

**THE FALL OF THE ROMANOV DYNASTY**

***THE REIGN OF TSAR NICHOLAS II (1894-1917)***

**Vladimir Moss**

**© Copyright: Vladimir Moss, 2021. All Rights Reserved.**

<u>INTRODUCTION</u>	5
<u>1. TSAR NICHOLAS II AND THE AUTOCRATIC IDEAL</u>	7
<u>2. KONSTANTIN PETROVICH POBEDONOSTSEV</u>	19
<u>3. THE FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE</u>	23
<u>4. RUSSIA TURNS EAST</u>	28
<u>5. THE HAGUE PEACE CONFERENCE</u>	34
<u>6. OPTINA DESERT AND THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA</u>	38
<u>7. THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY</u>	47
<u>8. THREE RUSSIAS: PETERSBURG, KISHINEV AND SAROV</u>	58
<u>9. PROTO-ECUMENISM AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES</u>	68
<u>10. THE BATTLE FOR THE RUSSIAN CHURCH</u>	80
<u>11. THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY</u>	91
<u>12. THE RUSSIAN ARMY</u>	100
<u>13. THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION</u>	104
<u>14. REGICIDE IN SERBIA</u>	111
<u>15. THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR</u>	115
<u>16. THE PRESS AND THE LIBERALS</u>	124
<u>17. BLOODY SUNDAY</u>	127
<u>18. THE STRIVING FOR CHURCH-STATE SYMPHONY</u>	141
<u>19. THE OCTOBER MANIFESTO</u>	150
<u>20. THE JEWS IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION</u>	156
<u>21. THE CHURCH IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION</u>	163
<u>22. THE CRUSHING OF THE 1905 REVOLUTION</u>	168
<u>23. THE PRECONCILIAR CONVENTION AND GEORGIAN AUTOCEPHALY</u>	174
<u>24. RUSSIA RECUPERATES</u>	181
<u>25. THE BLACK HUNDREDISTS</u>	185
<u>26. RUSSIA AND THE GREAT POWERS</u>	193
<u>27. THE STOLYPIN REFORMS</u>	200
<u>28. SIBERIA, RUSSIA'S FUTURE</u>	209

<u>29. THE NATIONALITIES POLICY: (1) THE SLAVIC MINORITIES</u>	214
<u>30. THE NATIONALITIES POLICY: (2) THE NON-SLAVIC MINORITIES</u>	222
<u>1. Finland.</u>	222
<u>2. The Baltic.</u>	223
<u>3. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.</u>	225
<u>4. Central Asia</u>	230
<u>31. YOUNG TURKS AND YOUNG BOSNIANS</u>	233
<u>32. RASPUTIN</u>	243
<u>33. NAME-WORSHIPPERS, SYMBOLISTS AND OCCULTISTS</u>	256
<u>34. VEKHI: THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION</u>	267
<u>35. THE ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION: (1) THE JEWS</u>	275
<u>36. THE ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION: (2) THE FREEMASONS</u>	279
<u>37. THE ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION: (3) THE CHRISTIANS</u>	284
<u>38. THE BEILIS TRIAL AND THE JEWISH "BLOOD LIBEL"</u>	290
<u>39. THE BALKAN WARS</u>	301
<u>40. ORTHODOXY IN TRANSCARPATHIA</u>	316
<u>41. THE LAST YEARS OF PEACE</u>	324
<u>42. THE PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE TSAR</u>	337
<u>43. SARAJEVO</u>	343
<u>44. THE EUROPEAN ROYAL FAMILY</u>	359
<u>45. EUROPE'S HUBRIS AND NEMESIS</u>	370
<u>46. THE WAR ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT</u>	375
<u>47. THE PLOTTERS GET TO WORK</u>	387
<u>48. THE RASPUTIN FACTOR</u>	392
<u>49. STUPIDITY OR TREASON?</u>	400
<u>50. THE DEATH OF RASPUTIN</u>	406
<u>51. APOCALYPTIC VISIONS</u>	411
<u>52. KERENSKY TAKES THE LEAD</u>	415
<u>53. THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION</u>	421
<u>54. THE ABDICATION OF TSAR NICHOLAS</u>	431
<u>55. THE REASONS FOR THE ABDICATION</u>	445

56. MICHAEL ALEXANDROVICH ROMANOV: TSAR FOR A DAY?

453

CONCLUSION. AUTOCRACY VERSUS CONSTITUTIONALISM

461

## INTRODUCTION

There can hardly be an historical figure over whom the opinions of historians differ more greatly than Tsar Nicholas II. Orthodox Christian historians generally have a high opinion of the Tsar, both as a man and as a skillful and determined defender of the Russian Orthodox Autocracy. Most western historians, however, appear to despise him, calling him weak-willed, unintelligent, unfit for the job, vacillating, incompetent, etc. Although the Russian Church Outside Russia canonized him and his family in 1981, and the official Russian Orthodox Church in 2000, there were many, even among the Orthodox, who maintained that he was a good man but a bad tsar, so that his glorification is a recognition of his virtues as a man (especially as a family man) but not of the quality of his governance.

One purpose of this book is to examine the justice of these accusations, using both western and Russian sources. The conclusion I reach is that, if we take into account first of all, the real purpose of his reign – the salvation of his people for eternity, and then the extraordinarily difficult circumstances of his reign, the multitude of his enemies both internal and external, and the paucity of his real friends and allies, we must conclude that Tsar Nicholas accomplished much, very much, and fully deserved to be considered as, in the words of the clairvoyant Fool-for-Christ, Blessed Pasha of Sarov, “the greatest of the Tsars”...

A second purpose of the book is to review the causes of the fall of the Romanov dynasty, not only from the political, military, economic or social points of view, but also from the religious, spiritual point of view. In particular, this involves an examination, especially in the first chapter but intermittently throughout the book, of the ideological struggle between monarchism and liberalism that dominated the reign, and the theological basis of the ideal of the Orthodox Autocracy, the ideal which Tsar Nicholas defended and for which he gave his life. The book begins with the Tsar’s accession to the throne in 1894 and ends with his abdication in 1917, and ranges widely across the various spheres of the dynasty’s influence, from the Balkans to the Pacific to the battlefields of the First World War. Developments in the contemporary West are described only to the extent that they affected developments within Russia.

The private and court life of Tsar Nicholas is only lightly touched on in this book – essentially only insofar as it affected the important issue of Rasputin and his influence. At the same time, it should be noted that not the least of Tsar Nicholas’ achievements was his irreproachable family life. In an age when family life was being undermined by immorality, not least in the wider Romanov family itself, the inner family of Tsar Nicholas presented an icon, as it were, of what family life could and should be, and of what the wider family of the Russian people could and should have been, in loving obedience to their *tsar-batiushka*, or father. Love, obedience and humility were at the root of all the Tsar’s family relations. It was fitting, therefore, that the family should receive the crown of martyrdom precisely *as a family* in 1918. But the martyrdom itself, and the last months of the Tsar’s life spent in exile and imprisonment after his abdication, do not form part of the content of this book.

Through the prayers of our Holy Fathers, Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy on us!

*March 8/21, 2021.  
Sunday of the Triumph of Orthodoxy.  
Kursk Icon of the Mother of God..*

## 1. TSAR NICHOLAS II AND THE AUTOCRATIC IDEAL

Tsar Alexander III died peacefully and in full consciousness on October 20, 1894, his head cradled by perhaps the greatest saint of the age, Fr. John of Kronstadt. On his deathbed he uttered these prophetic words to his son and heir, the Tsarevich Nicholas: "From the height of the throne your grandfather carried out many important reforms, directed to the good of the Russian people. As a reward for this, he received a bomb and death from Russian revolutionaries... On that tragic day the question stood before me: which path was I to follow? Was it the one towards which I was being urged by so-called progressive society, infected with the liberal ideas of the West, or was it the one recommended by my own convictions, by my own conscience? I chose my path. The liberals called it reactionary. I was interested only in the good of my people and the greatness of Russia. I strove to give it internal and external peace, that the state might freely and calmly develop, becoming strong, rich and prosperous in an orderly way. Autocracy has created Russia's historical individuality. If autocracy falls, God forbid, Russia will collapse with it. The fall of the time-honoured Russian government will inaugurate an era of civil strife and bloody internecine wars. I adjure you to love everything that serves the good, the honour and the dignity of Russia. Guard autocracy, remembering at the same time that you bear the responsibility for the fate of your subjects before the throne of the Most High. May faith in God and in the sanctity of your royal duty be the foundation of your life. Be firm and courageous and never show any weakness. Listen to everyone - there is nothing shameful in that - but hearken only to yourself and to your own conscience. In foreign policy, preserve and independent position. Remember - Russia has no friends. They fear our vastness. Avoid war. In domestic policy, first and foremost protect the Church. She has often saved Russia in times of misfortune. Strengthen the family, for it is the foundation of any state."<sup>1</sup>

On his father's death, Tsar Nicholas II carried out the testament of his father, defending autocracy and Russia to the death...

In May 1896 he was anointed and crowned in the Dormition cathedral in Moscow in a ceremony that the future Field-Marshal and President of Finland, Carl Gustaf Mannerheim, who took part in it, standing for four hours in his full-dress Imperial Chevalier Guard uniform at the bottom of the steps leading up to the imperial throne, described as "indescribably magnificent".<sup>2</sup>

Tsar Nicholas became the ruler of the largest and most variegated empire in world history. It included within its borders a great number of races and religions - 104 nationalities speaking 146 languages. It extended from the Baltic Sea to the Pacific Ocean, from the Arctic tundra to the sands of Central Asia. It had the largest army in the world and perhaps the fastest-growing economy, with all the complex social problems that invariably attend rapid economic growth.

---

<sup>1</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, Saint John the Forerunner Monastery, Meta Potamos, Cyprus: Metapotamos Publications, 2019, pp. 61-62.

<sup>2</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl\\_Gustaf\\_Emil\\_Mannerheim?fbclid=IwAR0QiG7dRgJbVKrmdU7KahKksqVAXcDgYP4LPEzyS-cfqEaf8-5OMZLMAs](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Carl_Gustaf_Emil_Mannerheim?fbclid=IwAR0QiG7dRgJbVKrmdU7KahKksqVAXcDgYP4LPEzyS-cfqEaf8-5OMZLMAs).

The influence of the Russian Empire extended well beyond its borders. The Orthodox Christians of Eastern Europe and the Middle East looked to it for protection, as did the Orthodox missions in Persia, China, Japan, Alaska and the United States, while its potential to become the world's most powerful nation was generally recognized – and feared.

Since Tsar Nicholas has probably been more slandered and misunderstood than any ruler in history, it is necessary to begin with a characterization of him. “Nicholas Alexandrovich,” writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, “was born on May 6/19, 1868 on the day of the memorial of Job the Much-Suffering. Later he used to say that it was not *by chance* that his reign and his suffering would become much-suffering. In complete accordance with the will of his father, Nicholas Alexandrovich grew up ‘as a normal, healthy Russian person’... From childhood he was able first of all ‘to pray well to God’. His biographers would unanimously note that faith in God was the living condition of his soul. He did not make a single important decision without fervent prayer! At the same time, being a young man and not yet Tsar, Nicholas Alexandrovich externally lived in the same way that almost all worldly young people of his time and his level of education. He loved sport, games, military activities, and acquired a fashionable for that time habit of smoking. He had an affair with the ballerina Kseshinskaya – which, however, he decisively cut short after an open and firm explanation with his father. He read a great deal, both spiritual and scientific and artistic literature (he loved L. Tolstoy’s *War and Peace*), he loved amateur dramatics and various ‘shows’ in the circle of his family and friends, he was keen on amusing tricks. But all this was *to a degree*, without extremes, and never going to the service of the passions. He had a strong will, and with the help of God and his parents he was able to control and rule himself. In sum, he preserved a wonderful clarity, integrity and purity of soul. The direct gaze of his deep, grey-blue eyes, which often flashed with welcoming humour, penetrated into the very soul of his interlocuters, completely captivating people who had not yet lost the good, but he was unendurable for the evil. Later, when his relations with the Tsar were already hostile, Count S.Yu. Witte wrote: ‘I have never met a more educated person in my life than the presently reigning Emperor Nicholas II’. Nicholas Alexandrovich was distinguished by a noble combination of a feeling of dignity with meekness (at times even shyness), extreme delicacy and attentiveness in talking with people. He was sincerely and unhypocritically *simple* in his relations with everybody, from the courtier to the peasant. He was organically repelled by any self-advertisement, loud phrases or put-on poses. He could not endure artificiality, theatricality and the desire ‘to make an impression’. He never considered it possible for him to show to any but the very closest people his experiences, sorrows and griefs. It was not cunning, calculated concealment, but precisely humility and the loftiest feeling of personal responsibility before God for his decisions and acts that led him to share his thoughts with almost nobody until they had matured to a point close to decision. Moreover, like his father, he put these decisions into effect in a quiet, unnoticed manner, through his ministers and courtiers, so that it *seemed* as if they were not his decisions... Later only his wife, Tsarina Alexandra Fyodorovna, knew the hidden life of his soul, knew him to the end. But for others, and especially for ‘society’, Nicholas Alexandrovich, like his crown-bearing forbear, Alexander I, was and remained an *enigma*, ‘a sphinx’. It would not have been difficult to decipher this



enigma if there had been the desire, if people had looked at his deeds and judged him from them. But 'educated' society did not have this desire... However, there was a great desire to represent him as 'the all-Russian despot', 'the tyrant' in the most unflattering light. And so sometimes spontaneously, at other times *deliberately*, a slanderous, completely distorted image of Tsar Nicholas II was created, in which by no means the least important place was occupied by malicious talk of the 'weakness' of his will, his submission to influences, his 'limitations', 'greyness', etc. One could test the Russian intelligentsia, as if by litmus paper, by their attitude to the personality of Nicholas Alexandrovich. And the testing almost always confirmed the already clearly established truth that in the whole world it was impossible to find a more despicable 'cultural intelligentsia' in its poverty and primitiveness than the Russian!... However, the personality of Nicholas II was not badly seen and understood by those representatives of the West who were *duty-bound* to understand it! The German chargé in Russia, Count Rechs, reported to his government in 1893: '... I consider Emperor Nicholas to be a spiritually gifted man, with a noble turn of mind, circumspect and tactful. His manners are so meek, and he displays so little *external* decisiveness, that one could easily come to the conclusion that he does not have a strong will, but the people around him assure me that he has a very definite will, which he is able to effect in life in *the quietest* manner.' The report was accurate. Later the West would more than once become convinced that the Tsar had an exceptionally strong will. President Emile Lube of France witnessed in 1910: 'They say about the Russian Tsar that he is accessible to various influences. This is profoundly untrue. The Russian Emperor himself puts his ideas into effect. His plans are maturely conceived and thoroughly worked out. He works unceasingly on their realization.' Winston Churchill, who knew what he was talking about when it came to rulers, had a very high opinion of the statesmanship abilities of Nicholas II. The Tsar received a very broad higher juridical and military education. His teachers were outstanding university professors... and the most eminent generals of the Russian army. Nicholas Alexandrovich took systematic part in State affairs, and was president of various committees (including the Great Siberian railway), sitting in the State Council and the Committee of Ministers. He spoke English, French and German fluently. He had an adequate knowledge of Orthodox theology..."<sup>3</sup>

K.G. Kapkov writes: "He did not raise himself above others, but at the same time he was filled with calmness, composure and dignity. The main thing that He inspired was awe, not fear. I think his eyes were the reason. Yes I'm sure it was his eyes, so beautiful were they. The most delicate blue shade, they looked straight in the face. With the kindest, tender and loving expression. How could you feel fear? His eyes were so clear that he seemed to open his whole soul to your sight. A simple and pure soul that was completely not afraid of your testing look... This was his greatest charm and, at the same time - a great political weakness..."<sup>4</sup>

It has been argued by many historians that Tsar Nicholas II was a weak man, pushed around by circumstances and the people closest to him. A close study of his reign does not confirm his estimate; nor was it shared by several of the politicians and statesmen who knew him well - for example, the Prime Minister of France and

---

<sup>3</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 377-379.

<sup>4</sup> Kapkov, *The Spiritual World of Nicholas II and his Family*.

Winston Churchill. Thus the tsaritsa “once remarked to her close friend Lily Dehn on this topic with some bitterness, ‘He is accused of weakness. He is the strongest – not the weakest. I assure you, Lili, that it cost the Emperor a tremendous effort to subdue the attacks of rage to which the Romanoffs are subject. He has learnt the hard lesson of self-control, only to be called weak; people forget that the greatest conqueror is he who conquers himself... I wonder they don’t accuse him of being too good: that, at least, would be true!’

“Aide-de-camp S. Fabritsky also notes: ‘Emperor Nicholas II had an even-tempered and tranquil disposition. He was also a man of rare steadiness and refinement, all of which made him seem weak to those who did not know him well. In the midst of the greatest currents of his reign and the infinitely painful times when his wife or children were ill, His Majesty always remained cool, with a seemingly perfect internal equilibrium, and many observers interpreted this as heartlessness.

“The Emperor’s compassion and sense of justice were extraordinary. In all his decisions he was always impelled by a desire not to injure anyone, even accidentally, and thus almost never acted rashly or in haste. This, however, engendered rumours to the effect that he was an indecisive man who dislike resolute people.”<sup>5</sup>

Prince N. D. Zhevakhov, deputy procurator of the Holy Synod, said: “He was, first and foremost, a seeker of God, a man who surrendered completely to the Will of God, a deeply religious Christian of high spirituality, who stood incommeasurably higher than those who surrounded him and with whom he Tzar was in communion. Only the boundless humility and the moving delicacy, of which even the enemies unanimously witnessed, did not allow the Emperor to emphasize his moral advantages over others. Only ignorance, spiritual blindness or malicious intent could attribute to the Sovereign all that later resulted in the form of malicious slander. ”

The Tsar was unparalleled in Russian history for his mercifulness. Even as a child he often wore patched clothing while spending his personal allowance to help poor students to pay for their tuition. He frequently pardoned criminals, even revolutionaries, and gave away vast quantities of his own land and money to alleviate the plight of the peasants. “Countless hospitals, orphanages, and institutions for the blind, as well as innumerable extraordinary petitions for economic aid from every corner of the empire, were based on the personal contributions of the tsar. The result was that before the end of the year, sometimes even before the beginning of autumn, Nicholas found himself in the difficult position of having empty pockets!”<sup>6</sup>

Under the Tsar’s leadership Russia made vast strides in economic and social development. He changed the passport system introduced by Peter I and thus facilitated the free movement of the people, including travel abroad. The poll tax was abolished and a voluntary programme of hospitalisation insurance was introduced, under which, for a payment of one rouble per year, a person was entitled to free hospitalisation. The stability of the rouble was increased greatly on the international markets during his reign. Contrary to the general myth, he did what he could to

---

<sup>5</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 93.

<sup>6</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 96.

alleviate the often harsh conditions of work in the factories. Thus in 1897, a law was enacted to limit work hours; night work was forbidden for women and minors under seventeen years of age, and this at a time when the majority of the countries in the West had almost no labour legislation at all. As William Taft, President of the United States, commented in 1913, "the Russian Emperor has enacted labour legislation which not a single democratic state could boast of". In only twelve years, from 1900 to 1912, infant mortality (infants under one year) went down in Russia from 252 per 1000 live births to 216.7.

General V.N. Voeikov writes: "In order to understand how Russia flourished in the last twenty years before the war, we must turn to statistics. From 1892 to 1913 the harvest of breads increased by 78%; the quantity of horned cattle increased between 1896 and 1914 by 63.5%; the mining of coal increased between 1891 and 1914 by 300%; oil industrialization – by 65%. At the same time the state budget provided the possibility of increasing its contribution to popular education to the Ministry of Popular Education alone by 628% from 1894 to 1914; while the railway network increased in length between 1895 and 1915 by 103%, etc."8

The reign of Tsar Nicholas II gave an unparalleled opportunity to tens of millions of people both within and outside the Russian empire to come to a knowledge of the truth of Orthodoxy and be saved thereby. Moreover, the strength of the Russian Empire protected and sustained Orthodoxy in other parts of the world, such as the Balkans and the Middle East, as well as the missionary territories of Japan, China, Alaska and Persia.

During the reign of Nicholas II, the Church reached her fullest development and power. "By the outbreak of revolution in 1917... it had between 115 and 125 million adherents (about 70 per cent of the population), around 120,000 priests, deacons and other clergy, 130 bishops, 78,000 churches [up by 10,000], 1,253 monasteries [up by 250], 57 seminaries and four ecclesiastical academies."9

The Tsar considered it his sacred duty to restore to Russia her ancient traditional culture, which had been abandoned by many of the "educated" classes in favour of modern, Western styles. He encouraged the building of churches and the painting of icons in the traditional Byzantine and Old Russian styles. Traditional church arts were encouraged, and old churches were renovated. The Emperor himself took part in the laying of the first cornerstones and the consecration of many churches.

Moreover, he took a very active part in the glorification of new saints, sometimes urging on an unwilling Holy Synod. Among those glorified during his reign were: St. Theodosius of Chernigov (in 1896), St. Isidore of Yuriev (1897), St. Seraphim of Sarov

---

7 Robert Tombs, *The English and their History*, New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014, p. 485.

8 Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 271. For more statistics, see Arsène de Goulevitch, *Czarism and Revolution*, Hawthorne, Ca., 1962.

9 Mikhail V. Shkarovskii, "The Russian Orthodox Church", in Edward Action, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *A Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 416. On December 1, 1901 the Tsar decreed that every military unit having its own clergy should have its own church in the form of a separate building (A.S. Fedotov, "Khramy vo imia svyatogo blagovernago velikago kniazia Aleksandra Nevskago v XIX-XX vv.", *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'*, N 5 (1818), March 1/14, 2007, p. 13).

(1903), St. Euphrosyne of Polotsk (1909), St. Anna of Kashin (1910), St. Joasaph of Belgorod (1911), St. Hermogenes of Moscow (1913), St. Pitirim of Tambov (1914), St. John (Maximovich) of Tobolsk (1916) and St. Paul of Tobolsk (1917). He himself, with his family, became the first in rank of the Holy New Martyrs and Confessors of Russia, the glory of the twentieth century and the foundation of the future resurrection of Holy Russia.

The Tsar promoted the education of children within the framework of church and parish. There they were taught the faith, unlike in the state, *zemstvo* schools, administered by the liberals, where they were infected with western influences. As a result, the number of parish schools, which were more popular among the peasants than the state schools, grew to 37,000. By contrast, the schoolteachers of the *zemstvo* schools raised a whole generation of children in radicalism, which was undoubtedly one of the main causes of the revolution. They had the advantage of having more money than the church schools, and not all the church-parish schools were of the highest quality in view of the fact that some Church teachers had also been infected by liberal ideas.

Overall, "enrolment in rural schools increased fourfold between 1881 and 1914 while the number of teachers from peasant families grew from 7,369 to 44,607 between 1880 and 1911. The census of 1897 found that 20.1 per cent of the population of European Russia was literate, but the gender gap was significant, with only 13.1 per cent of women being able to read and write compared with 29.3 per cent of men. Urban literacy stood at 45.3 per cent while rural literacy stood at 17.4 per cent, though both rose steadily in the years up to 1914. In that year only one-fifth of children of school age were actually in school. Doubtless this was because many peasants considered that schooling was not needed beyond the point when sons became functionally literate. As far as daughters were concerned, a widespread attitude was articulated by a villager in 1893: 'If you send her to school, she costs money; if you keep her at home, she makes money.' Nevertheless, by 1911 girls comprised just under a third of primary school pupils and the spread of schooling meant that by 1920 42 per cent of men and 25.5 per cent of women were literate..."<sup>10</sup>

Christian literature flourished under Tsar Nicholas; excellent journals were published, such as *Soul-Profiting Reading*, *Soul-Profiting Converser*, *The Wanderer*, *The Rudder*, *The Russian Monk*, *The Trinity Leaflets* and the ever-popular *Russian Pilgrim*. The Russian people were surrounded by spiritual nourishment as never before. And so Archpriest Michael Polsky put it, "In the person of the Emperor Nicholas II the believers had the best and most worthy representative of the Church, truly 'The Most Pious' as he was referred to in church services. He was a true patron of the Church, and a solicitor of all her blessings."<sup>11</sup>

\*

The pressures on the tsar from the right and the left were impossible to reconcile. The liberals ultimately wanted him to hand over his power to them. The conservatives,

---

10 S.A. Smith, *Russia and the Revolution*, Oxford University Press, p. 33.

11 Polsky, *The New Martyrs of Russia*, Wildwood, Alberta: Monastery Press, 2000, p. 117.

on the other hand, as Lieven writes, expected him “to be pope, king, and dictator rolled into one... No human being could fulfill those expectations...”<sup>12</sup>

Sebastian Sebag Montefiore confirms this judgement: “It is unlikely that even Peter or Catherine could have solved the predicaments of revolution and world war faced by Nicholas II in the early twentieth century.”<sup>13</sup> And yet he came much closer to doing just that than is generally recognized: if he had been allowed to reign just two months longer, then the planned Spring Offensive of 1917, in the opinion of many military experts, would have brought him victory in the world war and averted the revolution that eventually killed him and so many others.

It must also be remembered that although the tsar was an autocrat, he lived in an era when monarchy in the old style was already falling out of fashion and it was no longer possible, as it had been (almost) in the time of Louis XIV or Peter the Great, for one man to impose his will on a whole nation. In this connection the words of Catherine the Great are worth remembering: “It is not as easy as you think... In the first place my orders would not be carried out unless they were the kind of orders which could be carried out; you know with what prudence and circumspection I act in the promulgation of my laws. I examine the circumstances, I take advice, I consult the enlightened part of the people, and in this way I find out what sort of effect my law will have. And when I am already convinced in advance of general approval, then I issue my orders, and have the pleasure of observing what you call blind obedience. *And that is the foundation of unlimited power.* But believe me, they will not obey blindly when orders are not adapted to the customs, to the opinion of the people, and if I were to follow only my own wishes not thinking of the consequences...”<sup>14</sup>

If it was difficult even for the great Catherine to obtain obedience to her commands, it was much more difficult for her successor a century later, when the poison of English liberalism and French radicalism had penetrated everywhere. Europe was still a continent of monarchies (France was the only major exception), and the pomp and circumstance of monarchy was developed as never before. But the heart of true monarchism – sincere, heartfelt deference and obedience to the will of the monarch as the anointed of God – was hard to find. There were many “monarchists” but few real believers in monarchy, who demonstrated their faith in their works. Even the ministers of the monarch often forged their own policies that deviated from those of the monarch. Hence the need the monarch often felt to carry through his policies in other ways, circumventing his ministers. In such cases, the minister in question might well feel offended and even offer his resignation. Even after the abortive revolution of 1905, Tsar Nicholas still had the power to sack his ministers and often exercised that power. But such acts could have harmful consequences: the sacked minister might not go quietly, but would continue to oppose the will of his sovereign “from the back benches”, as it were. Of course, government in the late nineteenth century was an exceedingly complex task, and no monarch could govern efficiently without extensive consultation and delegation of power to ministers and permanent officials who naturally knew more than he did on many matters (although he knew much).

---

<sup>12</sup> Lieven *Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 93.

<sup>13</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 2016, p. xxvii.

<sup>14</sup> Isabel de Madariaga, *Russia in the Age of Catherine the Great*, London: Phoenix, 2002, p. 580.

However, as government became more complex, so the need to have a single head coordinating and unifying all its branches became greater. In constitutional monarchies, this could be an appointed or elected Prime Minister. But in an Orthodox autocracy it could only be the autocrat himself; the final responsibility rested with him alone...

The great internal issues of Nicholas' reign, as of the reigns of all the tsars since at least 1801, were twofold. The first was the peasants' demand for land, *all* the land, which in accordance with their "peasant socialism" they considered theirs by right. Tsar Nicholas went a long way, in his agrarian reforms, to satisfying the peasants' land hunger; but as a believer in private property, he could not accept the peasants' and the Cadet Party's demand that he simply acquiesce in the seizure of what was left of the landowners' land. This cost him dear in the abortive revolution of 1905, and it was the Bolsheviks' exploitation of this issue that swept them to power in 1917.

The second was the demand by the liberals – who included the great majority of the educated classes – for a constitution that effectively transferred power from the tsar to the liberals. Although the liberals insisted that they could do a much better job of governing the country than the hated autocracy, the evidence of 1917, when they had their chance and "blew" it, proves the opposite...

As early as January 17, 1895 the tsar directly addressed this issue in an address to representatives of the nobility, of the *zemstva* and other city groups. "I shall maintain the principle of autocracy," he said, "just as firmly and unflinchingly as it was preserved by my unforgettable reposed father." And he called the desire for constitutionalism "senseless dreams". As he explained to the Tsarevich's tutor, Pierre Gilliard: "I swore at my accession to guard intact the form of government that I received from my father and to hand it down as such to my successor. Nothing can relieve me of my oath; my successor alone will be able to modify it at his accession." As Robert Service writes, "this was not a passing idea. Before the Great War he had told Sophia Buxhoevden: 'Alexei won't be bound. He'll repeal what's unnecessary. I'm preparing the way for him.'"<sup>15</sup>

The dangers of constitutionalism had been explained many years before by Nicholas' grandfather, Tsar Alexander II. As Lieven writes, Alexander "explained to Otto von Bismarck, who was then Prussian minister in Petersburg, that 'the idea of taking counsel of subjects other than officials was not in itself objectionable and that great participation by respectable notables in official business could only be advantageous. The difficulty, if not impossibility, of putting this principle into effect lay only in the experience of history that it had never been possible to stop a country's liberal development at the point beyond which it should not go. This would be particularly difficult in Russia, where the necessary political culture, thoughtfulness and circumspection were only to be found in relatively small circles. Russia must not be judged by Petersburg, of all the empire's towns the least Russian one... The revolutionary party would not find it easy to corrupt the people's convictions and make the masses conceive their interests to be divorced from those of the dynasty. The Emperor continued that 'throughout the interior of the empire the people still see the

---

<sup>15</sup> Service, *The Last of the Tsars*, London: Pan, 2017, p. 10.

monarch as the paternal and absolute Lord set by God over the land; this belief, which has almost the force of a religious sentiment, is completely independent of any personal loyalty of which I could be the object. I like to think that it will not be lacking too in the future. To abdicate the absolute power with which my crown is invested would be to undermine the aura of that authority which has dominion over the nation. The deep respect, based on innate sentiment, with which right up to now the Russian people surrounds the throne of its Emperor cannot be parcelled out. I would diminish without any compensation the authority of the government if I wanted to allow representatives of the nobility or the nation to participate in it. Above all, God knows what would become of relations between the peasants and the lords if the authority of the Emperor was not still sufficiently intact to exercise the dominating influence.'...

"... After listening to Alexander's words Bismarck commented that if the masses lost faith in the crown's absolute power the risk of a murderous peasant war would become very great. He concluded that 'His Majesty can still rely on the common man both in the army and among the civilian masses but the "educated classes", with the exception of the older generation, are stoking the fires of a revolution which, if it comes to power, would immediately turn against themselves.' Events were to show that this prophecy was as relevant in Nicholas II's era as it had been during the reign of his grandfather..."<sup>16</sup>

\*

It is impossible to understand the superiority of Orthodox autocracy to all other systems of government for Orthodox Christians unless we adopt a religious point of view. For the question here is not: whether the will of the king, or of the ruling class, or even of the people as whole, is followed, but *the will of God*, Whose mercy and justice encompasses all human beings everywhere, and takes into account the consequences of present events far into the future. The will of God is not necessarily that we should have peace and prosperity in this life but rather salvation and eternal joy in the age to come. When put in that way, it is obvious that no individual human being or human collective has anything like the far-seeing wisdom needed to answer such a question. The hope, therefore, is that God will communicate His will to a king directly (or indirectly, through, say, a prophet or priest). This does not mean that the will of God cannot be expressed through a democratic election. But it seems intuitively more likely – and this is certainly what Holy Scripture and Tradition lead us to believe – that He will communicate His will more clearly and decisively through one man chosen by Him and anointed for that very purpose than through millions of voters who do not know their right hand from their left and have no special training or knowledge of politics and who, besides, are constantly changing their minds. *Vox populi*, contrary to the popular saying, is not (usually) *Vox Dei*.

Tsar Nicholas inherited this understanding of Autocracy from his father. In his tribute-obituary to Tsar Alexander III, the revolutionary-turned-monarchist Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov well summarized that ideal as follows:-

---

<sup>16</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, pp. 142, 143.

“How much confusion falls away with one look at this grand reign! How many forgotten truths it reveals! Monarchy is not dictatorship, not simple absolutism... Monarchy – in its autocratic ideal – can sometimes do that which dictatorship does, and can, if necessary, act by rejecting popular will. But in itself it stands higher than whatever will of the people there might be. Monarchy is the idea of subordination of interests and desires to *higher truth*.

“In monarchy the nation seeks sanctification of all the manifestations of its complex life through subordination to the truth. Personal authority is needed for this, as *only a man has a conscience, and only a man answers before God*. Unlimited authority is needed, for any restriction on the power of the Tsar by people would free him from answering to his conscience and to God. Surrounded by restrictions, he would already be subject not to truth, but certain interests, one or another earthly power.

“However, the unlimited and individual nature of decision are not the essence of monarchy, but only a necessary condition so that all social interests, their conflicts and their struggles, may be brought to agreement before an authority of the same *truth* that is above them all.

“This is why the bearer of the ideal came into the world, according to the conviction expressed by all the world in recent days, as a Tsar of truth and peace. He should have been namely such, *for the essence of monarchy is in the reconciling power of higher truth*.

“The monarch does not break the social structure of life; he neither destroys any differences created by its diversity, nor does he dismantle the great or the small, but everything he directs so that the development of all classes, all groups and all institutions should in no way violate truth. And thereby he gives the nation that unity which was vainly sought in “representation” and now is to be achieved in suicidal equalization.

“The monarch does not destroy self-initiative, advice, the work of popular thought, and he doesn’t negate the popular will when it exists. He is *higher* than all this. He is given not for destruction, but for *direction*. For him there is neither the wise man nor the fool, neither the strong nor the powerless, neither the majority nor the minority. For him there is only *conscience* and *truth*. He should see everything, but will support only that in which there is truth.

“Emperor Alexander III showed that monarchy in its true essence is not anything transitional, obsolete or compatible only with one phase of cultural development, but is an *eternal* principle, always possible, always necessary, and the highest of all political principles. If at any time this principle becomes impossible for some nation, then it is not because of the condition of its culture, but because of the moral degeneration of the nation itself. Where people want to live according to *truth*, autocracy is necessary and always possible under any degree of culture.

“Being the authority of *truth*, monarchy is impossible without religion. Outside of religion, personal authority gives only dictatorship or absolutism, but not monarchy. Only as the instrument of God’s will does the autocrat possess his personal and



unlimited authority. Religion in monarchy is needed not only for the people. The people should believe in God so they may desire to subject themselves to truth – yet the autocrat needs faith all the more so, for in matters of state power, he is the intermediary between God and the people. The autocrat is limited neither by human authority nor popular will, but he does not have *his* will and *his* desires. His autocracy is not a privilege, but a simple concentration of human authority, and it is a grave struggle, a great service, the height of human selflessness and a cross, not a pleasure. Therefore monarchy receives its full meaning only in *heredity*. There is no future autocrat if there is no will, no wish to choose between the lot of the Tsar and the plough-man, but it is already appointed him to deny himself and assume the cross of authority. Not according to desire or the calling of one's capabilities, but according to God's purpose does he stand at his post. And he should not ask himself whether he has the strength, but rather he should only believe that if God chose him, the hesitations of man have no place.

“It is in the greatness of subordination to the will of God that sanctification of our political life is given in the ideal of monarchy.

“In those epochs when this ideal is alive and universal, one does not need to be a great man for the dignified passage of the autocrat's vocation. Not all warriors are heroes, but in a well-organized army even the ordinary man finds the strength to heroically conquer and heroically die. And so it is in everything else. But with the advance of the age of demoralization and the neglect of the ideal, only a great chosen one may resurrect it in human hearts. There is nowhere for him to learn, for everything about him does not help him, but only hinders. He must draw upon everything from within himself, and not just in that measure necessary for the execution of his duty, but in that which is needed to enlighten all his surroundings. Indeed, what help would it be to the world if Alexander III confined himself only to giving Russia thirteen years of prosperity? The bearer of the ideal is sent not so that we would enjoy prosperity, remaining unworthy of it, but to awaken within us the aspiration to be worthy of the ideal.”<sup>17</sup>

Tsar Nicholas strained every sinew of heart, mind and will to fulfill the ideal of Autocracy as he inherited it from his father. Tragically, the people were not found worthy of that ideal, and so it was taken away from them. The leaders in this rejection of the ideal were the liberal constitutionalists, who opposed the Tsar at every turn, even at the height of the world war, trying to destroy the autocracy by claiming that the Tsar and the government appointed by him should be responsible, *not to God, but to themselves*. It followed that there was no idea of subordination to a higher truth: in fact, truth did not come into the matter at all, only the purely formal concept of rule by the people through the ballot box. Logically, therefore, the liberal destruction of the autocratic ideal led to religious apostasy and *atheism*, which is precisely what happened in 1917...

Tikhomirov writes: “The monarch does not destroy self-initiative, advice, the work of popular thought, and he doesn't negate the popular will when it exists. He is *higher*

---

<sup>17</sup> Tikhomirov, in Mark Hackard, “Autocrator”, *The Soul of the East*, February 14, 2016, <http://souloftheeast.org/2014/02/14/autocrator>.

than all this. He is given not for destruction, but for *direction*. For him there is neither the wise man nor the fool, neither the strong nor the powerless, neither the majority nor the minority. For him there is only *conscience* and *truth*. He should see everything, but will support only that in which there is truth."

And if it is objected that the anointed king may be evil or blind to the truth for some reason or other, then the Orthodox supporter of autocracy replies: of course, where men are involved, there is sin, and therefore the possibility of error. But the possibility of error is surely increased many times if the masses make the decision – which they may then weaken by their divisions or overthrow at the next election. Solomon asked wisdom from God and was granted it, in spite of the fact that he did not live a spotless life. But when do the teeming masses ask for wisdom from God?

In any case, if the king defies the will of God, God can remove him as He removed Saul – unless, of course, He judges that the people are not worthy of having a better king, or need chastisement. But if they are worthy, then He can and will provide them with a true autocrat, a king whom God declares to be, like David, "after My own heart", a king who, though sinful like all men, still loves God and strives to know and do His will, putting *truth and conscience* above all things. The question then becomes: will the people continue to be worthy of such a king? And will they honour and obey him?

## 2. KONSTANTIN PETROVICH POBEDONOSTSEV

In order to understand the reign of Tsar Nicholas we need to understand the most important influences on his upbringing, and in particular the views of his tutor, Konstantin Petrovich Pobedonostsev, who had served under Tsar Nicholas' father, Tsar Alexander III, and who from April, 1880 to October, 1905 was over-procurator of the Russian Holy Synod. His policies of Orthodox conservative nationalism, and his views on Church-State relations and on the liberal opposition, were dominant in Russia until the publication of the October manifesto in 1905. With his resignation in that year an epoch came to an end.

Montefiore writes: "Pobedonostsev cultivated a network of reactionary allies through the nationalist newspaper barons Mikhail Katkov and Prince Vladimir Meshchersky, who had hired Dostoevsky to edit the newspaper *The Citizen* which the heir secretly funded. The prince introduced Dostoevsky to Pobedonostsev, and they became best friends, meeting on Saturday night for hours of discussion. 'I shall run again to you as I came to you on other days for instructions,' wrote the novelist as he developed *The Brothers Karamazov*. Dostoevsky best expressed their Slavophile instincts: 'the Russian nation is an extraordinary phenomenon in the history of human genius.' He was an avid monarchist, seeing the tsars as 'a mystery, a sacrament, an anointment... the primary fact of our history.' Delighted that one of the titans of Russian literature had decent views, Pobedonostsev introduced Dostoevsky to Sasha [the future Alexander III] who had read and admired *Crime and Punishment*. The meeting was awkward – Dostoevsky could not play the courtier but it did not matter. Alexander II invited him to give lectures to the younger grand dukes, Sergei and Paul and their cousin K.R. Dostoevsky, once sentenced to death by one tsar, had become the confidant of the Romanovs."<sup>18</sup>

Tsar Alexander II called Pobedonostsev a "desperate fanatic" and a "Pharisee". However, he had a genuine Christian insight into the relationship between Holy Russia and the revolution. Thus as early as 1873, *The Citizen* published a series of articles of his entitled "Russian Leaflets from Abroad", in which he wrote: "A cloud can be seen on the horizon that will make things terrible, because we did not see it before. This is the fanaticism of unbelief and denial. It is not simple denial of God, but denial joined to mad hatred for God and for everyone who believes in God. May God grant that nobody lives to the time when fanaticism of this type gains power and receives the power to bind and to loose the human conscience." And again: "There is no doubt that if the atheists of our time ever come to the triumph of the Commune and the complete removal of Christian services, they will create for themselves some kind of pagan cult, will raise some kind of statue to themselves or their ideal and will begin to honour it, while forcing others to do the same."<sup>19</sup>

Dominic Lieven writes that "[Pobedonostsev's] view of human nature was even gloomier than that of other European conservatives: the majority of human beings were weak, selfish, gullible and largely immune to the call of reason. Given this reality,

---

<sup>18</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, London: Vintage, 2016, p. 442. Note.

<sup>19</sup> Pobedonostev, in Protopriest Michael Ardov, "Arkhi-Kontrevoliutsioner", *Nasha Strana*, N 2929, December 3, 2011, p. 3.

democracy was likely to turn into a chaotic sham, with professional politicians, plutocrats and press pandering to the prejudices and short-sighted greed of the electorate. In the Anglo-Saxon and Scandinavian countries, with their centuries-old tradition of individualism, an educated and self-disciplined citizenry had emerged which might just be able to sustain democratic politics, especially in a land of plentiful resources like the United States. Russian traditions were different, however, and the country was both more primitive and multi-national. In consequence, liberalism and democracy would bring disaster in their wake. Only the power and symbolism of an autocratic monarchy, advised by an elite of rational expert officials, could run the country effectively. Russia was built on communities – the peasant village, the Church and the nation – and these must be preserved and protected from the attacks of Western-style individualism. The educated classes, including the aristocracy, were bearers of this bacillus and were therefore dangerous. The religious and patriotic instincts of the peasantry were a firmer basis for political stability and Russian power, but the simple people must be protected from outside influences which would sow doubts among them about values and loyalties, thereby undermining the Russian national solidarity between ruler and people on which the empire's future depended."<sup>20</sup>

Since Pobednostsev personified this policy of the supremacy of the Orthodox Autocracy perhaps even more than the tsars whom he served, and since his influence extended far beyond his role as over-procurator (he was instrumental in censoring the heretical philosopher Soloviev, among others), he was reviled more than any other figure by the liberal press. He was portrayed as standing for the complete, tyrannical domination by the State of every aspect of Russian life; and among the epithets the press gave him were “prince of darkness, hatred and unbelief”, “state vampire”, “the great inquisitor” and “the greatest deicide in the whole of Russian history”.<sup>21</sup> These were vile slanders; for Pobedonostev was a pious man who educated the future Tsar Nicholas on the necessity of his being a servant of the Church. And although he never tried to correct the uncanonical state of Church-State relations, and even expressed the view that Peter the Great's removal of the patriarchate was “completely lawful”, his work as over-procurator was in fact very beneficial. Thus he did a great deal for the development of parish schools, an essential counter-measure to the spread of liberal and atheist education in the secular schools, for the spread of the Word of God in various languages throughout the empire, for the improvement in the lot of the parish priest and for an enormous (fourfold) increase in the number of monks over the previous reign.<sup>22</sup>

At the same time, it cannot be denied that the power that the tsars wielded over the Church through the over-procurators was anti-canonical. In the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries there had been something like real “symphony” between Church and State. However, the eighteenth century tsars from Peter the Great onwards succeeded, through the lay office of over-procurator, in making the Church dependent on the State to a large degree. Finally, through his decrees of November 13, 1817 and May 15, 1824 Alexander

---

20 Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, pp. 35-36.

21 A.I. Peshkov, “Kto razoriaet – mal vo Tsarstvii Khristovym” (He who destroys is least in the Kingdom of Christ), in K.P. Pobedonostev, *Sochinenia (Works)*, St. Petersburg, p. 3.

22 Sergei Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh – 1918 g.)* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2002, pp. 42-43.

I made the Holy Synod into a department of State. Fortunately, the over-procurators of the 19<sup>th</sup> century were in general more Orthodox than those of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. But the situation remained essentially uncanonical ...<sup>23</sup>

Some of the complaints about the State's interference in Church affairs were exaggerated - for example, the Petrine decree that priests should report the contents of confession if they were seditious. As Pobedonostsev himself pointed out, this had long been a dead letter. Others, however, were serious and had major consequences - as, for example, the tendency of over-procurators to move bishops from one diocese to another.

Firsov writes: "While K.P. Pobedonostsev was over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, the transfer of hierarchs from see to see was finally turned into a kind of 'educational' measure. The paradox consisted in the fact that 'while exalting the position of bishops from an external point of view, he [Pobedonostsev] at the same time had to increase his control over them'. The over-procurator was quite unable to square this circle: he wanted an intensification of Episcopal activity and at the same time did not want to present the hierarchs with the freedom of action that was necessary for this. State control over the Church had to be kept up. It was precisely for this reason that the over-procurator so frequently moved Vladykos from see to see. According to the calculations of a contemporary investigator, 'out of 49 diocesan bishops moved in 1881-1894, eight were moved twice and eight - three times. On average in one year three diocesan bishops were moved and three vicars; four vicars received appointments to independent sees'. In 1892-1893 alone 15 diocesan bishops and 7 vicar bishops were moved, while 14 vicar-bishops were raised to the rank of diocesan. At times the new place of their service and the composition of their flock differed strikingly from the former ones. In 1882, for example, a hierarch was transferred to Kishinev from Kazan, then in his place came the bishop of Ryazan, and he was followed by the bishop of Simbirsk.

"One can understand that this 'shuffling' could not fail to affect the attitude of hierarchs to their archpastoral duties: they were more interested in smoothing relations with the secular authorities and in getting a 'good' diocese. One must recognise that serious blame for this must attach to the long-time over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, K.P. Pobedonostev..."<sup>24</sup>

Nevertheless, the theoretical works of Pobedonostsev demonstrate a profound understanding of the importance of the Church in Russian life and indicate that, whether his views on Church-State relations were correct or not, he knew, as few others, what was truly in the Church's interests, considering that the State could not without profound damage to itself and the nation as a whole touch upon the religious

---

23 Peshkov provides a certain, not very convincing correction to this point of view: "It is necessary to take into account that even in the Synod he did not have that *direct* administrative power which any minister in Russia's Tsarist government possessed in the department subject to him, since the Most Holy Synod was a collegial organ, whose decision-making required the unanimity of its members. As Pobedonostev himself emphasized, '*juridically* I have no power to issue orders in the Church and the department. You have to refer to the Synod.' In particular, when Metropolitan Isidore of St. Petersburg expressed himself against the publication in Russia of the New Testament in the translation of V.A. Zhukovsky, K.P. Pobedonostev had to publish it abroad, in Berlin..." (Peshkov, *op. cit.*, p. 7) just as L.A. Tolstoy had to publish his translation in Geneva...

24 Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 77.

consciousness of the people, upon which its own power depended; for the people will support only that government which tries to incarnate its own "idea".

Although a belief in liberal democracy was almost universal by now in the West, in some countries it was not obviously a success. Thus in France and Italy governments succeeded each other with bewildering rapidity. "Democracy itself," noted Pobedonostsev, "we can say, has lost faith in its parliament, but is forced to be reconciled with it, because *it has nothing to replace it with*, and because everything that stood before has been destroyed, while democracy rejects in principle every idea of dictatorship. It is obvious to all that the falsely constructed building is wavering, is already shaking. But when and how it will fall, and what will arise on its ruins - that is the task of the sphinx that stands on the threshold of the twentieth century."<sup>25</sup>

In his article "The New Democracy", Pobedonostsev expounded the view that modern democracy differed essentially from ancient democracy. In the ancient city-states, he said, the suffrage was far from universal, and the *de facto* rulers were those who were best suited to govern the State. In modern democracy, by contrast, the new aristocracy of the *nouveaux riches* buys power by bribing and manipulating the masses. "In broadening its foundation, the newest democracy places universal suffrage as the goal closest to its heart. This is a fatal error, one of the most striking in the history of mankind. The political power which democracy tries to attain so passionately is splintered in this form into a multitude of particles, and each citizen acquires *an infinitely small* part of this right."<sup>26</sup>

Pobedonostsev was right in what he rejected. But for all his good works and correct analyses he failed to provide a positive programme for the renewal of the empire. That was probably too much to ask of any man, however powerful. Nevertheless, there is truth in the remark made about him: "Like frost he inhibits any further decay, but nothing will grow under him..."<sup>27</sup>

---

25 Pobedonostsev, *op. cit.*, pp. 281-283.

26 Pobedonostsev, "Novaia Demokratia" (The New Democracy), in *Sochinenia* (Works), St. Petersburg: "Nauka", 1996, p. 277.

27 Edvard Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar*, London: Arrow, 1992, p. 12.

### 3. THE FRANCO-RUSSIAN ALLIANCE

After the prescribed period of mourning for his father was over, Tsar Nicholas was crowned and anointed by the Metropolitan of Moscow at the Dormition cathedral in the Kremlin on May 14, 1896. A few days later, a terrible tragedy took place when at Khodynka Field the barriers holding back the crowds who came to receive gifts from their new Tsar were broken and about 1000 people were crushed to death. The Tsar, appalled, went to visit the wounded in hospital and was very generous to the families of the deceased, giving them all life pensions (which the Bolsheviks later cancelled). And he wanted to cancel a ball that was scheduled at the French embassy that evening. But he was dissuaded not to cancel it, because the French might be offended.

French goodwill was indeed important to the Russians. In the years just preceding the First World War, Russia was part of an international alliance system, of which perhaps the most important link was also the most surprising – that between Russia and France. After all, Russia was the last Great Power representing True Christianity and the last truly monarchical power, while France was famous for its revolutionism and republicanism, and was ruled from behind the scenes by the fiercely anti-Christian and anti-monarchist Grand Orient of Paris...

For most of the nineteenth century, France had been at or near the centre of European politics. The revolutions of 1789, 1830 and 1848 had all begun in Paris, and Napoleon III had briefly aspired to emulate the glory of his more famous relative of the same name. However, the Franco-Prussian War of 1870, and the bloody Paris Commune that followed, had deflated the nation and pared down her ambition and rebelliousness, while hurting her pride and leaving a lasting sense of bitterness. Republicanism was now accepted on all sides, even by the Catholics, as the form of her government, and world leadership in any sphere but the arts, some sciences and tourism was no longer a realistic aim for her politicians.

However, as Charles Emmerson writes, “By any standards, France was still a great country and a first-rank power. The French navy was amongst the world’s largest, its army was the equal of any, though parity with Germany was becoming harder to maintain. France had amassed the world’s second largest empire, from Indochina to Guyana, reaching into every continent on earth, even Antarctica. This empire was still expanding – not least in north Africa. While France had no continent or sub-continent to itself, as Britain did in India and Australia, it had Algeria, relatively sparsely populated yet close to the fatherland. The empire was a source of pride for many, and of wealth for some. It was also an increasingly important source of troops. At the Bastille Day march past at Longchamp in July 1913, [President] Poincaré presented the flag to twenty-five colonial regiments, from Algeria, Morocco, Senegal, Indochina, Madagascar, Chad and Gabon. French investments around the world were second only to those of Britain. In Russia, in particular, French investment was dominant. And while London was the undisputed clearing house for the international gold standard, France had been instrumental in forming a Latin Monetary Union with Paris in a leading role, making the currencies of several European currencies interchangeable.

“If French industry was far smaller than that of either Germany or of Britain, it was nonetheless technologically advanced, pioneering both moving pictures (the Lumière brothers, Pathé) and the European automobile industry (Michelin, Renault, Peugeot). The Germans might have their lumbering Zeppelins, portrayed in French magazines as both ugly and dangerous, but the French were masters of the aeroplane, more graceful, more manoeuvrable, and faster. A Frenchman had already been the first to cross the Channel in 1909, and first to fly to Rome in 1911, sailing above the Vatican and an awestruck Pope. The year 1913 saw a Frenchman be the first to land a plane in the Holy Land, French pilots fly further than any man had ever flown, and a Frenchman perform the first loop (which was then performed for adoring crowds at the Ghent world fair). Like French pilots, French engineers – educated in the *École Polytechnique* or the *École Centrale* – had a daring and a flair of which their German counterparts could only dream....

“Besides these material considerations of its power and influence France was, more to the point, still a great civilization. It was the French language, not English, that was the *lingua franca* of society and diplomacy, if not commerce. French cooking was deemed the standard of elegance, and French chefs the most capable exponents of the art. French fashion set the trends for the world. France’s universities, though perhaps less famous than Oxford and Cambridge, and without quite the same status at home as German universities, nonetheless housed great philosophers, Henri Bergson being the most famous, the advocate of intuition and the prophet of ‘*l’élán vital*’ – the vital force of life. France produced great mathematicians, including Raymond Poincaré’s cousin Henri. Over the preceding twelve years, French scientists, authors and humanitarians had been awarded no fewer than fifteen Nobel prizes, close to the German total of seventeen, and far ahead of the British total of six, let alone the American three.

“Above all, France still had Paris...”<sup>28</sup>

And yet France was worried and insecure. The cause was simple: Germany. France could never reconcile herself to the loss of the provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, and dreamed publicly of winning them back from Germany. But Germany was a larger country in terms of population, and the gap was becoming wider. Moreover, her industry outstripped France’s. So France needed allies. In 1892 Tsar Alexander III had signed an alliance with France, which Tsar Nicholas confirmed in a visit to Paris, and which remained the backbone of France’s security. And in 1903 a looser, but still important alliance with Britain was agreed in the *Entente Cordiale*. A weakness of this three-nation group was the imperial rivalry between Britain and Russia. But the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, strongly supported by France, would remove that problem...

However, the anti-Christian and anti-monarchist Grand Orient of France, whose influence on French politics was increasing all the time (in 1901 Masons founded the Radical party and the party of the Radical Socialists), were cooler about the Franco-Russian alliance. Their main aim was to effect a reconciliation between the French and

---

<sup>28</sup> Emmerson, 2013. *The World before the Great War*, London: Vintage, 2013, pp. 41-43.



German centres of Continental Masonry, a task made much more difficult by the nationalist passions on both sides.

“Evidence of this,” writes O.F. Soloviev, “is provided by articles in the secret GOF journal, *L’Acacia*, which in many ways reflected the intentions of the leadership of the Great Lodge and Great Orient of France. The main editor and author of the editorial articles, writing under the name ‘Hiram’, was the well-known journalist S. Limousène (1840-1909), who touched on the influence of Franco-German relations on world politics. This brother was simultaneously in the lodges of the three French ‘obediences’ and was in close contact with their leaders, which gave an additional weight to his utterances and thoughts.

“At the beginning of 1904 *L’Acacia* published an article by Limousène entitled ‘The Question of Alsace-Lorraine. Germany, France, Russia and Masonry’, whose central thesis was that the reconciliation of the first two countries would have to come one day ‘because of the necessity of agreeing for the sake of joint resistance to the Russian invasion’, for the State structures of Russia and France were ‘socially incompatible’. In the words of the author, the French were sympathetic only to the representatives of the Russian ‘intelligentsia and revolutionaries’. Moreover, [the Russians] have, he said, a different mentality from ours, conditioned by life in ‘the conditions of the most terrible and despotic regime, which is without any intellectual culture and unusually corrupted’. Moreover, even the Russians who are close [to us] in spirit believe in the inevitability of revolution, which will engender still more serious excesses and internal struggle than the revolution in France in 1789. In the end reaction will gain the upper hand thanks to ‘the masses of muzhiks’ – after all, the village population of Russia is much more backward than the French at the end of the 18th century. The result will be the expansion of Russia into Western Europe. But so far France helps Russia materially in the capacity of a friend and ally, which has allowed Moscow to build strategic railways while modernizing her weapons. There followed leisurely reflections on the striving of Russia to realize ‘the dream of world hegemony that was cherished already by Peter I’.

“The objections that Nicholas II was a peace-loving person and the initiator of the Hague conference were declared to be unsustainable in view of Russia’s predatory politics in Manchuria, which ‘will unfailingly lead to war with Japan’. Besides, such a liberal monarch had destroyed representative institutions in Finland, although he had sworn to preserve them. He was also weak-willed and indecisive, like the executed French King Louis XVI. In a word, such an order was not only distinguished by despotism, but also disorganized the country. ‘The genuine politics of Western Europe would have to consist in the dividing up of this colossus as long as it has not yet become too strong. It would have to use a possible revolution in order to re-establish Poland as a defensive rampart for Europe, while the rest of Russia would have to be divided into three or four states. Balance of power politics will remain the only fitting politics in the given conditions until the rise of the United States of Europe, which France will assist.’ In conclusion, the article noted that sooner or later, and without fail, ‘France will have to be reconciled with Germany’.”<sup>29</sup>

---

<sup>29</sup> Soloviev, *Masonstvo v Mirovoj Politike XX Veka* (Masonry in the World Politics of the 20th Century), Moscow: Rosspen, 1998, pp. 41-42.

However, France was not reconciled with Germany. And in spite of an almost entirely Masonic cabinet at the beginning of World War I, nationalist passions continued to keep not only the two governments, but even their Masonic lodges, at loggerheads. In other respects, though, the article was remarkably farsighted, from the future dominance of Russia (albeit Soviet, not Tsarist Russia) to the importance of that quintessentially Masonic project, the United States of Europe.

In one important respect, however, the article was quite wrong: in its estimate of the character of Tsar Nicholas II. He was neither weak-willed nor a war-monger nor a despot, but he was absolutely determined to uphold the traditional Orthodox world-view and bring it unharmed into the twentieth century. The Grand Orient knew that, and was determined to stop him. That is why the alliance between the Russian autocracy and the French republic was indeed unnatural. Nevertheless, it endured, largely because of the aggressive behaviour of the most powerful state in Europe – Germany.

There were also important economic reasons for the alliance.

“As the new century dawned,” writes Niall Ferguson, “no diplomatic relationship was more solidly founded than the Franco-Russian alliance. It remains the classic illustration of an international combination based on credit and debit. French loans to Russia by 1914 totaled more than 3 billion roubles, 80 per cent of the country’s total external debt. Nearly 28 per cent of all French overseas investment was in Russia, nearly all of it in state bonds.

“Economic historians used to be critical of the Russian government’s strategy of borrowing abroad to finance industrialization at home. But it is very hard to find fault with the results. There is no question that the Russian economy industrialized with extraordinary speed in the three decades before 1914. According to Gregory’s figures, net national product grew at an average rate of 3.3 per cent between 1885 and 1913. Annual investment rose from 8 per cent of national income to 10 per cent. Between 1890 and 1913 per capita capital formation rose 55 per cent. Industrial output grew at an annual rate of 4-5 per cent. In the period 1898-1913 pig iron production rose by more than 100 per cent; the railway network increased in size by some 57 per cent; and raw cotton consumption increased by 82 per cent. In the countryside too there was progress. Between 1860 and 1914 agricultural output grew at an average annual rate of 2 per cent. That was significantly faster than the rate of growth of population (1.5 per cent per annum). The population grew by around 10 per cent between 1900 and 1913; but total national income very nearly doubled...”<sup>30</sup>

Nevertheless, the Russians had no wish to antagonize Germany, with which they had important trade relations. In fact the two countries had more in common with each other than either had with any other great power (if we exclude Germany’s relationship with Austria). Both had ancient monarchies that were hampered, as the monarchs saw it, by recently created representative institutions, and royal families related to each other by generations of inter-marriage. Both had conservative rural

---

<sup>30</sup> Ferguson, *The Pity of War. 1914-1918*, London: Penguin, 1999, pp. 43-44.

nobilities with strong links to the army. Both had problems with minorities that they tried to cure by Russification and Germanization programmes respectively...

Moreover, there was always a significant faction in the Foreign Ministry that valued friendship with Germany above the alliance with France. The potential for conflict between Russia and the German-Austrian alliance had been dramatically decreased by the agreement made with Austria in 1897 to preserve the status quo in the Balkans. And in 1899 the Tsar made it clear to the German Foreign Minister, von Bulow, that there was no reason for conflict between the two countries if Russia's interest in the Balkans was respected: "There is no problem that finds the interests of Germany and Russia in conflict. There is only one area in which you must recognize Russian traditions and take care to respect them, and that is the Near East. You must not create the impression that you intend to oust Russia politically and economically from the East, to which we have been linked for centuries by numerous national and religious ties. Even if I myself handle these matters with somewhat more scepticism and indifference, I still would have to support Russia's traditional interests in the East. In this regard I am unable to go against the heritage and aspirations of my people."31

"The formation of the Franco-Russian alliance," writes Christopher Clark, "did not in itself make a clash with Germany inevitable, or even likely. The alliance soon acquired an anchorage in the popular culture of both countries, through the festivities associated with royal and naval visits, through postcards, menus, cartoons and merchandising. But the divergences in French and Russian interests remained an obstacle to close collaboration: throughout the 1890s, French foreign ministers took the view that since the Russians were unwilling to fight for the return of Alsace-Lorraine, the alliance with St. Petersburg should impose only minimal obligations on France. The Russians, for their part, had no intention of allowing the alliance to alienate them from Germany; on the contrary, they saw it as placing them in a better position to maintain good relations with Berlin. As Vladimir Lamzdorf, chief assistant to the Russian foreign minister, put it in 1895, the purpose of the alliance was to consolidate Russia's independence of action and to guarantee French survival, while at the same time restraining her anti-German ambitions. During the first decade of the alliance, Russian policy-makers - chief among them the Tsar - were preoccupied not with Central or south-eastern Europe, but with the economic and political penetration of northern China. More importantly, the shared suspicion of Britain that had helped to bring about the Franco-Russian Alliance also prevented it - for a time at least - from acquiring an exclusively anti-German orientation. Russia's interest in securing informal control over Manchuria brought St. Petersburg into conflict with British China policy and ensured that relations with London would remain far more tense for the foreseeable future than those with Berlin..."32

...

---

31 Tsar Nicholas, in Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, p. 94.

32 Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2013, p. 131.

## 4. RUSSIA TURNS EAST

Apart from the alliance with France, the Tsar's most important foreign policy decision around the turn of the century was his turning towards the Far East, which was where the country's priorities now lay almost as much as in Europe...

But why was Russia so interested in the *Far East*? The highest motive, Christian mission, certainly played a part. Russia had been baptizing the Asiatic peoples within and beyond her frontiers for some centuries. And among the greatest achievements of the late Russian Empire were the missions of St. Makary (Nevsky) of the Altai, St. Nicholas of Japan, and St. Innocent of Alaska.

Not only churchmen wanted to bring true civilization to the Far East. Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov said that Russia's role as a great power "was manifested not only in the creation of a great empire but also in the fulfillment of the great cultural achievement of liberating the Balkan peoples and summoning them to free political life, and also bringing civil order and civilization to vast areas of northern and central Asia."<sup>33</sup>

Again, as Orlando Figes points out, Dostoyevsky had spoken of Russia's "civilizing mission in Asia": "Inspired by the conquest of Central Asia, Dostoevsky, too, advanced the notion that Russia's destiny was not in Europe, as had so long been supposed, but rather in the East. In 1881 he told the readers of his *Writer's Diary*: 'Russia is not only in Europe but in Asia as well... We must cast aside our servile fear that Europe will call us Asiatic barbarians and say that we are more Asian than European... This mistaken view of ourselves as exclusively Europeans and not Asians (and we have never ceased to be the latter)... has cost us very dearly over these two centuries, and we have paid for it by the loss of our spiritual independence... It is hard for us to turn away from our window on Europe; but it is a matter of our destiny... When we turn to Asia, with our new view of her, something of the same sort may happen to us as happened to Europe when America was discovered. With our push towards Asia we will have a renewed upsurge of spirit and strength... In Europe we were hangers-on and slaves [the words 'slave' and 'Slav' are etymologically identical], while in Asia we shall be the masters. In Europe we were Tatars, while in Asia we can be Europeans. Our mission, our civilizing mission in Asia will encourage our spirit and draw us on; the movement needs only to be started.' This quotation is a perfect illustration of the Russians' tendency to define their relations with the East in reaction to their self-esteem and status in the West. Dostoevsky was not actually arguing that Russia is an Asiatic culture; only that the Europeans thought of it as so. And likewise, his argument that Russia should embrace the East was not that it should seek to be an Asiatic force: but, on the contrary, that only in Asia could it find new energy to reassert its Europeaness. The root of Dostoevsky's turning to the East was the bitter resentment which he, like many Russians, felt at the West's betrayal of Russia's Christian cause in

---

<sup>33</sup> Sazonov, in Dominic Lieven, *Towards the Flame: Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 121; S. Fomin and T. Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem Khristovym* (Russia before the Second Coming of Christ), Moscow, 1994.

the Crimean War, when France and Britain had sided with the Ottomans against Russia to defend their own imperial interests. In the only published very he ever wrote (and the qualities of 'On the European Events of 1854' are such that one can see why this was so) Dostoevsky portrayed the Crimean War as the 'crucifixion of the Russian Christ'. But, as he warned the Western readers of his poem, Russia would arise and, when she did so, she would turn toward the East in her providential mission to Christianize the world.

*Unclear to you is her [Russia's] predestination!  
The East – is hers! To her a million generations  
Untiringly stretch out their hands...  
And the resurrection of the ancient East  
By Russia (so God had commanded) is drawing near.”<sup>34</sup>*

Tsar Nicholas, writes Montefiore, “saw the East as ripe for Russian expansion in the race for empire. China was disintegrating – though, locally, a resurgent Japan was keen to win its own empire. Just after Nicky’s accession, Japan had defeated China in the First Sino-Japanese War. In one of his earliest decisions, Nicky, advised by Prince Alexei Lobanov-Rostovsky, the elderly grand seigneur who became foreign minister after Giers died, helped force Japan to give up some of its gains.

“Kaiser Wilhelm encouraged Nicky ‘to cultivate the Asian Continent and defend Europe from the inroads of the Great Yellow Race’, while both powers would seize Chinese ports. Soon afterwards, Willy sent Nicky his sketch showing Christian warriors fighting ‘the Yellow Peril’.

“Finance Minister [Count Sergei] Witte, already the maestro of the Trans-Siberian Railway, planned to expand into Manchuria in northern China through his policy of *penetration pacifique*: he persuaded and bribed the Chinese to let Russia build an Eastern Chinese Railway into Manchuria. At almost the same time, Lobanov agreed with Japan to share influence in Korea...”<sup>35</sup>

However, Witte, a man of talent and energy, was distrusted by the conservatives. Thus N.V. Muraviev, the Minister of Justice said that Witte, “thanks to his wife Matilda, a pure-blooded Jewess, has concluded a close union with the Jews and is confusing Russia... In his hands are special organs of his secret police... He is preparing, if there were to be a change of reign, to take power into his own hands. He has... influence everywhere.”<sup>36</sup> Witte’s foreign policy was frankly secular and imperialist, being closer to that of General A.A. Kireev: “We, like any powerful nation, strive to expand our territory, our ‘legitimate’ moral, economic and political influence. This is in the order of things...”<sup>37</sup>

“As the main architect of Russia’s industrialization,” writes Richard Pipes, “[Witte] was eager to ensure foreign markets for her manufactured goods. In his judgement,

---

<sup>34</sup> Figs, *Natasha’s Dance*, London: Penguin, 2002, pp. 415-416.

<sup>35</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 501.

<sup>36</sup> Vladimir Gubanov (ed.), *Nikolai II-ij i Novie Mucheniki* (Nicholas II and the New Martyrs), St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 705.

<sup>37</sup> Kireev, in Niall Ferguson, *The War of the Worlds*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 70.

the most promising export outlets lay in the Far East, notably China. Witte also believed that Russia could provide a major transit route for cargo and passengers from Western Europe to the Pacific, a potential role of which she had been deprived by the completion in 1869 of the Suez Canal. With these objectives in mind, he persuaded Alexander III to authorize a railway across the immense expanse of Siberia. The Trans-Siberian, begun in 1886, was to be the longest railroad in the world. [Tsar] Nicholas, who sympathized with the idea of Russia's Far Eastern mission, endorsed and continued the undertaking. Russia's ambitions in the Far East received warm encouragement from Kaiser Wilhelm II, who sought to divert her attention from the Balkans, where Austria, Germany's principal ally, had her own designs.

"In the memoirs he wrote after retiring from public life, Witte claimed that while he had indeed supported a vigorous Russian policy in the Far East, he had in mind exclusively economic penetration, and that his plans were wrecked by irresponsible generals and politicians. This thesis, however, cannot be sustained in the light of the archival evidence that has surfaced since. Witte's plans for economic penetration of the Far East were conceived in the spirit of imperialism of the age: it called for a strong military presence, which was certain sooner or later to violate China's sovereignty and come into conflict with the imperial ambitions of Japan..."<sup>38</sup>

\*

Witte succeeded in persuading the Tsar to his point of view. Thus "before 1904," writes Dominic Lieven, "Nicholas's priorities in terms of foreign policy were clear. Unlike Russians of so-called pan-Slav sympathy, he did not believe that his country's manifest destiny lay in the Balkans, nor did he feel that Petersburg must necessarily support the Balkan Slavs just because they were people of the same race and religion. The Emperor was determined that, should the Ottoman Empire collapse, no other power must steal Constantinople, thereby barring Russia's route out of the Black Sea and assuming a dominant position in Asia Minor. To avoid such a possibility in 1896-7 he was even willing to contemplate very dangerous military action. But, above all, Nicholas was intent on developing Russia's position in Siberia and the Far East. Particularly after 1900, his personal imprint on Russia's Far Eastern policy became very important."<sup>39</sup>

Up to this time, Russia's eastward expansion had been largely peaceful, and had been accompanied by the one true justification of imperialism - missionary work. However, already before 1900 Russia had begun to act in relation to Far Eastern races in a similar spirit to the other imperialist western powers. Thus at the railway station in Khabarovsk, on the Siberian-Chinese border, "foreign visitors were reminded of British India: 'Instead, however, of British officers walking up and down with the confident stride of superiority while the Hindus ... give way... there were Russian officers clean and smart promenading while the... cowering and cringing... Koreans made room for them... The Russian... is the white, civilized Westerner, whose stride is that of the conqueror.'

---

<sup>38</sup> Pipes, *The Russian Revolution, 1899-1919*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, pp. 12-13.

<sup>39</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, p. 94.

“Chinese workers were indispensable when it came to the bigger jobs too, not least railway construction and shipbuilding. In 1900 nine out of ten workers in the Vladivostok shipyards were Chinese. Yet Russian administrators felt no compunction about expelling surplus Asians in order to maintain Russian dominance... As Nikolai Gondatti, the governor of Tomsk, explained in 1911: ‘My task is to make sure that there are lots of Russians and few yellows here...’<sup>40</sup>

Russia was now caught up in imperialist rivalry with other western powers. Thus when Germany took Kiaochow from China in 1898 (formally speaking, it was leased from China, but in effect this was a land grab), the Russians were furious. “Military action against Germany, the Russian government admitted to itself, was not really an option. The new foreign minister, Muraviev, proposed that instead Russia send warships to take over the nearby Chinese port of Port Arthur. Witte opposed the idea; sending ships and troops ran absolutely counter to his plan to create a sphere of influence in Manchuria by promising friendly diplomatic support and loans. It made his previous inroads look dishonest, it would be expensive, and it would instantly alert the British to Russia’s intentions. Initially Nicholas listened to Witte. But Muraviev went behind Witte’s back, asked for a private audience and convinced the emperor to send the ships because the ‘yellow races’ understood only force. The Russians sailed into Port Arthur weeks later. ‘Thank God we managed to occupy Port Arthur... without blood, quietly and almost amicably!’ Nicholas wrote to his brother George. ‘Of course, it was risky, but had we missed those docks now, it would be impossible later to kick out the English or the Japanese without a war. Yes, one has to look sharp, there on the Pacific Ocean lies the whole future of the development of Russia and at last we have a fully open warm water port...’<sup>41</sup>

Retribution for the unlawful seizure of Port Arthur would come soon... Meanwhile, in 1900, the Boxer Uprising against western influence broke out in China. Among the victims of the Uprising 222 Chinese Orthodox from the Russian Spiritual Mission in Peking were martyred...<sup>42</sup> The Boxers, backed by Chinese troops, “besieged the embassies in Peking and then spread along Russia’s Manchurian Railway. Nicky joined Germany, Britain, America and Japan in sending an expeditionary force to relieve the embassies, but he was quick to withdraw. ‘The happiest day of my life will be when we leave Peking and get out of that mess.’ Yet it was just starting: he had to protect ‘Witte’s kingdom’ and railway in Manchuria. Now the Boxers attacked the Russian headquarters in Harbin. In June, Nicholas sent 170,000 troops into Manchuria – the end of Witte’s *penetration pacifique*. ‘I’m glad,’ wrote [War Minister Alexei Nikolayevich] Kuropatkin, ‘this will give us an excuse for seizing Manchuria.’<sup>43</sup>

---

40 Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 49-50.

41 Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 209.

42 “The First Chinese Orthodox Martyrs”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 29, N 1, January-February, 1979, pp. 14-18; *The True Vine*, N 8, Winter, 1991, pp. 42-51.

43 “On July 11, 1900, the Russian government warned the Chinese ambassador in St. Petersburg that troops would have to be sent into Manchuria to protect Russian assets in the area. Three days later, hostilities broke out when the Russians ignored a Chinese threat to fire on any troopships that sailed down the River Amur. Within three months, all Manchuria was in the hands of 100,000 Russian troops. ‘We cannot stop halfway,’ wrote the Tsar. ‘Manchuria must be covered with our troops from the North to the South.’ Kuropatkin agreed: Manchuria must become ‘Russian property.’” (Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 50-51). (V.M.)

“This run of opportunistic successes – intervention against Japan in 1895, annexation of Port Arthur and now expansion into Manchuria – encouraged the imperial ambitions of Nicholas, who forced the Chinese to sign over Manchuria for many years and planned to seize Korea as well. ‘I don’t want Korea for myself,’ he explained, ‘but neither can I countenance the Japanese setting foot there. Were they to try, that would be a *casus belli*.’”

“These adventures, Witte rudely told the tsar, were ‘child’s play which will end disastrously’. Nicholas resented him and made his own private plans. As he told his secret adviser, his father’s friend Prince Meshchersky: ‘I’m coming to believe in myself.’”<sup>44</sup>

That Russia’s conquest of Manchuria was pure commercial imperialism is affirmed by Lieven: Russia poured troops into Manchuria “to protect Witte’s precious railway. Once in possession of Manchuria Petersburg was disinclined to retreat, at least until absolute security could be guaranteed to its railway and the Chinese would concede Russia’s economic domination of the province. This Peking was unwilling to do. Its stand was strongly backed by Britain, the USA and Japan, all of which demanded free access for foreign trade to Manchuria. The signatories of the Anglo-Japanese alliance, clearly directed against Russia, in January 1902 further stiffened Chinese resolve.”<sup>45</sup>

And so Russia entered the twentieth century dangerously isolated in the Far East.

Moreover, a related event had undermined her moral standing. During the Boxer rebellion, certain Russian military commanders in Blagoveshchensk on the Amur had driven some thousands of Chinese out of the city and into the river, which showed that Russia had begun to be infected by the racist and imperialist spirit of the pseudo-Christian West.

The Church now began to speak out. Thus Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), although a monarchist, “was profoundly saddened by this event and foretold that it was precisely there, in the Far East, that we were bound to await the special punishment of God. The text of this prophecy has unfortunately not been found, but Vladyka Anthony himself spoke about it in his sermon before the service at the conclusion of peace with Japan [in 1905]. Pointing to the fact that the unsuccessful war with Japan was God’s punishment for the apostasy of Russian society from the age-old foundations of Russian life, Vladyka Anthony said: ‘... I will speak about the fact that it is not only the traitors of the fatherland that are guilty before God, I will say what I said five years ago, when I foretold that it would be precisely there, in the Far East, that we had to expect a particular punishment of God. But I will speak not with evil joy, as do our enemies, but with sadness and with shame, as a Christian and a Russian priest. In Blagoveshchensk, on the Amur, five years ago, we permitted a cruel action to take place. Several thousand Chinese, who were in service to Russian citizens, for the general security of the latter, were deceitfully led out of the city and forced into the river, where they found inescapable death... It was not for this that the Lord opened up before us the confines of the Far East, from the Volga to the sea of Okhotsk,

---

<sup>44</sup> Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 505.

<sup>45</sup> Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 97.



so that we amazed the foreigners by our heartlessness. On the contrary, it is there, in the East, and not in the West, that lies the missionary and even messianic calling of our people. Russians did not want to understand this calling – not simple people, of course, but people who consider themselves enlightened, who, following the example of their western enlighteners, would not allow themselves the slightest rudeness in relation to any European rascal, but do not consider humble, straightforward and industrious inhabitants of the East even to be people. We were bound to reveal to them Christ, we were bound to show them the Russian breadth of spirit, Russian love of man, Russian trustfulness, but we showed them only animal self-preservation that does not stop before anything. This is our first guilt, for God even in the Old Testament imputed the sinful fall of a people's military commanders to the whole people.'"<sup>46</sup>

---

<sup>46</sup> Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago*, volume 2, New York, 1957, pp. 140-141.

## 5. THE HAGUE PEACE CONFERENCE

Notwithstanding his misguided policy in the Far East, Tsar Nicholas was a peacemaker by nature, and in 1898 he suggested that all nations come together in order to cut their military forces and submit to general arbitration on international disputes. "The preservation of universal peace," he wrote, "and the reduction in weapons that weigh on all the peoples is, in the present situation, a goal to which the efforts of all governments should strive." Military expenses were an ever-increasing burden on the peoples, disrupting their prosperity. "Hundreds of millions are spent on the acquisition of terrible means of destruction which, while considered the last word in science today, must lose all value tomorrow in view of new inventions... Thus as the weapons of each state grow, they answer less and less to the goals put forward by governments."

The Tsar's proposal was well-timed; for powerful peace movements were developing in many countries, and the burden of military expenditure was indeed increasing.<sup>47</sup> So the Hague Peace Conference was convened on May 18, 1899, and was attended by representatives of 26 nations. Several useful resolutions were passed by the 1899 conference and its follow-up in 1907. Thus, as Sir Richard Evans writes, they "laid down an important series of ground rules for limiting the damage caused by war. They banned the killing of prisoners and civilians, and declared that an occupying force was the guardian of the cultural heritage of the areas it conquered, and should not loot or destroy cultural artefacts."<sup>48</sup>

"However," writes O.F. Soloviev, "at the very beginning Germany made clear her lack of desire even to consider the central question of disarmament, in spite of the intentions of the other participants. Kaiser Wilhelm II made a sensational speech in Wiesbaden in which he declared that the best guarantee of peace was 'a sharpened sword'.<sup>49</sup> Then, for the sake of consensus, the remaining delegates, at the suggestion of the Frenchman L. Bourgeois (1851-1926), a former president of the council of ministers and a Mason, limited themselves to accepting an evasive formula on the

---

<sup>47</sup> Before his "Appeal to the Rulers" of 1898 the Tsar is reported to have read the massive book by the Warsaw financier Ivan Stanislavovich Bloch, *Is War Now Possible?*, which was uncannily accurate in his forecast of the destructive consequences of a major European war (Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914-18*, London: Penguin, 1998, pp. 8-11).

<sup>48</sup> Evans, *The Pursuit of Power. Europe 1815-1914*, London: Penguin, 2017, p. 687.

<sup>49</sup> "I'll go along with the conference comedy," said the Kaiser, "but I'll keep my dagger at my side during the waltz." For once his uncle in Britain agreed with him. "It is the greatest nonsense and rubbish I ever heard of," said Edward. Germany went to the conference intending to wreck it if it could do so without taking all the blame. Its delegation was headed by Georg zu Münster, the German ambassador to Paris, who strongly disliked the whole idea of the conference, and included Karl von Stengel, a professor from Munich, who published a pamphlet shortly before the proceedings started in which he condemned disarmament, arbitration and the whole peace movement. The directions that Holstein in the German Foreign Office gave the delegates said: "For the state there is aim superior to the protection of its interests... In the case of great powers these will not necessarily be identical with the maintenance of peace, but rather with the violation of the enemy and competitor by an appropriately combined group of stronger states."

"One member of the German delegation, a military officer, made an unfortunate impression when he gave an exceedingly belligerent speech in which he boasted that his country could easily afford its defence expenditure and that furthermore every German saw military service 'as a sacred and patriotic duty, to the performance of which he owes his existence, his prosperity, his future.'" (Margaret Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, pp. 279-280, 281) (V.M.)

extreme desirability of 'limiting the military burdens which now weigh on the world for the sake of improving both the material and the moral prosperity of mankind'.

"After this the attention of delegates was concentrated on the third commission, which discussed problems of arbitration under the presidency of the same Bourgeois, with [Jacques] Decan [a member of the Grand Orient of Belgium], as secretary. As a result of these efforts, which were supported by other governments, success was obtained in paralysing the attempts of the Germans completely to exclude the application of arbitration procedures in the regulation of conflicts. In the preamble to the convention on 'the peaceful resolution of international conflicts', which was unanimously accepted, it was noted that the conference had been convened on the initiative of 'the most august monarch', Nicholas II, whose thoughts it was necessary to strengthen by an agreement on the principles of right and justice, on which 'the security of states and the prosperity of peoples' rested. The first article of the first section 'On the Preservation of Universal Peace' made the following provision: 'With the aim of averting, if possible, the turning to force in the mutual relations between states, the signatory powers agree to apply all their efforts to guarantee a peaceful resolution of international disagreements.'... Decan in his report to the commission was apparently the first to use the term 'League of Nations' to apply to the union of state approving of similar documents. Later the term was more and more widely used long before the creation, after the First World War, of an international organization of that name."<sup>50</sup>

The example provided by the Tsar at The Hague was infectious. Thus "in 1907, on the initiative of the President of the United States, Theodore Roosevelt, a conference of the world's then forty-four nations, including all the great empires, met to discuss outlawing aerial bombardment. Twenty-seven of the nations agreed, including the United States and Britain. Germany was one of the seventeen that wanted to retain the right to make war from the air. All forty-four powers did agree, however, to limit aerial bombardment to military targets. These were defined as mostly naval dockyards and military installations. By implication, residential and built-up areas would not be bombed..."<sup>51</sup>

Even these limited agreements were not fulfilled, being violated by the zeppelin airships that blitzed London in 1915. As J.R. Nyquist observes, somewhat caustically: "In 1899 and 1907 Czar Nicholas II put together conferences at the Hague to prohibit dum-dum bullets, asphyxiating gases, and the launching of projectiles or explosives from the air. Within two decades these agreements proved their worthlessness, especially during World War One. In the course of the war, Czar Nicholas and his entire family were murdered..."<sup>52</sup>

As for the more ambitious idea of "universal peace" brought about by an international arbitration procedure or "League of Nations", this was a non-starter. None of the Great Powers – including Russia – was willing to give up sovereignty in

---

<sup>50</sup> Soloviev, *Masonstvo v Mirovoj Politike* (Masonry in World Politics), Moscow: Rosspen, 1998, pp. 33-34.

<sup>51</sup> Martin Gilbert, *Challenge to Civilization: A History of the Twentieth Century, 1952-1999*, London: HarperCollins, 1999, p. 910.

<sup>52</sup> Nyquist, *Origins of the Fourth World War*, Chula Vista, Co.: Black Forest Press, 1999, p. 99.

this area. Already in 1899, the tsar found himself having to fend off some undesirable suggestions on arms limitation<sup>53</sup>, and within six months he had evidently cooled towards the idea of arbitration – he sent large numbers of troops into Manchuria without presenting his dispute with China to the court. Nor did the British think of arbitration before launching their war against the Boers. The fact was, “no European government would accept the idea of arms reduction.”<sup>54</sup>

It was not only the nationalists that hindered the attempts of tsars and statesmen to stop the arms race and prevent war. Socialist workers also consistently placed national pride above the international solidarity of the working class. Thus the Second International’s numerous attempts to force governments to reduce armaments and stop fighting were undermined by the conflicting nationalisms of French and German workers, Bulgarian and Serb workers, Austrian and Italian and Czech workers.<sup>55</sup>

Only the Russian socialists appeared to have no difficulty in placing class above nation – perhaps, paradoxically, because so many of them were Jews... On the eve of the First World War, the assassination of the great French socialist and internationalist Jean Jaurès symbolised the failure of socialism in the face of nationalism. But when the nationalists had exhausted themselves, the path would be open for the only completely consistent internationalist – because he hated all nations equally – Vladimir Lenin....

Especially resistant to any idea of disarmament were the Serbs. In 1898 a Serb journalist told the British ambassador: “The idea of disarmament does not please our people in any way. The Serbian race is split up under seven or eight different foreign governments, and we cannot be satisfied so long as this state of things lasts. We live in the hope of getting something for ourselves out of the general conflagration, whenever it takes place.”

As Niall Ferguson writes, “this was Serbian foreign policy: a kind of nationalist version of Lenin’s dictum: ‘the worse, the better.’”<sup>56</sup>

The Tsar’s initiative was a noble and well-intentioned one, as the American President Warren Harding officially acknowledged in 1921; and it was not without long-term consequences that are discernible today. But the Tsar was like a lamb among wolves in the world of international politics...

\*

---

<sup>53</sup> Thus Miranda Carter writes: “When, a couple of months before the Hague peace conference took place in May 1899, the British ambassador in St. Petersburg raised the issue of the four new battleships Russia had commissioned, Nicholas replied that it wasn’t the right moment for ‘exchanging views about a mutual curtailment of naval programmes’. By then, the tsar’s enthusiasm had waned when, according to the British Russia expert Donald Mackenzie Wallace, it had been pointed out to him that the proposed alternative to war – an arbitration court – would undermine the intrinsic superiority of the Great Powers, since small countries would have just as much muscle as big ones; and that there were thirty outstanding disputes with other Asian powers which Russia would almost certainly lose in arbitration. Nor did he like being hailed as a hero by European socialists” (*The Three Emperors*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 252).

<sup>54</sup> Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 252.

<sup>55</sup> Macmillan, *op. cit.*, chapter 10.

<sup>56</sup> Ferguson, *The Pity of War*, London: Penguin, 1999, p. 147.

Paul Gilbert writes: “Simultaneously with the discussion of the creation of the League of Nations at the beginning of the 20th century, proposals were raised for the establishment of an international financial body. Its functions were to include the regulation of financial disputes between different countries. It was then that the proposal to create the US Federal Reserve appeared. From the earliest days of its existence, this financial institution was essentially an international private bank, which was required to have its own authorized capital, denominated in gold. Today, the US dollar is not backed by either gold or the mass of commodities in the United States. But in 1913 everything was different. At the time when the FRS was created, the dollar, like the ruble, was obliged, if necessary, to be exchanged for an equivalent in gold. Not surprisingly, the US Federal Reserve had large reserves of gold as its charter capital.

“Under US law, however, American banks involved in the creation of the FRS, could not utilize their gold as authorized capital. It was assumed that it would be provided by those countries, for the settlement of financial disputes between which the FRS was created. The major world powers showed little interest in the proposal to finance the authorized capital of the FRS with their own gold and foreign exchange reserves. This was done only by Emperor Nicholas II from [Russia's vast gold reserves](#). The contribution of the Russian Empire to the US Federal Reserve amounted to 88.8% of its authorized capital in gold! At the same time, Russia was supposed to receive 4% of the invested funds annually, as dividends. However, soon after the establishment of the FRS, the 1917 Russian Revolution broke out, and then the Imperial Family were murdered by order of the new Bolshevik regime.

“The USSR, refused to recognize the debts of Tsarist Russia, and, accordingly, did not have any rights to its income from foreign assets...”<sup>57</sup>

---

<sup>57</sup> Gilbert, “How Nicholas II Created the World’s Largest Bank”, November 25, 2021, <https://tsarnicholas.org/2021/11/25/how-nicholas-ii-created-the-worlds-largest-bank/#like-8390>

## 6. OPTINA DESERT AND THE FUTURE OF RUSSIA

The great strength of Russia lay neither in her armies, nor in her physical resources, nor in the sheer numbers of her people, but in the holiness of her saints. It was this that merited her the title of “Holy Russia”. And the holiness of Russia was concentrated especially in her monasteries, of which the most famous was Optina.

In spite of the suppression of the Decembrist rebellion by Tsar Nicholas I in 1825, revolutionary ideas and the poison of westernism had been spreading through Russian society ever since. And the liberalizing reforms of Alexander II, regardless of their intrinsic merits or faults, brought Russia closer to the West. At the same time, however, a revival of the Eastern Orthodox teaching and practice of eldership (*starchestvo*) and hesychasm had also been taking place, whose aim was exactly the opposite of the revolution. It was the bringing of men into submission to the all-holy Will of God and the lawful authorities that are established by God. The fount and origin of this revival was the great monastic founder St. Paisius Velichkovsky, several of whose Russian disciples spread the word north from Romania, where his monastic foundations were situated, into Russia. Besides his personal influence on his disciples, Paisius also translated the *Philokalia*, a collection of patristic texts on prayer and the spiritual life, into Slavonic; the first edition was published with the help of Metropolitan Gabriel of St. Petersburg in 1793.

Ivan Mikhailovich Kontzevich has identified the essence of eldership, or *starchestvo*, with the gift of prophecy<sup>58</sup>; and the gifts of clairvoyance, of foreseeing the future and accurately assessing the present that we associate with Old Testament prophecy are certainly part of this New Testament charisma. But a study of the lives of the holy elders and their discussions with the thousands of people of all classes, ages and conditions who poured into Optina seeking advice and consolation shows that eldership was much more than that. It can be summarized as the knowledge of the will of God for every individual supplicant and the ability to guide him to accept and fulfill that will to the end of eternal salvation. The future confessor of the faith E. Poselyanin described it as follows: “The business of saving souls is a difficult one. The unceasing struggle with self, that is, the struggle of the spirit with a nature infected with original sin, and a continuous watch over self, necessary for success in this struggle, are not yet enough. A vast knowledge of human nature and its relations with the external world, of the spiritual benefit and harm which may be derived from contact with the world, and of the way by which grace is obtained is needed. To aid the soul in its exercises, and to preserve its balance, continuous guidance is necessary. Such guidance makes uninterrupted progress toward perfection possible, without the spiritual fluctuations and vicissitudes common to people who have no guide. There is needed someone who knows the soul, its dispositions, abilities and sins, a person with spiritual experience and wisdom who can guide the soul, encouraging it in times of laziness and sadness and restraining it in times of immoderate elation, one who knows how to humble pride, foresee danger and treat sin with penance. Quick and safe is the way of the man who has subjected himself to such guidance because he practices then the great virtues: obedience and humility. Revelation of thoughts, which is the condition *sine qua non* of

---

<sup>58</sup> Kontzevich, *Optina Pustyn' i ee Vremia* (Optina Desert and its Time), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1977.

*starchestvo*, is a powerful means of progress, terrible to the enemy of our salvation. The unrevealed thought troubles and depresses the soul; revealed, it falls away and does no harm.”<sup>59</sup>

“The path of guidance by an elder,” wrote Fr. Clement Sederholm in 1875, “has been recognized throughout all ages of Christianity by all the great desert dwellers, fathers and teachers of the Church as being the most reliable and surest of all that are known to the Church of Christ. Eldership blossomed in the ancient Egyptian and Palestinian communities; it was afterwards planted on Athos, and from the East it was brought to Russia. But in the last centuries, in view of the general decline of faith and asceticism, it has gradually fallen into neglect, so that many have even begun to reject it. In the times of St. Nilus of Sora, the way of eldership was already scorned by many; and by the end of the past century [that is, the 18th] it had become almost entirely unknown. For the restoration of this form of monastic life, which is founded upon the teaching of the Holy Fathers, much was done by the famous and great Archimandrite of the Moldavian monasteries, Paisius Velichkovsky. With great labor he gathered together on Athos and translated from Greek into Slavonic the works of the ascetic writers, which set forth the patristic teaching on monastic life in general and the spiritual relationship to an elder in particular. At the same time in Niamets and in the other Moldavian monasteries under his rule, he exhibited in practice the application of this teaching. One of the disciples of Archimandrite Paisius, Schemamonk Theodore, who lived in Moldavia almost 20 years, transmitted this teaching to Hiero-schemamonk Father Leonid and through him and his disciple, the Elder Hiero-schemamonk Macarius, it was planted in the Optina monastery.

“The abbot of Optina at that time, Fr. Moses, and his brother, the Skete superior Fr. Anthony, who laid the beginning of their monastic life in the Bryansk forest in the spirit of the ancient great desert dwellers, wished for a long time to introduce eldership into the Optina Monastery. By themselves, however, they could not fulfill this task; they were burdened by many difficult and complicated occupations in conjunction with the development and governance of the Monastery. Furthermore, although in general the combining of the duties of the abbacy and eldership in one person was possible in the ancient times of simplicity of character, as we have already mentioned, in our times it is very hard and even impossible. However, when Fr. Leonid settled in Optina, Fr. Moses, knowing and taking advantage of his experience in the spiritual life, entrusted all the brothers who live in the Optina Monastery to his guidance, as well as all others who would come to live in the Monastery.

“From that time the entire order of the monastic life at the Optina monastery changed. Without the counsel and blessing of the Elder nothing of importance was undertaken in the Monastery. Every day, especially in the evening, the brotherhood came to his cell with their spiritual needs. Each one hastened to reveal before the Elder how he had transgressed during the course of the day in deed, word or thought, in order to ask for counsel for the resolution of problems that had arisen, consolation in some sorrow that he had met, help and strength in the internal battle with the passions

---

<sup>59</sup> Posleyanin, *Russkie Podvizhniki 19-go veka* (Russian Ascetics of the 19th Century), St. Petersburg, 1910, pp. 221-222.

and with the invisible enemies of our salvation. The Elder received all with fatherly love and offered all a word of experience instruction and consolation.”<sup>60</sup>

Nor was it only monks who sought the instruction of the Optina elders: people from all walks of life from generals to peasants poured in their thousands through the gates of the monastery. The influence of the Optina elders, together with that of other Russian elders from other great monasteries in the same tradition such as Valaam, Sarov, Glinsk, Kiev and the Rossikon (St. Panteleimon’s on Mount Athos), and holy bishops such as Theophan the Recluse, Ignaty Brianchaninov, Innocent of Kherson, Philaret of Kiev and Philaret of Moscow, constituted a powerful spiritual antithesis to the influence of westernism in nineteenth-century Russia. Nor was Optina’s significance confined to pre-revolutionary Russia: many of the confessor bishops and priests of the early Soviet period had been trained by the Optina elders. No less than fourteen Optina *startsya* or elders were glorified as saints in 1992. The most recent was St. Nektary, who died in exile from the Sovietized monastery in 1928. After the first two great *startsya*, Lev (Nagolkin) and Makary (Ivanov), the most famous and influential was Macary’s disciple Ambrose (Grenkov). St. Lev’s disciples included the famous Bishop of the Black Sea and the Caucasus, St. Ignaty Brianchaninov. St. Makary of Optina had a profound influence on Nikolai Gogol and the Slavophile writer Ivan Kireyevsky, while St. Ambrose’s influence would extend wider still, including the famous writers Tolstoy and Dostoyevsky.

Among the spiritual sicknesses coming from the West and identified by the holy elders was indifferentism, what we would now call ecumenism, that is, an increased tolerance for Christian heresies to the extent of placing them on a par with Orthodoxy. The first ecumenical dialogue with the American Episcopalians had begun in the time of Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow, and while the Church leaders stood firm in Orthodoxy, the spirit of Anglican indifferentism was infectious.

Thus in the 1850s St. Ambrose of Optina wrote: “Now many educated people bear only the name of Orthodox, but in actual fact completely adhere to the morals and customs of foreign lands and foreign beliefs. Without any torment of conscience they violate the regulations of the Orthodox Church concerning fasts and gather together at balls and dances on the eves of great Feasts of the Lord, when Orthodox Christians should be in church in prayerful vigil. This would be excusable if such gatherings took place on the eves of ordinary days, but not on the eves of Feasts, and especially great Feasts. Are not such acts and deeds clearly inspired by our enemy, the destroyer of souls, contrary to the commandment of the Lord which says: carry out your ordinary affairs for six days, but the seventh (festal) day must be devoted to God in pious service? How have Orthodox Christians come to such acts hated by God? Is it not for no other reason than indiscriminate communion with believers of other faiths?...”

In 1863 St. Theophan the Recluse described how western indifferentism had begun already centuries before: “Have you heard of the indulgences of the Pope of Rome? Here is what they are: special treatment and leniency, which he gives, defying the law of Christ. And what is the result? From all of this, the West is corrupt in faith and in

---

<sup>60</sup> Sederholm, *Elder Leonid of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1990, pp. 49-52.



its way of life, and is now getting lost in its disbelief and in the unrestrained life with its indulgences.

“The Pope changed many doctrines, spoiled all the sacraments, nullified the canons concerning the regulation of the Church and the correction of morals. Everything has begun going contrary to the will of the Lord, and has become worse and worse.

“Then along came Luther, a smart man, but stubborn. He said, The Pope changed everything as he wanted, why shouldn't I do the same? He started to modify and to re-modify everything in his own way, and in this way established the new Lutheran faith, which only slightly resembles what the Lord commanded and the holy apostles delivered to us.

“After Luther came the philosophers. And they in turn said, Luther has established himself a new faith, supposedly based on the Gospel, though in reality based on his own way of thinking. Why, then, don't we also compose doctrines based on our own way of thinking, completely ignoring the Gospel? They then started rationalizing, and speculating about God, the world and man, each in his own way. And they mixed up so many doctrines that one gets dizzy just counting them.

“Now the westerners have the following views: Believe what you think best, live as you like, satisfy whatever captivates your soul. This is why they do not recognize any law or restriction and do not abide by God's Word. Their road is wide, all obstacles removed. But the broad way leads to perdition, according to what the Lord says...”<sup>61</sup>

And again he wrote: “'If any man shall say to you, here is Christ; or lo, He is there, believe him not.' (Mark 13.21). Christ the Lord, our Saviour, having established upon earth the Holy Church, is well pleased to abide in it as its Head, Enlivener and Ruler. Christ is here, in our Orthodox Church, and He is not in any other church. Do not search for Him elsewhere, for you will not find Him. Therefore, if someone from a non-Orthodox assemblage comes to you and begins to suggest that they have Christ - do not believe it. If someone says to you, 'We have an apostolic community, and we have Christ,' do not believe them. The Church founded by the Apostles abides on the earth - it is the Orthodox Church, and Christ is in it. A community established only yesterday cannot be apostolic, and Christ is not in it. If you hear someone say, 'Christ is speaking in me,' while he shuns the [Orthodox] Church, does not venerate or know its pastors, and is not sanctified by the Sacraments, do not believe him. Christ is not in him: rather, another spirit is in him, one that appropriates the name of Christ in order to divert people from Christ the Lord and from His Holy Church. Neither believe anyone who suggests even some small thing alien to the [Orthodox] Church. Recognize all such people to be instruments of seducing spirits and lying preachers of falsehood.”<sup>62</sup>

The danger of religious indifferentism was especially noted by St. Ignaty Brianchaninov, a disciple of the Optina Elder Lev: "You say, 'heretics are Christians just the same.' Where did you take that from? Perhaps someone or other calling himself a Christian while knowing nothing of Christ, may in his extreme ignorance decide to

---

61 St. Theophan, *Sermon on the Sunday after Nativity*, December 29, 1863.

62 St. Theophan, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year*, Moscow, 2010, p. 40.

acknowledge himself as the same kind of Christian as heretics, and fail to distinguish the holy Christian faith from those offspring of the curse, blasphemous heresies. Quite otherwise, however, do true Christians reason about this. A whole multitude of saints has received a martyr's crown, has preferred the most cruel and prolonged tortures, prison, exile, rather than agree to take part with heretics in their blasphemous teaching.

"The Ecumenical Church has always recognised heresy as a mortal sin; she has always recognised that the man infected with the terrible malady of heresy is spiritually dead, a stranger to grace and salvation, in communion with the devil and the devil's damnation. Heresy is a sin of the mind; it is more a diabolic than a human sin. It is the devil's offspring, his invention; it is an impiety that is near idol-worship. Every heresy contains in itself the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, whether against the dogma or the action of the Holy Spirit."<sup>63</sup>

"The reading of the Fathers clearly convinced me that salvation in the bosom of the Orthodox Russian Church was undoubted, something of which the religions of Western Europe are deprived since they have not preserved whole either the dogmatic or the moral teaching of the Church of Christ from her beginning."<sup>64</sup>

St. Ignaty was especially fierce against the heresy of Papism: "Papism is the name of a heresy that seized the West and from which there came, like the branches from a tree, various Protestant teachings. Papism ascribes to the Pope the properties of Christ and thereby rejects Christ. Some western writers have almost openly pronounced this rejection, saying that the rejection of Christ is a much smaller sin than the rejection of the Pope. The Pope is the idol of the papists; he is their divinity. Because of this terrible error, the Grace of God has left the papists; they have given themselves over to Satan – the inventor and father of all heresies, among which is Papism. In this condition of the darkening [of the mind], they have distorted several dogmas and sacraments, while they have deprived the Divine Liturgy of its essential significance by casting out of it the invocation of the Holy Spirit and the blessing of the offerings of bread and wine, at which they are transmuted into the Body and Blood of Christ... No heresy expresses so openly and blatantly their immeasurable pride, their cruel disdain for men and their hatred of them."

St. Ignaty was pessimistic about the future of Russia: "It is evident that the apostasy from the Orthodox faith is general among the people. One is an open atheist, another is a deist, another a Protestant, another an indifferentist, another a schismatic. There is no healing or cure for this plague."

"What has been foretold in the Scriptures is being fulfilled: a cooling towards the faith has engulfed both our people and all the countries in which Orthodoxy was maintained up to now."

---

<sup>63</sup> Brianchaninov, *Pis'ma*, no. 283; translated as "Concerning the Impossibility of Salvation for the Heterodox and Heretics", *The Orthodox Word*, March-April, 1965, and *Orthodox Life*, January-February, 1991.

<sup>64</sup> Brianchaninov, "Lamentation", in *The Orthodox Word*, January-February, 2003, p. 20.

"Religion is falling in the people in general. Nihilism is penetrating into the merchant class, from where it has not far to go to the peasants. In most peasants a decisive indifference to the Church has appeared, and a terrible moral disorder."<sup>65</sup>

"The people is being corrupted, and the monasteries are also being corrupted," said the same holy bishop to the future Tsar Alexander II in 1866, one year before his own death.<sup>66</sup>

Metropolitan Philaret of Moscow feared "storm-clouds coming from the West", and advised that rizas should not be made for icons, because "the time is approaching when ill-intentioned people will remove the rizas from the icons."<sup>67</sup>

Another pessimist was St. Makary of Optina, who wrote: "The heart flows with blood, in pondering our beloved fatherland Russia, our dear mother. Where is she racing headlong, what is she seeking? What does she await? Education increases but it is pseudo-education, it deceives itself in its hope. The young generation is not being nourished by the milk of the doctrine of our Holy Orthodox Church but has been poisoned by some alien, vile, venomous spirit, and how long can this continue? Of course, in the decrees of God's Providence it has been written what must come to pass, but this has been hidden from us in His unfathomable wisdom..."<sup>68</sup>

Visions from above seemed to confirm that apocalyptic times were approaching. Thus in 1871 the Over-Procurator of the Holy Synod, Count Alexander Petrovich Tolstoy, had the following vision: "It was as if I were in my own house standing in the entrance-hall. Beyond was a room in which on the ledge between the windows there was a large icon of the God of Sabaoth that gave out such blinding light that from the other room (the entrance-hall) it was impossible to look at it. Still further in was a room in which there were Protopriest Matthew Alexandrovich Konstantinovsky and the reposed Metropolitan Philaret. And this room was full of books; along the walls from ceiling to floor there were books; on the long tables there were piles of books; and while I certainly had to go into this room, I was held back by fear, and in terror, covering my face with my hand, I passed through the first room and, on entering the next room, I saw Protopriest Matthew Alexandrovich dressed in a simple black cassock; on his head was a skull-cap; in his hands was an unbent book, and he motioned me with his head to find a similar book and open it. At the same time the metropolitan, turning the pages of this book said: 'Rome, Troy, Egypt, Russia, the Bible.' I saw that in my book 'Bible' was written in very heavy lettering. Suddenly there was a noise and I woke up in great fear. I thought a lot about what it could all mean. My dream seemed terrible to me - it would have been better to have seen nothing. Could I not ask those experienced in the spiritual life concerning the meaning of this vision in sleep? But an inner voice explained the dream even to me myself. However, the explanation was so terrible that I did not want to agree with it."

---

<sup>65</sup> Brianchaninov, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, pp. 339, 340.

<sup>66</sup> *Zhizneopisanie Sviatitelia Ignatia Brianchaninova*, p. 485. In the last decade of his life the holy hierarch composed notes for an agenda of a Council of the Russian Church that would tackle the grave problems facing her. See <http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=page&pid=1968>.

<sup>67</sup> Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 349.

<sup>68</sup> St. Makary, *Letter 165 to Monastics*, in Fr. Leonid Kavelin, *Elder Macarius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1995, pp. 309-310.

St. Ambrose of Optina gave the following interpretation of this vision: "He who was shown this remarkable vision in sleep, and who then heard the very significant words, very probably received the explanation of what he had seen and heard through his guardian angel, since he himself recognized that an inner voice explained the meaning of the dream to him. However, since we have been asked, we also shall give our opinion..."

"...The words 'Rome, Troy, Egypt' may have the following significance. Rome at the time of the Nativity of Christ was the capital of the world, and, from the beginning of the patriarchate, had the primacy of honour; but because of love of power and deviation from the truth she was later rejected and humiliated. Ancient Troy and Egypt were notable for the fact that they were punished for their pride and impiety - the first by destruction, and the second by various punishments and the drowning of Pharaoh with his army in the Red Sea. But in Christian times, in the countries where Troy was located there were founded the Christian patriarchates of Antioch and Constantinople, which flourished for a long time, embellishing the Orthodox Church with their piety and right dogmas; but later, according to the inscrutable destinies of God, they were conquered by barbarians - the Muslims, and up to now have borne this heavy slavery, which restricts the freedom of Christian piety and right belief. And in Egypt, together with the ancient impiety, there was from the first times of Christianity such a flowering of piety that the deserts were populated by tens of thousands of monastics, not to speak of the great numbers of pious laity from whom they came. But then, by reason of moral licentiousness, there followed such an impoverishment of Christian piety in that country that at a certain time in Alexandria the patriarch remained with only one priest.

"... After the three portentous names 'Rome, Troy, Egypt', the name of 'Russia' was also mentioned - Russia, which at the present time is counted as an independent Orthodox state, but where the elements of foreign heterodoxy and impiety have already penetrated and taken root among us and threaten us with the same sufferings as the above-mentioned countries have undergone.

"Then there comes the word 'Bible'. No other state is mentioned. This may signify that if in Russia, too, because of the disdain of God's commandments and the weakening of the canons and decrees of the Orthodox Church and for other reasons, piety is impoverished, then there must immediately follow the final fulfillment of that which is written at the end of the Bible, in the Apocalypse of St. John the Theologian.

"He who saw this vision correctly observed that the explanation given him by an inner voice was terrible. Terrible will be the Second Coming of Christ and terrible the last judgement of the world. But not without terrors will also be the period before that when the Antichrist will reign, as it is said in the Apocalypse: 'And in those days shall men seek death, and shall not find it; and death shall flee from them' (9.6). The Antichrist will come during a period of anarchy, as the apostle says: 'until he that restraineth be taken away from the midst' (II Thessalonians 2.7), that is, when the powers that be no longer exist."<sup>69</sup>

---

<sup>69</sup> St. Ambrose of Optina, *Pis'ma* (Letters), Sergiev Posad, 1908, part 1, pp. 21-22.

\*

St. Ambrose's identification of "him that restraineth" the coming of the Antichrist with the Orthodox Autocracy had long roots in the patristic writings. St. John Chrysostom, Blessed Theophylact and others identified him with the Roman emperors, especially the Christian Roman emperors, whose successors, as being the emperors of "the Third Rome", Russia, were the Russian Tsars. Metropolitan Philaret had restated the political teaching of Orthodoxy with exceptional eloquence in the previous reign. And now St. Theophan the Recluse wrote: "The Tsar's authority, having in its hands the means of restraining the movements of the people and itself relying on Christian principles, does not allow the people to fall away from them, but will restrain it. And since the main work of the Antichrist will be to turn everyone away from Christ, he will not appear as long as the Tsar is in power. The latter's authority will not let him show himself, but will prevent him from acting in his own spirit. That is what he that restraineth is. When the Tsar's authority falls, and the peoples everywhere acquire self-government (republics, democracies), then the Antichrist will have room to manoeuvre. It will not be difficult for Satan to train voices urging apostasy from Christ, as experience showed in the time of the French revolution. Nobody will give a powerful 'veto' to this. A humble declaration of faith will not be tolerated. And so, when these arrangements have been made everywhere, arrangements which are favourable to the exposure of antichristian aims, then the Antichrist will also appear. Until that time he waits, and is restrained."

St. Theophan wrote: "When these principles [Orthodoxy, Autocracy and Nationality] weaken or are changed, the Russian people will cease to be Russian. It will then lose its sacred three-coloured banner." And again: "Our Russians are beginning to decline from the faith: one part is completely and in all ways falling into unbelief, another is falling into Protestantism, a third is secretly weaving together beliefs in such a way as to bring together spiritism and geological madness with Divine Revelation. Evil is growing: evil faith and lack of faith are raising their head: faith and Orthodoxy are weakening. Will we come to our senses? O Lord! Save and have mercy on Orthodox Russia from Thy righteous and fitting punishment!"<sup>70</sup>

And again, he wrote: "Do you know what bleak thoughts I have? And they are not unfounded. I meet people who are numbered among the Orthodox, who in spirit are Voltaireans, naturalists, Lutherans, and all manner of free-thinkers. They have studied all the sciences in our institutions of higher education. They are not stupid nor are they evil, but with respect to the Church they are good for nothing. Their fathers and mothers were pious; the ruin came in during the period of their education outside of the family homes. Their memories of childhood and their parents' spirit keeps them within certain bounds. But what will their own children be like? What will restrain them within the needed bounds? I draw the conclusion from this that in one or two generations our Orthodoxy will dry up."

As St. Ignaty Brianchaninov wrote: "We are helpless to arrest this apostasy. Impotent hands will have no power against it and nothing more will be required than

---

<sup>70</sup> St. Theophan, in Fomin and Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem*, 1994, vol. I, pp. 346, 347.

the attempt to withhold it. The spirit of the age will reveal the apostasy. Study it, if you wish to avoid it, if you wish to escape this age and the temptation of its spirits. One can suppose, too, that the institution of the Church which has been tottering for so long will fall terribly and suddenly. Indeed, no-one is able to stop or prevent it. The present means to sustain the institutional Church are borrowed from the elements of the world, things inimical to the Church, and the consequence will be only to accelerate its fall. Nevertheless, the Lord protects the elect and their limited number will be filled.”<sup>71</sup>

---

<sup>71</sup> Sokolov, L.A. *Episkop Ignatij Brianchaninov* (Bishop Ignaty Brianchaninov), Kiev, 1915, vol. 2, p. 250. Italics mine (V.M.).

## 7. THE MYSTERY OF INIQUITY

Niall Ferguson writes: “Though living standards were almost certainly rising (if the revenues from excise duties are any guide), this was no cure for a pervasive sense of grievance, as any student of the French *ancien régime* could have explained. A disgruntled peasantry, a sclerotic aristocracy, a radicalized but impotent intelligentsia and a capital city with a large and volatile populace: these were precisely the combustible ingredients the historian Alexis de Tocqueville had identified in 1780s France. A Russian revolution of rising expectations was in the making...”<sup>72</sup>

“Russian society,” writes Orlando Figes, “had been activated and politicized by the famine crisis [of 1891], its social conscience had been stung, and the old bureaucratic system had been discredited. Public mistrust of the government did not diminish once the crisis had passed, but strengthened as the representatives of civil society continued to press for a greater role in the administration of the nation’s affairs. The famine, it was said, had proved the culpability and incompetence of the old regime, and there was now a growing expectation that wider circles of society would have to be drawn into its work if another catastrophe was to be avoided. The *zemstvos*, which had spent the past decade battling to expand their activities in the face of growing bureaucratic opposition, were now strengthened by widespread support from the liberal public for their work in agronomy, public health and education. The liberal Moscow merchants and industrialists, who had rallied behind the relief campaign, now began to question the government’s policies of industrialization, which seemed so ruinous for the peasantry, the main buyers of their manufactures. From the middle of the 1890s they too supported the various projects of the *zemstvos* and municipal bodies to revive the rural economy. Physicians, teachers and engineers, who had all been forced to organize themselves as a result of their involvement in the relief campaign, now began to demand more professional autonomy and influence over public policy; and when they failed to make any advances they began to campaign for political reforms. In the press, in the ‘thick journals’, in the universities, and in learned and philanthropic societies, the debates on the causes of the famine – and on reforms needed to prevent its recurrence – continued to rage throughout the 1890s, long after the immediate crisis had passed.

“The socialist opposition, which had been largely dormant in the 1880s, sprang back into life with a renewed vigour as a result of these debates. There was a revival of the Populist movement (later rechristened Neo-Populism), culminating in 1901 with the establishment of the Socialist Revolutionary Party. Under the leadership of Viktor Chernov (1873-1952), a law graduate from Moscow University who had been imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress for his role in the student movement, it embraced the new Marxist sociology whilst still adhering to the Populist belief that all the workers and peasants alike – what it called the ‘labouring people’ – were united by their poverty and their opposition to the regime. Briefly, then, in the wake of the famine, there was growing unity between the Marxists and the Neo-Populists as they put aside their differences about the development of capitalism (which the SRs now accepted as a fact) and concentrated on the democratic struggle...

---

<sup>72</sup> Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 14-15.



“Marxism as a social science was fast becoming the national creed: it alone seemed to explain the causes of the famine. Universities and learned societies were swept along by the new intellectual fashion. Even such well-established institutions as the Free Economic Society fell under the influence of the Marxists, who produced libraries of social statistics, dressed up as studies of the causes of the great starvation, to prove the truth of Marx’s economic laws. Socialists who had previously wavered in their Marxism were now completely converted in the wake of the famine crisis, when, it seemed to them, there was no more hope in the Populist faith in the peasantry. Petr Struve (1870-1944), who had previously thought of himself as a political liberal, found his Marxist passions stirred by the crisis: it ‘made much more of a Marxist out of me than the reading of Marx’s *Capital*’. Martov also recalled how the crisis had turned him into a Marxist: ‘It suddenly became clear to me how superficial and groundless the whole of my revolutionism had been until then, and how my subjective political romanticism was dwarfed before the philosophical and sociological heights of Marxism.’ Even the young Lenin only became converted to the Marxist mainstream in the wake of the famine crisis.

“In short, the whole of society had been politicized and radicalized as a result of the famine crisis. The conflict between the population and the regime had been set in motion...”<sup>73</sup>

\*

The increasing radicalization of Russian society soon took an organized form. In 1897 the “Universal Jewish Workers’ Union in Russia, Poland and Lithuania”, otherwise known as the Bund, was founded. In 1898 the Russian Social-Democratic Party was founded, with the active participation of the Bund.<sup>74</sup> The Russian-Jewish revolutionary underground had received its first organizational impulse...

However, the government was less harassed at this time by open revolutionaries than by the local councils, or *zemstva*, whose 70,000 teachers, doctors, statisticians and agronomists, collectively known as the “Third Element” (as opposed to the first two elements, the administrators and elected deputies), inculcated liberal ideas in the young. The Interior Minister Plehve called them “the cohorts of the *sans-culottes*”; he believed that, coming themselves from a peasant or lower-class background, they were trying to use their position in the *zemstva* to stir up the peasantry.

In 1899 *zemstvo* leaders formed a discussion group called *Beseda* (Symposium). The next year the government ordered the dismissal of those *zemstvo* deputies who were becoming involved in political questions. In 1901 a confidential memorandum published by Witte in Germany called for the abolition of the *zemstva* as being incompatible with autocracy...

---

<sup>73</sup> Figes, *op. cit.*, pp. 160-162.

<sup>74</sup> V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia from Peter I to our days), Moscow, 1997. p. 363.



Nevertheless, in the same year, writes Sir Geoffrey Hosking, “a Union of Liberation was set up to coordinate the efforts of zemstvo and professional people. It had to hold its founding congress in Switzerland, but it soon began to campaign inside Russia, especially after reverses in the Japanese war threw doubt on the strength and competence of the autocracy. The Union issued pamphlets and held ‘liberation banquets’, at which the demand was ever more insistently raised that the autocracy be replaced by a constitutional monarchy with a parliament elected by universal, direct, equal, and secret ballot.”<sup>75</sup>

Although the Liberationists were liberals, they veered more and more to the left and to the socialists. For it was commonly accepted that since nothing could be worse than the autocracy on the right, there were “no enemies on the left”. An example of this tendency was Peter Struve who on the one hand founded the journal *Osvobozhdenie (Liberation)* in Germany in 1902, and on the other hand was the author of the founding manifesto of the Social-Democratic Party, which declared: “The Russian proletariat can win political freedom for itself only by itself, and it will overthrow the autocracy, so as then with greater energy to continue the struggle with capitalism and the bourgeoisie until the final victory of Socialism...”<sup>76</sup>

The liberal, liberationist virus infected all generations, and the young first of all. Thus in 1899, the university students in St. Petersburg and other major cities went on strike. “If,” writes Richard Pipes, “one wishes to identify events that not merely foreshadowed 1917 but led directly to it, then the choice has to fall on the disorders that broke out at Russian universities in February, 1899. Although they were soon quelled by the usual combination of concessions and repression, these disorders set in motion a movement of protest against the autocracy that did not abate until the revolutionary upheaval of 1905-6. This First Revolution was also eventually crushed but at a price of major political concessions that fatally weakened the Russian monarchy. To the extent that historical events have a beginning, the beginning of the Russian Revolution may well have been the general university strike of February 1899.”<sup>77</sup>

It is significant that this disorder should have begun with those who had not yet completed their education and had not yet received the wisdom that experience of life gives. There is much in the revolution that resembles the rebellion of an adolescent against his parents. In a healthy society such a rebellion is frowned upon and checked; for it overturns the normal order. The tragedy of these years was that grey hairs were no longer seen as a sign of wisdom, and the elders followed the younger, not daring to seem “behind the times”.

Thus S.S. Oldenburg writes: “Society did not respond in any way to his Majesty’s reconciliatory moves [towards the students]. It continued to sympathize with the strike. Only the editor of *New Times*, A.S. Suvorov, was bold enough to write against it: ‘If the government had let the young people’s strike take its natural course, that is,

---

<sup>75</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 368.

<sup>76</sup> Struve, in I.P. Yakobi, *Imperator Nikolaj II i Revoliutsia* (Emperor Nicholas II and the Revolution), Moscow, 2010, p. 70.

<sup>77</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

if it had said, 'If you don't want to study, then don't study', then it would not have harmed itself in its higher education, but would have put the young students in a difficult position, leaving them without education and without the support of the field of social activity which they were counting on.' Almost the whole of the rest of the press hurled itself at *New Times* for these lines..."<sup>78</sup>

The Tsar himself, after receiving a report on the strikes, apportioned blame both to the students and to the police and to the university administrators. And he did not forget the role that society had played: "To our sorrow, during the disturbances that have taken place, local society has not only not supported the efforts of the state authorities,... but in many instances has assisted the disorders, stirring up the excited youths with their approval and permitting themselves to interfere in an inappropriate way in the sphere of state directives. Such disturbances cannot be tolerated in the future and must be put down without any weakening by strict government measures."<sup>79</sup> However, the pattern was set of agitators being supported by the press and society. From now on, the Tsar had increasingly to govern without the support of the newspaper-reading public, while the universities now became hot-houses of revolutionary agitation to such an extent that many students were no longer interested in academic studies but only in politics.

An important role in teaching the young to rebel was played by foreign revolutionaries. As General V.N. Voeikov writes: "In his *Notes of a Revolutionary*, Prince Kropotkin gives a completely clear indication under whose direction 'developed' our Russian youth abroad. Thanks to his sincerity, we can form an accurate picture of who in Switzerland worked on the leaders of our revolutionary movement: the centre of the Internationale was Geneva. The Geneva sections gathered in a huge Masonic temple 'Temple Unique'. During the large meetings the spacious hall accommodated more than two thousand people, which served as an indicator of the quantity of young people thirsting for enlightenment. The French émigré-communards taught the workers for free; they went on courses in history, physics, mechanics, etc. Time was also given to participation in sections that sat during the evenings in side-rooms of this temple of science."<sup>80</sup>

\*

The largest section in the university student population was constituted by seminarians and sons of priests. "Clergy sons were strikingly successful in getting into university: because they were prominent among the radical activists, the government curbed entry from seminaries in 1879."<sup>81</sup> The strong representation of the priestly caste in the revolutionary movement was a striking sign of the times.<sup>82</sup>

---

<sup>78</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 147.

<sup>79</sup> Tsar Nicholas, in Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

<sup>80</sup> Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 127.

<sup>81</sup> Hosking, *Russia. People and Empire 1552-1917*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 329.

<sup>82</sup> T.G. Leontiev, "Vera i Bunt: dukhoventstvo v revoliutsionnom obshchestve Rossii nachala XX veka" (Faith and Rebellion: the clergy in the revolutionary society of Russia at the beginning of the 20th century), *Portal-Credo.Ru*, 2015.

Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov and Nechaiev were early examples; Joseph Stalin was the most famous example of all...

In 1894, as Alan Bullock writes, Stalin became "one of the 600 students at the Russian Orthodox theological seminary in Tiflis. The Tsarist authorities had refused to allow a university to be opened in the Caucasus, fearing that it would become a centre for nationalist and radical agitation. The Tiflis seminary served as a substitute, and was attended by many young men who had no intention of entering the priesthood...

"... The official policy of Russification made the seminary a stronghold of Georgian nationalism. A student expelled for his anti-Russian attitude in 1886 had assassinated the Principal, and only a few months before Stalin's admission a protest strike of all the Georgian pupils led to the seminary's closure by the police and the expulsion of eight-seven students...

"... [Stalin's] daughter Svetlana wrote after his death: 'A church education was the only systematic education my father ever had. I am convinced that the seminary in which he spent more than ten years played an immense role, setting my father's character for the rest of his life, strengthening and intensifying inborn traits.

"My father never had any feeling for religion. In a young man who had never for a moment believed in the life of the spirit or in God, endless prayers and enforced religious training could only produce contrary results... From his experiences at the seminary he came to the conclusion that men were intolerant, coarse, deceiving their flocks in order to hold them in obedience; that they intrigued, lied and as a rule possessed numerous faults and very few virtues.'

"One form which Stalin's rebellion took was spending as much time as possible reading illicit books obtained from a lending library in the town and smuggled into the seminary. Besides Western literature in translation, and the Russian classics – also forbidden – Stalin became acquainted with radical and positivist ideas which he is said to have picked up from reading translations of Darwin, Comte and Marx, as well as Plekhanov, the first Russian Marxist.

"Growing discontented with the vague romantic ideals of Georgian nationalism, Stalin organized a socialist study circle with other students, including Iremashvili, and according to the latter soon began to show intolerance towards any member who disagreed with him. He found a natural attraction in the Marxist teaching of the inevitability of class war and the overthrow of an unjust and corrupt social order. The attraction was as much psychological as intellectual, appealing to the powerful but destructive emotions of hatred and resentment which were to prove so strong force in Stalin's character, and offering a positive outlet for an ambition and abilities which would otherwise have been frustrated. As Robert Tucker wrote, the gospel of class war legitimized his resentment against authority: 'it identified his enemies as history's'."83

One of Stalin's friends at seminary was Gutsa Parkhadze, who wrote: "We youngsters had a passionate thirst for knowledge. Thus, in order to disabuse the minds

---

83 Bullock, *Hitler and Stalin. Parallel Lives*, London: HarperCollins, 1991, pp. 12, 13, 14.

of our seminary students of the myth that the world was created in six days, we had to acquaint ourselves with the geological origin and age of the earth to be able to prove them in argument; we had to familiarize ourselves with Darwin's teachings. We were aided in this by Lyles' *Antiquity and Men*, and Darwin's *Descent of Man*, the latter in a translation edited by Sechenov. Comrade Stalin read Sechenov's works with great interest.

"We gradually proceeded to a study of class society, which led us to the works of Marx, Engels and Lenin. In those days, the reading of Marxist literature was punishable as revolutionary propaganda. The effect of this was particularly felt in the seminary, where even the name of Darwin was always mentioned with scurrilous abuse. Comrade Stalin brought these books to our notice. The first thing we had to do, he would say, was to become atheists."<sup>84</sup>

Another member of Stalin's group was Lado Ketshoveli, who was a ringleader in the revolt that led to the closing down of the seminary. He founded the first underground Marxist press in Transcaucasia, and in 1902 was arrested and shot dead by guards after shouting from his cell window: "Down with the autocracy! Long live freedom! Long live socialism!" "To Stalin he still remained, many years afterwards, the exemplar of a revolutionary fighter and his influence no doubt helped to precipitate Stalin's break with the seminary. By his fifth year the school authorities regarded Stalin as a hardened troublemaker, and he was expelled in May 1899 on the ground that 'for unknown reasons' he failed to appear for the end-of-year examinations. Iremashvili, who had accompanied him to the seminary, wrote later that he took with him 'a grim and bitter hatred against the school administration, the bourgeoisie and everything in the country that represented Tsarism'."<sup>85</sup>

It is obviously dangerous and unjust to draw any general conclusions about the nature of seminary education from Stalin's example alone. Nevertheless, the fact that so many former seminarians, sons of priests and even priests joined the revolutionary movement - another important example is Gapon in the 1905 revolution - indicated that something was wrong in the Church. The seminaries themselves - especially those in Pskov, Volhynia and Tambov - became regular trouble-spots throughout the first decade of the century, with strikes, violence and even some shootings of teachers.<sup>86</sup> Could the radicalism at the bottom of the hierarchy have had something to do with liberalism at the top? Could the lack of zeal of the leaders of the Church be influencing the followers to look for certainty elsewhere? If so, then only a revival of zeal for the truth of Christianity would be able to quench zeal for the falsehood of the revolution...

\*

---

84 Emilian Yaroslavsky, *Landmarks in the Life of Stalin*, Moscow, 1940, pp. 12-13.

85 Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 16. For some anecdotes of Stalin's behaviour at the seminary, see I.V. Alexandrov, "Fotoletopisets", *Pravoslavnaiia Rus'*, N 10 (1869), May 15/28, 2009, pp. 12-15.

86 See the diary entries of the future hieromartyr, Bishop Arseny, in *Pis'ma Vladyki Germana* (The Letters of Vladyka Herman), Moscow: St. Tikhon's Theological Institute, 2004, pp. 17-23. In 1907 a student at Tambov seminary shot the inspector, Archimandrite Simeon Kholmogorov, who was paralyzed for life before receiving the crown on martyrdom.

After the collapse of the “Going to the People” movement in the 1870s and its repression by the authorities there was a twofold reaction, one terrorist and the other peaceful (for the time being).

The first reaction writes S.A. Smith, involved “the formation in 1879 of the People’s Will, a conspiratorial organization that looked to act of terror as the means to provoke popular insurgency, convinced that if those who personified the tyranny of autocracy were struck down, this would spark a revolutionary conflagration among the people. Between 1879 and 1881 they launched a wave of killings that culminated on March 1881 in the assassination of Alexander II (after several failed previous attempts). Far from precipitating popular revolt, however, it led to the decimation of the movement, as leaders were hanged or sent to Siberia. The debacle led some, notably Georgii Plekhanov, to turn to Marxism as offering a more scientific, less morally inspired theory of revolution. Plekhanov, who earned the epithet ‘father of Russian Marxism’, argued that rural society, far from representing an embryonic form of socialism, was undergoing capitalist development and that the peasantry was beginning to split along class lines. The proletariat, not the peasantry, would be the agent of revolution, and in 1881, he helped establish the Emancipation of Labour group which began to form propaganda circles among the educated workers of the cities. In Paris in 1889 at the founding congress of international parties, known as the Second International, Plekhanov made the bold prediction that the Russian Revolution ‘will triumph as a proletarian revolution or it will not triumph at all’.

“In 1887 a group of the terrorists was hanged for seeking to kill the new tsar Alexander III, among the A.I. Ul’ianov, son of Il’ia and brother of the 17-year-old Vladimir Il’ich, who after 1901 would be known to the world as Lenin. Vladimir was devastated by the loss of his brother and threw himself into student protests at Kazan University. Within months he had been expelled. Initially, Vladimir was attracted, like his brother, to the terrorism of the People’s Will, though he moved rather quickly towards Marxism over the next two years. Marxism entailed the rejection of terror as an instrument of revolution, yet Lenin’s Marxism would always bear some of the élan of the Russian terrorist tradition with its commitment to the violent overthrow of the state. In other ways, too, his Marxism was marked by the Russian revolutionary tradition represented by such men as Nikolai Chernyshevskii, Sergei Nechaev, or Petr Tkachev, with its emphasis on the need for a disciplined revolutionary vanguard, its belief that willed action (the ‘subjective factor’) could speed up the ‘objectively’ determined course of history, its defence of Jacobin methods of dictatorship, and its contempt for liberalism and democracy (and indeed for socialists who valued these things).”<sup>87</sup>

In the last analysis, we must agree with I.P. Goldenberg that Lenin was the successor of Bakunin more than Marx, and that his tactics were those of that “universal apostle of destruction” ... <sup>88</sup>

\*

---

<sup>87</sup> Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 2018, pp. 42-43.

<sup>88</sup> Goldenburg, in Robert Service, *Lenin*, 2000, p. 267.

Lenin was a hereditary nobleman of mixed Russian, Chuvash and Jewish origin. He lived on party funds and income from his mother's estate. Choosing to work in the underground<sup>89</sup>, he had very little direct knowledge of the way ordinary people lived, and cared even less. "According to Gorky, it was this ignorance of everyday work, and the human suffering which it entailed, which had bred in Lenin a 'pitiless contempt, worthy of a nobleman, for the lives of the ordinary people... Life in all its complexity is unknown to Lenin. He does not know the ordinary people. He has never lived among them.'"<sup>90</sup>

Lenin was imprisoned in 1895, and in 1897 was "sentenced to three years' administrative exile in Siberia for his involvement with the revolutionary Union of Struggle. He found life in Shushenskoe, in the Minusinsk district, remarkably pleasant..."<sup>91</sup> In 1900 he returned, becoming the editor of a newspaper, *Iskra*, meaning "spark", with which he hoped to unite the underground and spark a revolution...

For a revolutionary, Lenin lived a relatively simple, even ascetic life, and had only one known affair - with Inessa Armand. But, as Oliver Figes writes, "asceticism was a common trait of the revolutionaries of Lenin's generation. They were all inspired by the self-denying revolutionary Rakhmetev in Chernyshevsky's novel *What Is To Be Done?* By suppressing his own sentiments, by denying himself the pleasures of life, Lenin tried to strengthen his resolve and to make himself, like Rakhmetev, insensitive to the sufferings of others. This, he believed, was the 'hardness' required by every successful revolutionary: the ability to spill blood for political ends. 'The terrible thing in Lenin,' Struve once remarked, 'was that combination in one person of self-castigation, which is the essence of all real asceticism, with the castigation of other people as expressed in abstract social hatred and cold political cruelty..."

"The root of this philistine approach to life was a burning ambition for power. The Mensheviks joked that it was impossible to compete with a man, such as Lenin, who thought about revolution twenty-four hours every day. Lenin was driven by an absolute faith in his own historical destiny. He did not doubt for a moment, as he had once put it, that he was the man who was to wield the 'conductor's baton' in the party. This was the message he brought back to Russia in April 1917. Those who had known him before the war noticed a dramatic change in his personality. 'How he had aged,' recalled Roman Gul', who had met him briefly in 1905. 'Lenin's whole appearance had altered. And not only that. There was none of the old geniality, his friendliness or comradely humour, in his relations with other people. The new Lenin that arrived was cynical, secretive and rude, a conspirator "against everyone and everything", trusting no one, suspecting everyone, and determined to launch his drive for power.'..."

Lenin hated his own country. "I spit on Russia", he said once; and his actions showed his contempt for Russians of all classes. Nothing is further from the truth than

---

<sup>89</sup> For, as he argued in *What is to be Done?* (1902), in the conditions of Tsarist Russia it was impossible for the party to live openly among the people, but had to be an underground organization with strictly limited membership. "In an autocratic state the more we confine the membership of such a party to people who are professionally engaged in revolutionary activity and who have been professionally trained in the art of combating the political police, the more difficult it will be to wipe out such an organization" (in Cohen and Major, op. cit., p. 678).

<sup>90</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 386.

<sup>91</sup> Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 49.

the idea that Lenin's revolution was carried out for the sake of Russia or the Russians: it was carried out, not out of love for anybody or anything, but simply out of irrational, demonic, universal hatred... Still less was it carried out for the sake of truth. As Victor Sebestyeny says, "In his ideas and polemics Lenin constantly created images of an alternative reality, appealing not so much to facts, as to emotions. This is the politics of post-truth, in which real facts and truth are substituted by their emotional fictions and utopian surrogates."<sup>92</sup>

As we have seen, the revolutionary Social Democratic Party was founded in 1898; its first congress was held in Minsk. It was immediately joined by Lenin. In 1900 he and Martov (Tsederbaum) created a political journal called *Iskra* (Spark). However, at the congress of the SDs held in 1903 by the SDs in Brussels and London, they split into two groups, the Bolsheviks led by Lenin and the Mensheviks by Martov. Trotsky (Bronstein) belonged to the Mensheviks at that time, but changed sides in time for the 1905 revolution. The difference between the two parties was that the Bolsheviks wanted a more tightly organized and centralized party, whereas the Mensheviks wanted a more loosely organized party on the western model that could, however, attract more people. "It would be broadly true to say," writes S.A. Smith, "that the Bolsheviks were tougher, more disciplined, more intolerant, more self-confident, more amoral, and less squeamish about using violence and undemocratic means than their rivals, who were more cautious, more circumspect, more inclined to waver, more committed to democracy, more intolerant of primitive sloganizing."<sup>93</sup>

"Not until 1912," writes Alan Bullock, "did Lenin force a final break with the Mensheviks. The basic issue, however, on which all attempts at unity broke down remained the same as in 1903.

"Both groups accepted Marx's scheme of historical development and believed that Russia must go through the stage of capitalism as a necessary condition for a socialist revolution. But they could not agree on what followed after that. The Mensheviks believed that, in view of Russia's economic backwardness, it would take a long time before such a revolution would take place, and that the immediate task was to work for a middle class liberal revolution. This would get rid of the autocratic Tsarist regime, clear the way for capitalism to fulfil its historic role of industrialization and at the same time secure constitutional reforms allowing the legal growth of a mass working class on the lines of the German Social Democrats.

"Lenin was not prepared to wait or leave it to historical processes by themselves to produce the socialist revolution on which all his thoughts were concentrated. To Mensheviks this was an anti-Marxist heresy, a conspiratorial reliance on 'subjective factors' such as the revolutionary will, instead of on Marx's 'objective factors, the laws of social development, which he had worked out and which could not be artificially speeded up..."<sup>94</sup>

---

<sup>92</sup> Sebestyeny, in Natalia Golitsyna, "Biurokrat, dictator, ljubovnik" (Bureaucrat, dictator, lover), *Radio Svoboda*, April 1, 2017.

<sup>93</sup> Smith, *Russia and the Revolution*, p. 73.

<sup>94</sup> Bullock, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

But the real issue was Lenin's dictatorial nature. All the leading socialists – Plekhanov and Trotsky in Russia, Luxemburg in Germany – saw the problem in Lenin's dictatorial character and attempt to concentrate all power in his hands. As Trotsky put it: "The party organization is substituted for the party, the Central Committee is substituted for the party organization, and finally a 'dictator' is substituted for the Central Committee."<sup>95</sup>

"Lenin had never been tolerant of dissent within his party's ranks. Bukharin complained that he 'didn't give a damn for the opinions of others'. Lunacharsky claimed that Lenin deliberately 'surrounded himself with fools' who would not dare question him. During Lenin's struggle for the April Theses this domineering attitude was magnified to almost megalomaniac proportions. Krupskaya called it his 'rage' – the frenzied state of her husband when engaged in clashes with his political rivals – and it was an enraged Lenin whom she had to live with for the next five years. During these fits Lenin acted like a man possessed by hatred and anger. His entire body was seized with extreme nervous tension, and he could neither sleep nor eat. His outward manner became vulgar and coarse. It was hard to believe that this was a cultivated man. He mocked his opponents, both inside and outside the party, in crude and violent language. They were 'blockheads', 'bastards', 'dirty scum', 'prostitutes', 'cunts', 'shits', 'cretins', 'Russian fools', 'windbags', 'stupid hens' and 'silly old maids'. When the rage subsided Lenin would collapse in a state of exhaustion, listlessness and depression, until the rage erupted again. This manic alteration of mood was characteristic of Lenin's psychological make-up. It continued almost unrelentingly between 1917 and 1922, and must have contributed to the brain haemorrhage from which he eventually died.

"Much of Lenin's success in 1917 was no doubt explained by his towering domination over the party. No other political party had ever been so closely tied to the personality of a single man. Lenin was the first modern party leader to achieve the status of a god: Stalin, Mussolini, Hitler and Mao Zedong were all his successors in this sense. Being a Bolshevik had come to imply an oath of allegiance to Lenin as both the 'leader' and the 'teacher' of the party. It was this, above all, which distinguished the Bolsheviks from the Mensheviks (who had no close leader of their own)..."<sup>96</sup>

By this time, writes Hosking, the cells of the SD revolutionaries "had become the object of concerted police attention. Among the measures taken by the regime in the aftermath of the assassination [of Alexander II in 1881] was a thorough overhaul of the security police. The old Third Department was wound up and replaced by a new and much larger Department of Police, among whose tasks was the protection of senior officials and the thorough investigation of terrorist organizations. It has its own security bureaus (*okhrannyye otdeleniya*), first in Moscow, St. Petersburg and Paris (to keep watch over émigrés), then in some twenty other major cities. Sergei Zubatov, head of the Moscow *okhrana*, sponsored the promotion of a new generation of specially trained security officers, their operations backed up by systematic records. Lenin accorded them the ultimate accolade when he recommended that the revolutionary

---

<sup>95</sup> Trotsky, *Our Political Tasks*, 1904, in Cohen and Major, *op. cit.*, p. 679.

<sup>96</sup> Figes, *op. cit.*, pp. 389, 390, 391.



party should be run by a 'few professionals, as highly trained and experienced as our security police'.

"By now the revolutionary parties had perfected their conspiratorial techniques, and to gain the information they required about them the police had little alternative but to deploy secret agents within their ranks. To sustain their credibility, those agents had to take their share in the tracking, the bombmaking, and the secret communications which were part and parcel of the terrorist's life. In that way the agent provocateur emerged, the double agent working for both the police and the revolutionaries. Opposition parties cut off from the public and a secret police accountable to nobody held out intoxicating opportunities to individuals attracted by the exercise of power for its own sake. They were extremely difficult for either side to detect and could orchestrate alternating betrayals and terrorist acts at their own convenience. Here the *fiscal* and the revolutionary, both descendants of Peter the Great, amalgamated in one sinister figure.

"The Socialist Revolutionaries, anxious this time not to be hijacked by the practitioners of assassination, created a separate 'fighting detachment' (*boevoi otriad*) to concentrate on terrorism, so that other party members could devote themselves to propaganda and other peaceful activities. Ironically, however, the isolation of the terrorists meant their final emancipation from normal moral and political considerations. The fighting detachment fell into the hands of a police agent, Evno Azef, under whose command it conducted a concerted campaign against officials of the very regime which had hired him. From 1902 to 1906 its victims included the governor-general of Moscow, number of ministers - including two ministers of the Interior, Dmitrii Sipiagin and Viacheslav Pleve, Azef's own employers - and some 4,000 central and local officials, killed or wounded. Rarely, if ever, has any regime sanctioned such an onslaught of terror. When Azef's duplicity was finally revealed, the disclosure discredited the police and permanently undermined the moral standing of the Social Revolutionary Party. It contributed in no small part to the public's disillusionment with politics of all kinds in the final years of tsarism..."<sup>97</sup>

---

<sup>97</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, pp. 359-360.

## 8. THREE RUSSIAS: PETERSBURG, KISHINEV AND SAROV

Russia at the turn of the century was a country of enormous size, population and contrasting nationalities and social classes. Three of the most important were the nobility, the Jews and the Russian Orthodox peasantry. All three drew attention to themselves in the year 1903.

The nobility, writes Douglas Smith, "comprised almost 1.9 million people, about 1.5 percent of the entire population of the Russian Empire. They were a diverse group, divided by nationality (Russians, Poles, Georgians, Baltic Germans [and Tatars]), religion (Russian Orthodoxy, Catholicism, Lutheranism), education and wealth (from a great deal of both to little of either), and political outlook (from reactionaries to revolutionaries). There were hereditary nobles, whose privileged status passed to their offspring, and personal nobles, whose did not. So great was the diversity among the empire's nobility that historians continue to debate whether it even deserves to be considered a distinct social class. If there was one thing that defined a noble, it was, as a commentator wrote in 'The Tasks of the Nobility' in 1895, a certain quality 'of being among the chosen, of being privileged, of not being the same as all other people'. The Russian nobility was never, however, a class of idle rich. Rather, it had always been a service class that initially derived its privileges and then increasingly its own identity from serving the grand princes of Muscovy and later the tsars of imperial Russia whether at court, in the military, or in the administration.

"At the top of the nobility was the aristocratic elite, roughly a hundred or so families with great landed wealth dating back to at least the eighteenth century. These nobles often held high positions at court or in the government. The aristocracy was typically old, titled, and rich. It intermarried and had a sense of itself as a self-defined group. Aristocrats belonged to the same clubs and salons, and the young men served in the elite imperial guards regiments like the Chevaliers Gardes, the Horse Guard, and the Emperor's Life Guard Hussars. Part of the aristocracy (including the Golitsyns, Gagarins, Dolgorukys, and Volkonskys) descended from the ancient princely dynasties of Riurik and Gedymin; others came from the nontitled boyar families of the Muscovite court, most notably the Naryshkins and the Sheremetevs, a branch of which acquired the title of count under Peter the Great; or from other old noble families that had served in the cavalry units, such as the Shuvalovs, Vorontsovs, and Orlovs."<sup>98</sup>

"'Petersburg society'," writes Montefiore, "was not as important as it liked to think it was. This was the beginning of the Silver Age of poetry and art (following the Golden Age earlier in the century) in which, dissatisfied by Orthodox religion, Victorian morality and scientific rationalism, and exhilarated by the rush of the modern, the avant-garde tested the meaning of art, faith and pleasure by experimenting with imagery, language and dance, as well as sexual adventurism, necromancy and narcotics. While a powerful mercantile class of textile and railway tycoons emerged in the cities, the nobility was mortgaging its estates, a retreat before the energy of the merchants as played out in Anton Chekhov's *The Cherry Orchard*."<sup>99</sup>

---

<sup>98</sup> Smith, *Former People: The Last Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, London: Macmillan, 2012, p. 25.

<sup>99</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, London: Vintage, 2016, pp. 502-503.

The aristocratic elite displayed itself particularly during the pre-Lenten balls in the Winter Palace. "The Ball of 1903," writes Smith, "was to be imperial Russia's last great ball. What made it so spectacular and unusual was in large part its special theme. Although held on the two-hundredth-year anniversary of the capital's founding by Peter the Great, [Tsar] Nicholas chose as the theme for the ball the reign of Peter's father, Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, and all the guests were instructed to come in costumes from the seventeenth century. Such was the excitement that vast sums of money were spent on designers and the finest tailors to create exquisite outfits of fancy brocades, silks, and satin decorated with gold, pearls, and diamonds. The men came attired as boyars, gunners, falconers, and Cossack hetmans; the ladies, as boyarinas, peasants (elaborately costumed ones anyway), and Muscovite ladies of the court. Some dressed as concrete historical figures. Count Sergei Sheremetev, for example, came as Field Marshal Count Boris Sheremetev, his great-great-grandfather. The emperor came as Tsar Alexei Mikhailovich, and Empress Alexandra, wearing a costume estimated at a million rubles, as Tsaritsa Maria Ilinichna. So enormous was its effect that the ball was repeated shortly thereafter at the home of Count Alexander Sheremetev."

The ball left Grand Duke Alexander "with a bad feeling. He recalled an evening like it some twenty-five years earlier under Alexander II, but the times had changed. 'A new and hostile Russia glared through the large windows of the palace,' he wrote. 'This magnificent pageant of the seventeenth century must have made a strange impression on the foreign ambassadors; while we danced, the workers were striking and the clouds in the Far East were hanging dangerously low...'"<sup>100</sup>

\*

The contrast between the world of the aristocratic elite and that of the striking workers and their Jewish revolutionary leaders could hardly have been greater. The Jews were murdering thousands of government officials - these were the real "pogroms" of the period. And it was these murders, together with the familiar complaints against Jewish money-lenders, that excited "counter-pogroms" on the part of the Orthodox Christian peasantry.

Alexander Solzhenitsyn writes: "Jewish pogroms were stirred up at all times and only in the South-West of Russia (as also was the case in 1881)."<sup>101</sup> And on April 6, 1903 - the last day of the Jewish Pascha and the first day of the Orthodox Pascha - a pogrom broke out in Kishinev, capital of the province of Moldavia in South-West Russia. According to the official figures drawn up in the indictment by the procurator of the local court, V.N. Goremykin, it began with "the usual clashes between Jews and Christians which have always taken place in recent years at Pascha" and with "the hostility of the local Christian population towards the Jews". And then "two weeks before Pascha... rumours began to circulate in Kishinev that there would be a slaughter of Jews in the forthcoming feast".

A particularly inflammatory role was played here by the newspaper *Bessarabets*, whose editor, Pavolachi Krushevan, also published *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*.

---

<sup>100</sup> Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 52-53.

<sup>101</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

The *Protocols* purported to be the minutes of a meeting of Jewish elders somewhere in the West plotting to take over the world. In fact, they were largely plagiarized from Maurice Joly's *Dialogue aux Enfers entre Montesquieu et Machiavel*, a debate between a supporter of liberalism (Montesquieu) and a supporter of despotism (Machiavel), published in 1864 in France, supplemented with a lot of anti-Semitic material. They were created in Paris and brought to Russia in about 1894, probably with the help of the Okhrana chief in Paris, Rachkovsky.

When the forgery was demonstrated to Tsar Nicholas II, he said: "Drop the *Protocols*. One cannot defend a pure cause by dirty methods."<sup>102</sup> Unfortunately, the Tsar's advice was not followed, and the forgery became accepted as genuine by very many in many countries. It became popular especially during the Russian Civil War, and White Russian officers were instrumental in taking it to Germany, where it made a profound impression on Hitler.

Krushevan's *Bessarabets* printed "from day to day sharp articles of an anti-Jewish tendency, which did not fail to leave a trace... among the salesmen and petty scribes, etc. of the uneducated people of Bessarabia. The latest provocative articles of *Bessarabets* contained communications about the murder in Dubossary of a Christian child supposedly carried out by Jews by ritual means..."<sup>103</sup>

The pogrom began after the murder of a Russian man and the death of a Russian girl in the local Jewish hospital.<sup>104</sup> According to the indictment, 42 people were killed, including 38 Jews, and about 500 Jewish shop fronts were destroyed. By April 9, 816 people had been arrested, of whom 664 were charged with crimes.

"The conclusion of the indictment was: the disorders 'grew to the indicated proportions only thanks to the incompetence of the police, who did not have the required leadership... The preliminary investigation has not unearthed any evidence that would indicate that the above-mentioned disorders were prepared beforehand.'

"And they were not unearthed by any subsequent investigation.

"But in spite of this, the Jewish 'Bureau of Defence' (with the participation of the very influential M. Vinaver, G. Sliozberg, L. Bramson, M. Kulisher, A. Braudo, S. Pozner and M. Krol), had no sooner heard about the pogrom in Petersburg than they excluded from the beginning any other causes of it than a tsarist plot: 'Who gave the order for the organization of the pogrom, who directed the dark forces that carried it out?' - 'Immediately we learned under what circumstances the Kishinev slaughter took place, it became clear for us that this diabolic undertaking would never have taken place... if it had not been thought up in the Department of Police and carried out in fulfilment of orders from there'. Although, of course, writes the same M. Krol in the 40s of the 20th century, 'the scoundrels organized the Kishinev pogrom in strict secrecy, we are profoundly convinced that the Kishinev slaughter was organized from

---

<sup>102</sup> Norman Cohn, *Warrant for Genocide*, London: Serif, 1996, pp. 126, 285-289. Cf. Paul Johnson, *A History of the Jews*, London: Pimlico, 1995, p. 456.

<sup>103</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 322.

<sup>104</sup> Montefiore, *op. cit.*, pp. 510-511.

above, with the knowledge, and perhaps even on the initiative of Plehve. Only if we had the most indisputable evidence against them could we tear the mask from these highly-placed murderers and place them in a fitting light before the whole world. Therefore we decided to send the well-known lawyer Zarudny to Kishinev.' 'He was the most suitable person to carry out the mission that we had laid on him', he 'took it upon himself to discover the hidden springs of the Kishinev slaughter', after which the police 'to make a diversion arrested some tens of robbers and thieves'. (Let us recall that on the day after the pogrom 816 were arrested.) - Zarudny collected and took away from Kishinev 'exceptionally important material', that is to say: 'that the main culprit and organizer of the pogrom was the chief of the Kishinev garrison Levendal'".<sup>105</sup>

This "exceptionally important material" was never published. Goremykin looked into the accusations against Levendal and found them baseless. But Krushevan, whose inflammatory articles had indeed helped the pogrom on arriving in Petersburg two months later, was attacked and wounded with a knife by Pinkhas Dashevsky... The government sacked the governor of Bessarabia, while Plehve issued a circular to all governors, city bosses and heads of police expressing disturbance at the inactivity of the Kishinev authorities and calling for decisive action to cut off violence.

Nor was the Orthodox Church silent. The Holy Synod issued a circular ordering the clergy to take measures to root out hatred of the Jews. Fr. John of Kronstadt said: "Instead of a Christian feast they have arranged a disgustingly murderous feast to Satan." And Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) said: "The terrible punishment of God will attain those evil-doers who shed blood asking for that of the God-man, His Most Pure Mother, the Apostles and Prophets'; 'that they should know that the Jewish race, which has been rejected up to now, is dear to the Spirit of God, and that everyone who would want to offend it will anger the Lord.'"<sup>106</sup>

The Jews and radicals inside Russia, and the European and American press outside Russia, were loud in their accusations that the Russian government was responsible for the Kishinev pogrom. The newspaper magnate William Hurst even used the fateful word "holocaust"...<sup>107</sup> On May 18 *The Times* of London published a letter of a "completely secret letter" of Plehve to the Kishinev governor von Raaben in which Plehve supposedly asked the governor not to put down any disturbances against the Jews but only to inform him about them.<sup>108</sup> The letter turned out to be a forgery, as even pro-Semite sources accept.<sup>109</sup> However, this did not prevent the 1996 edition of *The Jewish Encyclopaedia* from reiterating the accusation as if it were fact...<sup>110</sup>

\*

Far from the superficial glitter of Petersburg, and the bloody violence of Kishinev, a truly holy feast was celebrated in August, 1903 in the monastery of Sarov, deep in

---

<sup>105</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 327-328.

<sup>106</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 329.

<sup>107</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

<sup>108</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 333.

<sup>109</sup> Vital, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

<sup>110</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 335.

patriarchal Russia. The occasion was the glorification – on the initiative of the Tsar - of St. Seraphim of Sarov (+1832), perhaps the greatest saint of the Petersburg period of Russian history.

The Russian Church had undertaken few glorifications of saints during the St. Petersburg period of her history. However, early in his reign Tsar Nicholas II initiated no less than six.

As Tikhon Sisoiev writes, the most important of these was that of St. Seraphim on July 19, 1903: “The question of the canonization of the Sarov ascetic was first raised in 1883. At that time the leader of the Moscow women gymnasiums, Viktorov, wrote a letter to the over-procurator, Konstantin Pobedonostsev, suggesting that ‘the beginning of the reign of the emperor [Alexander III] should be marked by the uncovering of the relics of the pious God-pleaser who was honoured throughout Russia. However, there was no reply. Later other private suggestions were rejected.

“In 1894 on the initiative of Igumen Raphael (Trukhin), the superior of the Sarov monastery, a detailed life of Seraphim of Sarov was composed in which confirmed testimonies of 94 miracles from the life of the ascetic were documented. The Synod acted in an ambiguous way: they refused the canonization, but continued to gather information. Thus the just-started process of glorification hung in the air, and it is not known how long the silence of the Synod would have continued if it had not been for the ‘cunning’ of Archimandrite Seraphim (Chichagov).

“... Archimandrite Seraphim was an energetic man. Having obtained access to the archives of the Diveyevo monastery, he assembled a whole complex of various information about the life and miracles of Seraphim of Sarov, which he systematized in chronological order. As a result of this investigation, a book was published, *The Chronicle of the Seraphimo-Diveyevo Monastery*, which the archimandrite, bypassing the Synod, handed to Nicholas II after a personal audience with his Majesty. We find evidence of this in the diary entries of General Alexander Kireev, who points out that the procurator Pobedonostsev afterwards called Archimandrite Seraphim ‘a great scoundrel and rogue’. The question of the canonization began to get moving.

“In the spring of 1902 the over-procurator was invited by the emperor to a family breakfast at which Nicholas II suggested providing – already within a few days – a decree on the glorification of Seraphim of Sarov. Pobedonostsev objected that such haste seemed to him inappropriate when it was a matter of glorifying a man. The empress cut in: ‘His Majesty can do anything.’ The suggestion became an order.

“Why did the Royal Family adopt such unbending determination? There were various reasons for this. The Sarov ascetic had already been venerated for a long time in the Romanov family. Thanks to the prayers of Seraphim of Sarov, it was thought, the seven-year-old daughter of Alexander II had been healed. Empress Alexandra Fyodorovna believed that it was precisely through his prayers that a boy – the future heir to the throne - would finally be born in the family. But apart from his personal veneration for the saint, Nicholas II was seeking in the canonization of Seraphim the resolution of profound internal political problems. In the opinion of many historians,

his Majesty in the course of the first half of his reign was trying to come closer to the people. "Noble Russia" since 1861 [the emancipation of the serfs] had been inexorably falling apart,' writes G.P. Fedorov, the Russian historian and philosopher. 'The Autocracy did not have the strength to tear itself away from its noble roots and would perish together with it. Russia, which had been frozen for twenty years by Pobedonostsev, was clearly rotting under the snow.' It was precisely the widespread veneration of Seraphim of Sarov among the people that, in the eyes of the emperor himself, provided an opportunity to find a point of contact between the simple people, the intelligentsia and the nobility.

"One way or another, Pobedonostsev submitted, and the *Church Gazette* of July, 1902 announced the beginning of the preparation of the official canonization. In the same month the empress sent gifts to Sarov Desert: a lampada and church vestments. It seemed that the glorification of Seraphim of Sarov was an accomplished fact. But new hindrances arose...

"On January 11, 1903, a commission headed by Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow arrived in Sarov to unearth and examine the relics of Seraphim of Sarov. Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenko) remembered: "The body of the saint had been subject to corruption, but the bones, which were in a perfect state of preservation, were laid out correctly. The hairs of the head and beard had also been preserved; they were of a grayish-ginger colour. The results of the commission were handed to the Most Holy Synod. 'Why did they go off into some wood to find only some bones?' said one of the members of the Synod. Everybody was disturbed – if the body had been corrupted, it meant that Seraphim was not a saint.

"The point was that during the Synodal period the idea had become embedded in the people's and clergy's consciousness that the holiness of a reposed man was witnessed not only by his life and miracles, but also by the incorruption of his relics. In order to refute this non-obligatory condition of canonization, a whole theological investigation was required. Its results were published in the declaration of Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky): 'Incorruption of relics is by no means considered to be a sign of the glorification of the holy God-pleasers. When there is incorruption of relics, this is a miracle, but only in addition to those miracles which are worked through their mediation.' The doubts had been dispelled.

"After this the Synod declared themselves satisfied with the results of the inspection of the relics and prepared a report for the emperor in which they expressed their agreement with the canonization of Seraphim of Sarov. Having read the report, Nicholas II placed the following resolution on it: 'I have read this with a feeling of true joy and deep emotion'.

"A colossal amount of work was carried out in connection with the organization of the coming festivity in the short period from the beginning of 1903: special 'missionary' trains were sent to Sarov, new hotels were built, medical care points were organized. By July [17/]30 about 300,000 pilgrims and more than 500 clergy had arrived in the town. That evening his Majesty himself arrived. Prince Vladimir Volkonsky, who also came to Sarov, recalled: 'There was a real unity. Not seeming, but sincere and

complete, involving the whole assembled people, every person, of whatever class he was. Such a tenderness and kindness reigned over the whole of Sarov and over all who had come under its shade.' We find the same impression in the diary of Nicholas II: 'A huge exaltation of spirit both from the triumphal event and from the amazing mood of the people.'"111

"The Royal Family," writes Archpriest Lev Lebedev, "had known about the great Wonderworker of the Russian Land for a long time. But a particular impression was made on the Tsar and Tsarina by the book *A Chronicle of the Seraphimo-Diveyevo Women's Monastery*, written and given personally to Nicholas II by Archimandrite Seraphim (Chichagov) – the scion of a noble family, one of the most educated and talented representatives of the nobility, who wanted to exchange a military career for monastic asceticism... In the *Chronicle* there were so many teachings, words of the holy elder of Sarov, prophecies, information about his miracles that the Royal Family was inspired with great faith in him! The triumphant glorification of Seraphim of Sarov, who had already been widely venerated in the people for a long time, was appointed from July 17 to 20, 1903. The Tsar came to Sarov with his whole family, his mother, the widowed Empress Maria Fyodorovna, his brothers, the Great Princes, other members of the Imperial House, and his suite. The Royal Family had never undertaken such a pilgrimage before. It was unlike any of the other journeys undertaken by the Tsar and Tsaritsa to holy places. Up to 300,000 worshippers from every corner of Russia assembled in Sarov for those days. Nicholas II tried to be present at all the long, almost unending services. The peak of the festivities was the transfer of the relics of St. Seraphim from the monastery's hospital church of SS. Zosimas and Sabbatius, where he had been buried, into the Dormition cathedral of the Sarov community on July 18. The coffin with the relics was borne on their shoulders by the Tsar, the Great Princes and the hierarchs, tightly surrounded by a sea of people."112

The festivities were truly an icon of Holy Russia: the Royal Family and the Great Princes mixed with thousands of peasants in a natural union that only the true worship of God and the veneration of His saints can produce. Many miracles of healing took place, and those who were present witnessed to the extraordinary spiritual peace and joy that was granted the worshippers. The Royal Family were praying for their own miracle – the birth of a male child, and their prayer was answered...

"Something unseen and unheard took place. The Russian Tsar and his Family were for several days in immediate prayerful union with hundreds of thousands (!) of Russian people, praying together with them, in their very heart. The secret police were as it were dissolved in this mass; in fact, there was essentially no need for its presence! It was truly 'with one heart and one mouth' that the Orthodox people glorified God, the God-pleaser Seraphim and God's Anointed, Tsar Nicholas II!... *Such* a meeting with Holy Russia, represented by *such a multitude of the people* and with the breathing of *the special grace of God*, bound up with the glorification of St. Seraphim of Sarov, turned out to be *the first* for the Royal Couple and... *the last*...

---

111 Sisoiev, "Trudnosti kanonizatsii" (Difficulties of canonization), *Foma.ru*, July 30, 2016, <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/95782.html>.

112 Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 388-389.



“The Sarov days of 1903 became a *key event in the whole reign*. During the festivities the Tsar received from the widow of P.A. Motovilov a letter of St. Seraphim of Sarov addressed *precisely to him*, Nicholas II [‘to the Tsar in whose reign I shall be glorified’], sealed (but never opened!) with the soft part of a piece of bread. The Tsar read the letter and his face changed, and after reading it... he wept... To this day nobody knows what was in the letter. We can guess that it contained some kind of prophecy about his destiny, or the destiny of Russia. In the same period Nicholas II visited the fool-for-Christ Pasha of Sarov... She symbolically (by means of a doll) foretold to the Tsar *the birth of a son*, and spoke much with him in figurative language. The Tsar left amazed and joyful: ‘I have travelled across the whole of Russia and have not met such a saint. Everyone has received me as Tsar, but she as a simple person,’ he said. Pasha placed the portrait of Nicholas II in her prayer corner and made many prostrations to the earth in front of it, which greatly exhausted her cell-attendants who used to lift and lower Pasha since she could not make prostrations herself because of illness. ‘Matushka, why are you praying to the Tsar?!’ they asked. ‘You know nothing,’ replied the blessed one. ‘He will be higher than all the Tsars.’ When war began in 1914 Pasha, covered in tears, began to kiss the feet of the Tsar on the portrait, saying: ‘Dear one, it is already near the end,’ and sent him the message: ‘*Your Majesty, come down from the Throne yourself*’...

“The visit to Sarov quickly produced results: On July 30 / August 12, 1904 the Heir to the Throne Alexis Nikolayevich was born! We can imagine the joy of the Crown-Bearing Parents! In the first months of the life of the new-born it was still not known what a terrible disease nestled in him. He looked completely healthy, he was simply a beautiful child...”<sup>113</sup> But for those who knew the prophecies the child’s name itself ominous: according to a seventeenth-century prophecy, the Romanov dynasty would end with an Alexis as heir...<sup>114</sup>

The Sarov days were like a last warm glow from the fading fire of Holy Rus’. They demonstrated that the ideal of a nation united by the Orthodox faith and in submission to a benevolent Tsar-Father was still a living reality. And indeed, there were many great saints still living in Russia at that time, such as the Optina Elders and St. John of Kronstadt, and many hundreds of thousands more who would suffer martyrdom during the Soviet period. These holy people were the fruit of Holy Russia, a fruit that ripened under the protection of the tsarist regime...

\*

The joy of the Sarov days was quickly followed by sorrow and tragedy...

Dominic Lieven writes: "Between 1895 and 1901 the Empress had given birth to four daughters: Olga, Tatiana, Marie and Anastasia. The four little girls were beautiful, healthy and lively children who were greatly loved by their parents. Nicholas was a fine father and the family circle was full of love, warmth and trust. If the Emperor had a favourite it was probably Tatiana, whose personality came closest to that of her mother. Olga, his eldest daughter, was the most thoughtful, sensitive and intelligent of the four. Marie, the third, with huge grey eyes and a warm-hearted, simple, friendly

---

<sup>113</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 390.

<sup>114</sup> Helen Rapoport, *Ekaterinburg*, London: Windmill Books, 2009, p. 88.

manner, was always the easiest to get on with at first acquaintance. Anastasia, born in 1901, was notorious as the family's comedian. Under Russian law, however, no woman could inherit the crown. Had Nicholas died before 1904, the throne would have gone to his kind-hearted but weak-willed younger brother, the Grand Duke Michael. Since Michael was a bachelor in 1904 and subsequently contracted an illegal and morganatic marriage, the Romanov inheritance would then have passed to a younger brother of Alexander III, the Grand Duke Vladimir, and his descendants. Tension and mutual dislike between the 'Vladimir branch' and the imperial couple were never far below the surface in the twentieth century. Much therefore hung on the life of the little boy born in August, 1904. All the more horrifying was the discovery that the child had haemophilia.

"In the Edwardian era there was no treatment for haemophilia and little way of alleviating the terrible pain it periodically caused. The chances were against a haemophiliac living into middle age, let alone being able to pursue a normal life. For any parents who loved their children as intensely as the imperial couple did, the physical and emotional strain of a haemophiliac son was bound to be great. In the case of Nicholas and Alexandra, however, matters were made worse by the fact that it was considered unthinkable to admit that the future autocrat of all the Russias was incurably ill and quite possibly doomed to an early death. The natural sympathy and understanding which might have flowed to the parents had therefore to be foregone. Moreover, however harrowing one of Aleksei's periodic illnesses might be, a monarch - let alone a Russian autocrat - had always to keep up appearances. It says something for Nicholas's extraordinary self-control that, adoring Aleksei as he did, he nevertheless never let the mask slip. As Alexandra herself once wrote to him, 'you will always keep a cheery face and carry all hidden inside.'

"Inevitably, however, it was the mother who bore the greater burden during her son's illnesses, not to mention the incessant worry even when he was relatively healthy. Nor could she escape the guilt born of the knowledge that she was the cause of her son's suffering [for the haemophiliac gene was transmitted through the maternal line] and of the extra burden of worry about his dynasty's future that had been placed on her husband's shoulders. Physically frail and always very highly strung, the Empress poured her last drop of energy into watching over her son and nursing him during his attacks... The effort cost the Empress dear. She was often too ill and exhausted to play the role of a monarch's consort, incurring great odium as a result. Moreover, the strain of Alexis' illness pushed his mother close to nervous collapse. As the Grand Duchess Olga commented, 'the birth of a son, which should have been the happiest event in the lives of Nicky and Alicky, became their heaviest cross...'"<sup>115</sup>

In spite of the joyous Sarov Days, which demonstrated the survival of true faith among the people, the fact was that *on the whole* the Russian people were falling away from the faith and their loyalty to the Autocracy. And not only among the westernized educated classes. The peasants, too - that class that the tsars believed was most devoted to Altar and Throne - were losing their zeal.

---

<sup>115</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, pp. 34-35.

For the time being, however, this was hidden from the consciousness of the tsar himself. He was not to know that the rapturous expressions of devotion he received from peasant delegations in many parts of the country, and most strikingly in Sarov, came from an ever-dwindling proportion of the common people. He was not to know that Sarov, 1903 marked the high point of his reign, after which it would be a steady descent into anarchy...

## 9. PROTO-ECUMENISM AND THE ORTHODOX CHURCHES

Greece after its liberation from the Turks was in a sorry state spiritually speaking. As Sotos Chondropoulos writes, "the new Bavarian king's court corrupted the traditional Orthodox values. This confusion greatly affected the priests, who struggled to lead the nation in its newly found freedom, just as they had during the hard years of Turkish oppression. Now, however, their values were steadily becoming more secular. The priesthood had become, in fact, nothing more than a routine vocation with many despots. The laity, in its instinctive wisdom, was aware of this but could do nothing since it was bound by politicians, scholars, and demagogues. So it turned satirical towards everything, including the church. Indeed, what a sad state of affairs it is when people mock their religious leaders."<sup>116</sup>

Men arose from within the Church who combatted these tendencies. However, they were not all of the same quality. Perhaps the finest was St. Nektarios of Pentapolis, who by his holy life and God-inspired writings showed that the great hierarchs of the patristic period had found a worthy successor. But he was little understood by his fellow hierarchs, and ended his earthly life in 1920 in virtual exile on the island of Aegina.

Another striking figure was the layman Apostolos Makrakis. He wrote openly against Freemasonry, which won him the approval of the hierarchy, and then against simony - which did not. Although he spoke eloquently against foreign influences and heresies, he was himself not pure in his teaching, and in 1878 the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece condemned him for teaching the tripartite composition of the soul and that Christ was perfected at His Baptism in the Jordan.

No less concerned about westernizing tendencies in the Church was the famous novelist Alexandros Papadiamandis, sometimes known as "Greece's Dostoyevsky". But he believed that the Church's condemnation of Makrakis should be obeyed, and he was critical of the religious brotherhoods that grew up in the wake of Makrakis' "School of the Word". "In the first place," as Anestis Keselopoulos interprets his thought, "the brotherhoods transfer the center of the Church's life and worship from the parish and the church to the auditorium. Secondly, the lay theologians in the brotherhoods of his day present an easy, fashionable Christianity. In their sermons, they hesitate or are ashamed to speak of the Saints and miracles, of fasting and asceticism, of the battle against the passions and evil spirits. Thirdly, Papadiamandis takes issue with the type of religious man that the piety of the brotherhoods fashions and the pride and hypocrisy that the moralistic one-sidedness of the religious unions cultivate."<sup>117</sup>

Papadiamandis entered into conflict with the Makrakians, and called Makrakis himself a "dangerous and much more unremitting opponent" than even "the cosmopolitan modernists and the atheist Kleona Ragavis."<sup>118</sup>

---

<sup>116</sup> Chondropoulos. *Saint Nektarios: The Saint of Our Century*, Athens, 1997. p. 48.

<sup>117</sup> Keselopoulos, *Greece's Dostoyevsky*, Protecting Veil, [www.ProtectingVeil.com](http://www.ProtectingVeil.com), 2011, p. 86.

<sup>118</sup> Keselopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

While closer to the hierarchy than Makrakis, Papadiamandis was not afraid to criticise the hierarchs, especially in their too-close relationship with the State. "Papadiamandis believes that 'the Church should be far from every governmental dependence and imposition'. He argues that 'the Church is victorious in the world without the slightest cooperation of the State; in fact, on the contrary, the Church has been much persecuted and exhausted by the State. Today, the Church can be victorious over every persecution when its leaders, having the consciousness of their high calling, seek the good of the Church in every way. Papadiamandis insists that the Church must not only distance itself from politics but also from the State in general. The Church must be particularly strict when a corrupt State asks Her, not only for small compromises but to commit sins on its behalf. He believes that the Church must be managed by the faithful themselves and not from the outside. In particular, the election and ordination of clergy must take place according to purely ecclesiastical criteria and procedures, and the Church should not be forced to accept the 'swarm of priests, boors and philistines that corrupt politics have many times imposed upon the eminent hierarchs to ordain."<sup>119</sup>

\*

Turning from Free Greece to Greece under the Turks - that is, to the Ecumenical Patriarchate, we see that piety was in general higher, especially in the country districts of Anatolia, where holy priests such as St. Arsenius of Cappadocia (+1924) struggled. However, the capital suffered from various heterodox influences - not only the Islam of the Ottoman rulers, but also, more seriously, the Catholicism and Protestantism of the western powers.

Also beginning at this time were ecumenical relations between the Ecumenical Patriarchate and the other major Christian confession in the Turkish empire, the Armenians. Hieromonk Enoch writes: "The heresy of ecumenism extends back into the mid 19th century. The Ecumenical Patriarchate engaged in negotiations with the Armenian Monophysite Church in the 19th century, and, in the documents for establishment of a 'communion agreement', state that they 'recognize' the priesthood and mysteries of the Armenian Monophysites. This eventually led to a decision, sometime in between 1879-1885, by the Ecumenical Patriarchate, apparently, allowing Armenian Monophysites to take Communion from Orthodox priests if they didn't have access to their own clergy! As always, it seems the Protestant English Establishment (Anglicans), were involved in this somewhere."<sup>120</sup>

They were indeed. In fact, both the Catholics and the Anglicans were adopting a more "eirenical", ecumenist approach to inter-Church relations at this time. Pope Leo XIII had already shown himself a liberal in political terms, striving to come closer to the republican government of France, the Kaiser's Germany and even the revolutionary movement. He brought the Vatican into the world of stock-market

---

<sup>119</sup> Keselopoulos, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

<sup>120</sup> Enoch, "Constantinople Attempted Union with Armenian Monophysites in 19th Century; Allowed Armenians to Take Communion in 1879", *NFTU News*, July 21, 2016. See more at: <http://nftu.net/constantinople-attempted-union-with-armenian-monophysites-in-19th-century-allowed-armenians-to-take-communion-in-1879/#sthash.n5swfeqK.dpuf>.

speculation, and founded the first Vatican bank. Then, on June 20, 1894, he issued an encyclical on the union of the Churches "addressed," in the words of Patriarch Anthimus' encyclical in reply dated August, 1895, "to the sovereigns and peoples of the whole world, in which he also called on our Orthodox, Catholic and Apostolic Church of Christ to unite with the throne of the Pope, understanding this union in the sense that we should recognize him as the supreme pontiff and the highest spiritual and secular head of the whole Church scattered throughout the earth and the only deputy of Christ on earth and distributor of all grace".

The patriarch replied, listing all the heresies of the papacy and called on it to return to the One, Holy, Catholic and Apostolic church. For "truly," continued the encyclical, "every Christian heart must be filled with the desire for the union of the Churches, especially the union of the whole Orthodox world... Therefore in her public prayers [the Orthodox Church] prays for the union of all those who are dispersed and for the return of all those who erred to the correct path of the truth, which alone can lead to the Life of all that exists, the Only-Begotten Son and Word of God, our Lord Jesus Christ...

"Reverting, then, to that teaching which was common to the Churches of the East and of the West until the separation, we ought, with a sincere desire to know the truth, to search what the One Holy, Catholic and Orthodox Apostolic Church of Christ, being then 'of the same body,' throughout the East and West believed, and to hold this fact, entire, and unaltered. But whatsoever has in later times been added or taken away, every one has a sacred and indispensable duty, if he sincerely seeks for the glory of God more than for his own glory, that in a spirit of piety he should correct it, considering that by arrogantly continuing in the perversion of the truth he is liable to a heavy account before the impartial judgment-seat of Christ. In saying this we do not at all refer to the differences regarding the ritual of the sacred services and the hymns, or the sacred vestments, and the like, which matters, even though they still vary, as they did of old, do not in the least injure the substance and unity of the faith; but we refer to those essential differences which have reference to the divinely transmitted doctrines of the faith, and the divinely instituted canonical constitution of the administration of the Churches. 'In cases where the thing disregarded is not the faith (says also the holy Photius), and is no falling away from any general and catholic decree, different rites and customs being observed among different people, a man who knows how to judge rightly would decide that neither do those who observe them act wrongly, nor do those who have not received them break the law.'<sup>121</sup>

The Catholic writer Adrian Fortescue finds this worthy reply "unpardonably offensive". In revenge, as it were, he mocks the internal divisions within the patriarchate in a manner that is tendentious but which nevertheless is worth quoting as demonstrating how the undeniably scandalous state of the patriarchate was perceived by the outside world: "In 1894 [Ecumenical Patriarch] Lord Neophytos VIII occupied the see. He was a prelate who really cared for the dignity and independence of his Church, and by way of restoring them he ventured on a feeble attempt at resisting the tyranny of the Porte [the Ottoman government] in canonical matters. But when he

---

<sup>121</sup> "A Reply to the Papal Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII, on Reunion". [http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc\\_1895.aspx](http://orthodoxinfo.com/ecumenism/encyc_1895.aspx)

asked the other Orthodox Churches to help him (Russia could have claimed almost anything as the acknowledged protector of all Orthodox Rayahs), their jealousy of the Phanar was so much greater than their zeal for ecclesiastical independence that no one would do anything. The Bulgarian trouble, to which of course he could not put an end, alienated his own friends - they always seem to accuse the perfectly helpless Patriarch when the Bulgars become specially unbearable - so the Porte had no difficulty in making them depose him. On October 25 (O.S.), 1894, the synod and the mixed council agreed that he must resign, and a deputation of five members waited on him to inform him of their unanimous decision. So Neophytos VIII had to go back to private life in his house on the Antigone island. Having got rid of the Patriarch, the synod and the mixed council quarrelled so badly about his successor that their members excommunicated each other, and things came to an absolute block, till the Minister of Religions, Riza Pasha, wrote to say that he had annulled all their acts, and that they were to elect a new Patriarch at once. In defiance of the law the Porte struck off seven names from the first list of twenty-eight candidates which was sent up; one of these names was that of Germanos of Heraclea, who would otherwise almost certainly have been chosen. The popular candidate was the ex-Patriarch, Joachim III (1878-1884), but (it was said at the time) Germanos managed to get his name struck off too; so at last Anthimos VII (Metropolitan of Leros and Kalymnos) was elected. There was a tumult at his enthronement; the people wanted Joachim, and would cry 'Unworthy' (Ανθιμος αναξιτος) instead of the proper form. Germanos had prudently retired to Vienna. However, Lord Anthimos began the reign in which he chiefly distinguished himself by his unpardonably offensive answer to the Encyclical of Pope Leo XIII. In two years the popular party succeeded in having him deposed. The immediate reason was the affair of Ambrose of Uskub [Skopje], in which he was accused of betraying the cause of Hellas. No accusation could have been more unjust. The cause of Hellas is the one thing no Rumenical Patriarch ever betrays; he was only helpless before the Porte and the Russians. He did his best to keep his see. As soon as he heard that the synod wanted him to retire he suspended the leaders of the opposition and ordered them to go back to their dioceses. Of course they refused to obey. Poor Anthimos did all a man could. He went to the Yildiz-Kiosk and implored the Sultan to protect him, but the Sultan had other things to think about, and, on February 8, 1897, he went to swell the number of ex-Patriarchs, who wait in hope of being some day re-elected. There were now three - Joachim III, Neophytos VIII, and Anthimos VII. Constantine V (Valiades) was elected Patriarch in April. Lord Constantine seems to have been one of the best of all the later Rumenical Patriarchs. He set about reforming the education of priests, insisted that the services of the Church should be celebrated with proper reverence, and modified some of the incredibly pretentious etiquette which his court had inherited from the days of the Old Empire. There seemed no possible reason why he should be deposed, except that the parties of the ex-Patriarchs wanted their candidates to have another chance. In the spring of 1901 it was first rumoured that Lord Constantine V was shaking on his throne. Twelve metropolitans of his synod and six laymen in the mixed council voted for his resignation. The rich bankers and merchants of the Phanar were all in favour of Germanos Karavangelis, of Pera. Constantine tried to remove that danger by sending him to be Metropolitan of Kastoria, a long way off in Macedonia. Nevertheless, on April 9th, Constantine's resignation was demanded by both synod and mixed council. But he did not want to resign, and for a time the Porte supported him. The Greek paper *Anatolia*, strongly partisan of the ex-Patriarch, Joachim III, all

too hurriedly announced that Constantine had ceased to reign. It was immediately suppressed by the Government, and its proprietor was put in prison. The free Greeks of the kingdom were also all for Constantine. But in Holy Week his metropolitans again waited on him with the demand that he should resign. He was naturally indignant that they should disturb him during these august days, and he declared that his health was perfectly good and that he intended to go on presiding over the Orthodox Church. Four metropolitans were on his side. He celebrated the services of Holy Week surrounded by these four, but boycotted by all the rest of his synod. The opposition then sent an order to the four, forbidding them to communicate with the deposed one, and they besieged the Minister of Religions, Abdurrahman, with petitions for his removal. The Porte tried to save him as long as it could, but the opposition was too strong. Again there was an absolute block at the Phanar. The synod refused to sit under Constantine; and so he fell. He retired to Chalki, and Joachim III was re-elected. Lord Joachim, the reigning Patriarch, had already occupied the throne of Constantinople from 1878 to 1884. Since then he had been an ex-Patriarch with a strong party demanding his re-election. On Friday, June 7 (O.S.), 1901, after the fall of Constantine V, he was chosen by eight-three votes, and the Porte then gave him his *berat*."<sup>122</sup>

Joachim III introduced a period of relative stability into the patriarchate. But it was precisely in this period that the influence of Anglican ecumenism came most strongly to bear. This may have had something to do with the fact that Joachim himself was a Freemason... Thus according to the leading organ of the patriarchate, "the first impulse towards official communion between the two Churches (Orthodox and Protestant) was provided by the Lambeth conference of July, 1897, in which 194 bishops from the whole Anglican communion came together and unanimously voted for action aimed at the union of the Churches... After this, in February, 1898, Archbishop Friedrich of Canterbury sent letters to the Patriarchs of the East and the Archbishop of Cyprus with copies of the decisions of the conference with regard to the union of the Churches... He asked the Orthodox Church to accept the baptism of the Anglicans and allow her priests to give the Divine Gifts to dying Anglicans in places where they did not have their own priests... In September, 1899, in a letter to Patriarch Constantine V the Archbishop of Canterbury expressed the burning desire of the English for clearer understanding and the establishment of closer relations, declaring that it would be difficult to set out the details of such a course and that the longed-for communion should proceed with ever-increasing depth insofar as the determination of some kind of programme towards this end had been shown to be difficult... He pointed out that the communion of the two Churches would become surer through the cessation of proselytism, through visits of Orthodox clergy to London and of the Archbishop of Canterbury and English priests to the Ecumenical Patriarchate in Constantinople on the great feasts and other official days, and through each Church telling the other of important changes taking place in her... On the basis of an agreement on these points by both sides, mutual correspondence began in December, 1900 and continued. After this various other events took place demonstrating the friendly relations between the two Churches..."<sup>123</sup>

---

<sup>122</sup> Fortescue, *The Orthodox Eastern Church*, London: Catholic Truth Society, 1920, pp. 342-345.

<sup>123</sup> *Ekklesiastiki Alitheia* (Ecclesiastical Truth), 1920; in Monk Pavlos, *Neomerologitismos Oikoumenismos* (Newcalendarism Ecumenism), Athens, 1982, pp. 17-19



The first such "demonstration" was Patriarch Joachim's declaring, in 1902, that Papism and Protestantism were "great ramifications (αναδενδραδας) of Christianity". However, before embarking on an ecumenist course, he wisely decided to issue an encyclical asking all the other Orthodox Churches (except Antioch and Bulgaria, whose hierarchies, for different reasons, he did not recognise) to express their opinions on union with the western churches.

He also asked their opinion on the proposed change to the new, Gregorian calendar. This was related to the ecumenical venture, because the difference between the old, Julian calendar used in the Orthodox East and the new, Gregorian calendar used in the Catholic-Protestant West was the first obstacle to the practical implementation of ecumenism - celebrating the major Christian feasts together. The issue had already arisen at the state level because, as Pavel Kuzenkov points out, "it was not easy to answer the question as to why Russia should stick to its own, special calendar while Europe and America followed the unified calendar system. Weighty arguments were needed. By the twentieth century Russia had become an integral part of the civilized world, and very many stood for the adoption of the Gregorian calendar. However, Tsar Nicholas II, who in 1899 set up a committee to review the calendar, decided not to rush things. In my view, the voice of our great Church historian Vasily Vasilievich Bolotov played a crucial role. He provided a well-substantiated explanation for why Russia should continue to observe the Julian calendar: because the Orthodox Paschalia is based on it. If we introduce the Gregorian calendar, our Paschalia will cease to function as a mathematical system.

"The fact is that the Alexandrian Paschalia, which was worked out in the fourth century, is quite a refined mathematical instrument intended to make two astronomical cycles—the solar and lunar cycles, along with the week cycle—agree with one another. As a result 532 years make up a complete cycle of Pascha and the movable Church feasts that are related to it. But the main thing about this cycle is that it is interwoven with the Julian year of 365 and one-quarter day. If we replace the Julian year with the Gregorian year underhand, the cycle will collapse. That is why there is no Gregorian Paschalia. Pascha according to "the new style" is calculated by means of manipulations with the traditional Alexandrian Paschalia, involving complex corrections to it. For the Paschalia is at the heart of the liturgical Church calendar. In effect, the following question arises: either the new calendar or the Paschalia. And it is impossible to combine both.

"Bolotov's arguments produced an effect, and it was decided at the state level that this process should be examined further and not speeded up, while the country's tradition should be maintained. Among the favorable circumstances was the fact that many other countries of that time, such as the Ottoman Empire and the Balkan States, lived by the same calendar. That is, it was not an exclusively Russian peculiarity but a distinctive characteristic in a number of countries of the former Byzantine world.

"The Julian calendar became a symbol of old Russia."<sup>124</sup>

---

<sup>124</sup> Kuzenkov and Pushchaev, "The Rudiments of an Ultra-Ecumenical Project, or Why Constantinople Needed to Introduce the New Calendar", *Pravoslavie.ru*, February 20, 2019.

In any case, the Local Orthodox Churches all rejected the new calendar (Alexandria and strife-torn Cyprus did not reply). Their replies were summarized by the Catholic writer Adrian Fortescue as follows: "His Holiness [Joachim III] speaks of the Latins with every possible charity, moderation, and courtesy, and hopes for reunion with us. Which hope may God fulfill. The difference of his tone from that of Anthimos VII, in the famous answer to Pope Leo XIII, is very remarkable. The answers of the sister-Churches, however, show how little they are disposed to listen to the voice of their honorary chief...

"Jerusalem answered cordially and sympathetically. Patriarch Damianos said that it is unhappily hopeless to think of reunion with Latins or Protestants as long as they go on proselytising in the East. But union with the Anglicans is possible and very desirable... Athens answered that no union is possible, least of all with the Old Catholics, who will not give a plain account of what they do or do not believe. Bucharest said that the only union possible would be the conversion of the Latin and Protestant heretics to the one true Orthodox Church; the Old Catholics are specially hopeless, because they have given up confession and fasting, try to unite with the Anglicans, and do not know what they themselves believe. Belgrade likes the idea of union with the Old Catholics especially. Russia answered at great length and very offensively [*sic*]. What, said the Holy Russian Synod, is the good of talking about reunion with other bodies when we are in such a state of disorder ourselves? It went on to draw up a list of their domestic quarrels, and hinted plainly that they were all the fault of the Phanar. For the rest, union with the Latins is impossible, because of the unquenchable ambitions of the See of Rome, which long ago led her to her fall. As for the Anglicans, the Church of Russia has always been well disposed towards them: 'We show every possible condescension to their perplexities, which are only natural after so long a separation. But we must loudly proclaim the truth of our Church and her office as the one and only heir of Christ, and the only ark of salvation left to men by God's grace.'"<sup>125</sup>

Having received all the replies, the patriarch published a second encyclical in 1904 which expressed his own opinions, both about ecumenism and about the first step necessary in order to implement ecumenism - the change from the traditional Orthodox Julian calendar to the papal Gregorian calendar that was in use throughout the West: "The Church is one, in identity of faith and similarity of habits and customs, in accordance with the decisions of the Seven Ecumenical Councils; and one it must be, and not many and diverse, differing from each other both in dogmas and in the basic principles of Church government.

"This is our opinion concerning the calendar: the Paschalion is venerable and immovable, having been fixed already centuries ago and sanctioned by the constant practice of the Church. In accordance with it, we have been taught to celebrate the radiant Resurrection of the Lord on the first Sunday after the full moon of the spring equinox, or on the Sunday following; and we are not allowed to make innovations in this. And it is mindless and pointless for those who are lying in wait to ambush our

---

<sup>125</sup> Fortescue, *op. cit.*, pp. 345-347. See also Eleutherios Goutzides, *Ekklesiologika Themata* (Ecclesiological Themes), Athens, 1980, vol. I, pp. 64-67.

immovable Julian calendar by jumping only 13 days, so that our menologia and those of the followers of the other calendar should coincide. On the one hand, there is no compelling reason to omit all these days; such an act has no ecclesiastical or scientific justification. And on the other hand, the coincidence of the menologia will be only temporary, viz., until the year 2100, when there will again begin to be a difference of one day."<sup>126</sup>

This epistle was followed by a further bout of infighting among the hierarchs, according to Fortescue: "So far then Lord Joachim III has shown himself a wise and admirable Patriarch. Alas! He has one fault, and that is an unpardonable one. He has already reigned five years, and the rival parties think it is quite time for him to retire, so as to give their favourites another chance. Already the opposition to him in his synod has declared itself. In January, 1905, there was a scene. Lord Prokopios of Durazzo led the anti-Joachimite side, and in a long speech attacked a number of the Patriarch's actions. 'Holy man of Durazzo,' said Joachim angrily, 'thou hast learnt thy lesson well. These are the plots brewed in the conventicles of the holy man of Ephesus.' 'All holy one,' said Joachim of Ephesus, 'there are no conventicles held in my house.' Then he, too, made a list of accusations, and eight metropolitans ranged themselves on his side. The Patriarch tried the old and always hopeless expedient of forbidding Prokopios to attend the meetings of the synod. That only brought matters to a climax. The eight members at once deposed Joachim and telegraphed the news to Petersburg, Bucharest, Athens, Belgrade, etc. Then, as usual, both sides appealed to the Sultan. Abdulhamid once more had the exquisite pleasure of lecturing them all on charity and concord. 'Patriarch Effendi,' says he, 'you are breaking the laws of the Church. You have no right to exclude Prokopios, and you must make it up with the eight metropolitans.' Then he sent for the eight. 'My metropolitans, what right have you to depose the Patriarch? It is not right. You must make it up with Lord Joachim.' He further hinted that if the precepts of their own Prophet are not enough to control their passions and to make them live in peace, he would have to refer the matter to the invincible Ottoman Police. Eventually the Minister of Religions, our inimitable friend Abdurrahman, last November, sent a note to Joachim, telling him his duty and the Canons of the Orthodox Church, and exhorting him to be a good Patriarch; but so far the Porte is for him and he still reigns. However, the opposition is by no means dead, and we may hear any day that he has gone the weary way to Chalki once more, and that a new bishop rules over the Great Church."<sup>127</sup>

\*

The Russian Church had been under pressure from the Tsars for some time to indulge in what we may call "proto-ecumenism". Thus in 1847 Emperor Nicholas I concluded a concordat with Pope Gregory XVI which envisaged that the Russian Orthodox Church would carry out all the sacraments and needs for those who turned to her with such requests from the Catholics exiled for their participation in the Polish rebellions against Russia, if they were living in places where there were no Catholic churches or Catholic clergy. In accordance with the meaning of this concordat and the

---

<sup>126</sup> *Agios Agathangelos Esphigmenites* (St. Agathangelos of Esphigmenou), N 124, March-April, 1990, pp. 17-19.

<sup>127</sup> Fortescue, *op. cit.*, pp. 347-348.

order of the Emperor, the Synod then issued the corresponding command, which was obligatory for the Russian Orthodox clergy, to satisfy the requests of exiled Catholics, if such requests came from them. Again, as the Russian empire had expanded, so had the number of subjects of other, non-Orthodox faiths, to the extent that by the late imperial period, as Igor Smolich says, it was no longer a “confessionally united kingdom”, but an “interconfessional empire”. Thus, as Archimandrite Makary (Veretennikov) writes, commenting on Smolich’s work, “Tsar Alexander III, for example, visited Buddhist temples and attended their services; [and] Tsar Nicholas II also (for example, during the world war) visited Catholic churches, Jewish synagogues and Muslim mosques, attended their services, and kissed the Catholic cross. From a purely ecclesiastical-formal point of view the Orthodox tsar should not have done that, but as the head of a super-confessional empire, as emperor, he was forced to it.”<sup>128</sup>

The most active ecumenists were the Anglicans, and the “High Church” branch of the Anglicans that took particular interest in the Russian Church, whose highly traditional ethos and status as a local national Church seemed to them to be a model of what the Anglican Church should be. Unfortunately, the sincere interest of some Anglicans in Russian Orthodoxy did not go so far as to see in Orthodoxy the One True Church; and the *rapprochement* between the two Churches turned out to be more of a danger to the Russians than an opportunity to the Anglicans. In 1908 the Anglican Bishop of Gibraltar reported that a recent synod of the Anglican Church had decided that the Anglican Churches could baptize the children of Orthodox coming to Anglican priests in places where there were no Orthodox priests, but only on condition that this baptism was not repeated by Orthodox clergy. Then, in 1910, the first “World Missionary Conference” was convened in Edinburgh. This is considered by some to mark the historical beginning of the ecumenical movement. Its president, John Mott, was the first to introduce the terms “Ecumenism” and “ecumenical” into common currency.<sup>129</sup>

In 1900, Bishop Tikhon of Alaska and the Aleutian Islands, the future Martyr-Patriarch, attended the consecration of Reginald Weller as Episcopalian Bishop Coadjutor of the Diocese of Fond du Lac, Wisconsin.<sup>130</sup> In his diary under December 16/29, 1900, Archbishop Nicholas (Kasatkin) of Japan mentions this fact with some annoyance: “Why did Tikhon worm himself in there in a hierarchical mantia?”

The problem was that many of the Orthodox Churches were indulging in “proto-ecumenism”, including the Ecumenical Patriarchate and some of the Slavic Churches. Thus the famous Serbian theologian Fr. Nikolai Velimirovich, who had studied both in Russia and for several postgraduate degrees in western universities, served with Anglicans in London after the outbreak of war in 1914. Later, however, he later turned away from ecumenism, and became a great confessor against both ecumenism and communism before his death in exile in 1956.<sup>131</sup>)

---

<sup>128</sup> Veretennikov, “K Voprosu Periodizatsii Istorii Russkoj Tserkvi” (Towards the Question of the Periodicisation of the History of the Russian Church), <http://ao.orthodoxy.ru/arch/017/017-smol.htm>, pp. 6, 11 (footnote 17). The construction of a Buddhist temple in St. Petersburg in Nicholas’ reign elicited strong criticism from hierarchs.

<sup>129</sup> Monk Pavlos, *op. cit.*, pp. 19-20.

<sup>130</sup> *The Living Church*, November 17, 1900.

<sup>131</sup> See Muriel Heppell, *George Bell and Nikolai Velimirovich*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, 2001.

Although for the time being the Lord “winked” at these violations of Orthodox canon law, the time was coming when He would no longer be so indulgent... In 1914 the “World Congress for International Friendship through the Churches” met. This led to the creation of the “Life and Work” Movement, which later combined with the “Faith and Order” Movement to form the World Council of Churches in 1948. However, the outbreak of the First World War put a temporary halt to these developments...

The official service-books of the Russian Church reveal an unclear attitude towards the sacraments of the heterodox. Thus in the *Book of Needs*, we read: “Know this also, that a schismatic baptism, and a heretical one, by those who believe in the Holy Indivisible Trinity, in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, the Holy Orthodox-Catholic Church determines to be ultimately acceptable in every way.”

Again, Bulgakov’s *Handbook for Clergy*, explains that Roman Catholics, if they have been baptised and confirmed, should be received by the “Third Rite”, that is, renunciation of heresies and repentance. If they have not been confirmed, they must be chrismated. They must *never* be baptised. “Recognising Baptism as a requirement for becoming a member of her, [the Russian Orthodox Church] accepts Jews, Muslims, pagans and those sectarians who distort the fundamental dogmas of the Orthodox Church through Baptism; Protestants are accepted through Chrismation; and those Catholics, Armenians and members of the Anglican Church who have not received Chrismation or Confirmation, and also those who have fallen away from Orthodoxy, she accepts through the Third Rite, through Repentance, repudiation of errors and Communion of the Holy Mysteries.”<sup>132</sup>

The 1903 Epistle of the Holy Synod of the Russian Church to the Patriarch of Constantinople expressed firm opposition to union with the heretics. The hierarchs were “unchangeably convinced... that our Eastern Orthodox Church, which has inviolably preserved the complete deposit of Christ, is alone at the present time the Oecumenical Church”. “As regards our relations with the two great ramifications of Christianity, the Latins and the Protestants, the Russian Church, together with all the autocephalous Churches, ever prays, awaits, and fervently desires that those who in times of old were children of Mother Church and sheep of the one flock of Christ, but who now have been torn away by the envy of the foe and are wandering astray, ‘should repent and come to the knowledge of the truth’, that they should once more return to the bosom of the Holy, Catholic and Apostolic Church, to their one Shepherd. We believe in the sincerity of their faith in the All-Holy and Life-Originating Trinity, and on that account we accept the baptism of both the one and the other. We respect the Apostolic Succession of the Latin hierarchy, and those of their clergy who join our Church we accept in the Orders which they then possess, just as we do in the case of

---

<sup>132</sup> S.V. Bulgakov, *Nastol’naia Kniga sviaschenno-tserkovno-sluzhitelej* (Handbook for Church Servers), Kharkov, 1900, p. 928. In a footnote Bulgakov writes: “Accepting confirmed Anglicans [and Catholics] by the ‘Third Rite’ could be permitted only under the condition of recognition that the Anglican Church has a completely legitimate hierarchy, truly having preserved the grace of the priesthood in unbroken succession from the Apostles.”

With regard to the Syro-Chaldean Nestorians, the position of the Church of Russia was expressed in a Synodal ukaz dated March 17-21, 1898, N 1017, which stated that in accordance with the 95th Canon of the Sixth Ecumenical Council they were to be received according to the Third Rite, and that their clergy had be received in full ecclesiastical rank, with no re-ordination.

Armenians, Copts, Nestorians and other bodies that have not lost Apostolic Succession. 'Our heart is enlarged' (II Corinthians 6.11), and we are ready to do all that is possible in order to promote the establishment upon earth of the unity which we so much desire. But, to our great regret and to the common grief of all true children of the Church, at the present time we are obliged to think, not so much of softening our relations towards Western Christians, and of a love-abounding drawing of their communities into union with us, as of the unwearying and ever-watchful defence of the rational sheep committed to our charge from unceasing attacks and multiform seducements on the part of the Latins and the Protestants."<sup>133</sup>

As Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) explained, the refusal to rebaptise or reordain a heretic, and reception of him by the "Third Rite", did not entail the belief that the heretic was inside the Church. It was rather an acceptance that the *form* of these rites was correct and did not have to be repeated; so that this form became as it were a cup receiving the grace that is imparted only in the Orthodox Church.<sup>134</sup> Unfortunately, however, this widespread practice of "economy" in the reception of heretics led to frequent misunderstandings in the ecumenical era that began after the First World War...

With regard to the Latins, Archbishop Anthony wrote: "The Church is one and has never been divided, but heretics and schismatics fell away from her in the first age, have fallen away since, and will fall away until the Lord's Second Coming. Therefore, there can be no question of Union with heretics and schismatics, but only of their restoration to union with the Church from which they fell away.

"If the Roman Catholics should renounce their imaginings, then their restoration to union with the Church would be a matter for the greatest joy to the faithful and to the Holy Angels, not only for the sake of their souls' salvation but for the realization of the restored fullness of the Church's life to which our brethren of the West would bring that corporate ecclesiastical activity which is characteristic to them. In the circumstance of the renunciation by the Roman Catholics of their pseudo-dogmas, and in particular of that absurd one of them which ascribes Infallibility to the Pope in

---

<sup>133</sup> A translation of the whole Epistle is to be found in Athelstan Riley, *Birkbeck and the Russian Church*, London: Macmillan, 1917, pp. 247-257.

<sup>134</sup> . Khrapovitsky clarified the meaning of baptism and Apostolic Succession found in his article "The Basis on which Economy may be used in the Reception of Converts": "those among heretics, whether clerical or lay, baptized and anointed (with chrism) by heretics, had only the empty sign (or outward form) of the mystery, and it receives the complement of grace only through that mystery which unites them with the holy Church (chrismation or penance). Moreover, in confirmation of this principle, should be added the custom, established in the Church, that the reception of heretics and schismatics, "in their existing orders," may be performed only by a bishop; if a priest receive them, then they enter the Church as simple laymen. This means that a schismatic priest united to the Church receives true priesthood only through episcopal reception; but a priest cannot bestow this grace on the one received. It is only on such a conception of the mysteries of the Church that her regulations as to the applicability to heretics and schismatics of one or the other rite of reception can be accepted; only on such a conception can the decisions of the holy apostles about the baptism of heretics and schismatics be reconciled with the further canons of the Councils about not baptizing them, and about their reception by the second, or even by the third rite ... As a condition of their reception in their existing orders, the existence among schismatics, before their conversion to the Church, of hierarchical succession, is usually insisted upon; but from the canonical rule of Basil the Great already quoted, we see that no schismatics have any succession and cannot have any; a hierarchy falling away from the Church 'become laymen and cannot confer the grace of the Holy Spirit, of which they are themselves devoid.' ... (This *economia* or accepting of the outward form of baptism in heterodox communities) depends on ecclesiastical economy, on the judgment of the local bishops and the Councils, and on the existence of the outward form of the mysteries of baptism, chrismation and orders in the communities from which the applicants come."

matters, of Faith, the Holy Church, in restoring them to union with herself, would not only certainly restore to the Roman Primate that primacy which was assigned to him before his falling away into schism, but would probably invest him with such an authority in the Ecumenical Church as had never hitherto been assigned to him – inasmuch as that which he formerly possessed was confined to Western Europe and North-West Africa.

“But such authority, assumed as being given to the Pope after his return to Orthodoxy, would be based, not on Roman fables about the Apostle Peter as chief over all the Apostles, about the succession of the Popes to the fullness of his imaginary authority, about indulgences, purgatory, etc., but in the practical need of ecclesiastical life by the force of which that life was gradually centralized: first, in the metropolitanates (from the third century) and then in the patriarchates (from the fourth and fifth centuries) with the result that the authority of the metropolitans and patriarchs in their areas was continually and gradually strengthened in proportion to the assimilation of the people to Christian culture. We admit for the future the conception of a single personal supremacy of the Church in consonance with the broadest preservation of the conciliar principle and on the condition that that supremacy does not pretend to be based on such invented traditions as the above, but only on the practical need of ecclesiastical life.”<sup>135</sup>

---

<sup>135</sup> *The Christian East*, February, 1924, no. 1, 24-25



## 10. THE BATTLE FOR THE RUSSIAN CHURCH

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed a fierce struggle for the soul of the Russian Church, the major traditional mainstay of Tsarist Russia. Now the Church in turn gained much from the support of the State, but it was increasingly accepted that while the Church should be *supported* by the State, she should not *depend* on it, financially and administratively, to the degree imposed on her by Peter the Great's *Spiritual Regulation*, which had abolished the patriarchate and made the Church almost a department of the State. Indeed, by the turn of the century it had become almost an article of faith among the Church and near-Church intelligentsia that Church-State relations needed a thorough overhaul in order to bring them closer to the "symphonic" ideal inherited from Byzantium.

However, this movement was opposed by Pobedonostsev, who feared that a reform of Church-State relations, even if desirable in itself from a canonical point of view, might lead to Church-State *separation* and the gradual dechristianisation of society. Sergei Firsov writes: "Pobedonostsev saw and understood better than many that the demolishing of the Petrine Synodal system in Russian conditions would not lead to the recreation of correct mutual relations between the Church and the State, but would only strengthen anti-government forces. To represent the Church and the kingdom as existing in isolation from each other was psychologically impossible, while any changes in the ecclesiastical structure could be understood by 'the simple people' only as the abolition of the previous Church-State relationship [because 'for our peasant form is everything']. It was not by chance that Pobedonostsev, while talking with General A.A. Kireev about Church problems and 'about learning', declared that what he feared above all was a new schism: 'It's fine for you, but where shall we go with our darkness, with the peasant. I fear a schism, that's what I fear!'"<sup>136</sup> It is not clear whether he meant a Church schism, or a schism between the peasants and the State. In either case, the peasant uprisings of 1905 showed that the venerable old man had a point... However, there was a contradiction in Pobedonostsev's position. On the one hand, he sincerely believed that the Church was the soul of the State and the people, and should be its teacher, corrector and inspirer. On the other hand, he acted as if he did not believe this, but rather that the Church should be tutored and disciplined by the State, and that he himself, as the representative of the State, should act as the taskmaster of the Church hierarchy...

Tsar Nicholas, with his deep love of pre-Petrine Russia, took a close interest in this question. He believed in giving the Church more freedom, and that freeing the Church from the dead hand of the State would ultimately be to the benefit of both Church and State. But, perhaps under the influence of his former tutor, Pobedonostsev, he acted cautiously... Nevertheless, one of the most important measures of his reign was his removal from the Constitution in 1901 of the phrase describing him as "Supreme Judge" of the Church. And, as we shall see, if political events had not intervened, it is likely that this would have been only the first step in a far-ranging reform of Church-State relations, bringing them back to true "symphony".

---

<sup>136</sup> Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' nakanune peremen (konets 1890-kh - 1918 g.)* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes (the end of the 1890s to 1918), Moscow, 2002, p. 47.



The movement for Church reform first manifested itself publicly in 1901, when, somewhat reluctantly, Pobedonostsev allowed the convening of a series of religio-philosophical meetings between the “God-searching” intelligentsia and the clergy in St. Petersburg. These meetings - the idea of D.S. Merezhkovsky, V.V. Rozanov and a Synodal official, V.A. Ternavtsev - were an attempt to respond to a definite turning away of a part of the intelligentsia from sixties-style positivism to some kind of religion. Unfortunately, however, the conversion was, as often as not, not to Orthodoxy but to some vague kind of mysticism or theosophy. For Russia at that time was teeming with false teachers and prophets: revolutionaries such as Lenin and Trotsky; Protestant sectarians such as the Baptists, Stundists and Adventists; more “mystical” sectarians such as the *khlysty*, the *beguny*, the *Dukhobory*, the *molokany*, the *prygany* and the *skeptisy*; free thinkers and heretics such as the novelist Lev Tolstoy or the philosopher Vladimir Soloviev; theosophists such as Blavatsky and the “silver age” poets such as Andrei Bely, and a huge army of masons, liberals, nihilists, anti-monarchists and ecumenists who were busy undermining the foundations of Church and State.<sup>137</sup>

Even when the *intelligenty* did convert to Orthodoxy, as when the philosophers Bulgakov, Berdiaev, Frank and Struve converted from Marxism, it was not to a pure, patristic Orthodoxy, as is proved by the “renovationist Orthodoxy” of Bulgakov and Berdiaev after the revolution. Nevertheless, if these “God-seekers” were ever to acquire true Orthodoxy, they needed to encounter the Church in her more learned representatives. Hence the significance of the religio-philosophical meetings, which were chaired by a rising star of the Russian Church, Bishop Sergei (Stragorodsky).

“Sergei,” writes G.M. Soldatov, “was popular in circles waiting for the introduction of ‘democratic’ reforms in the State. In his sermons and speeches he criticized the relationship between the ecclesiastical and state authorities in the Russian Empire.”<sup>138</sup> This would have been a risky subject to raise only ten years earlier; but times were changing rapidly, and Sergei, as his future career proved, was always sensitive to how the times were changing, and accommodated himself to them accordingly...

In the third and fourth of the religio-philosophical meetings, Sergei espoused the popular liberal cause of the novelist Leo Tolstoy... Tolstoy was in essence a radical Protestant, who stood for a Christianity reduced to “pure” morality without the Church, dogmas, miracles or sacraments. His teaching became very popular both at home and abroad (especially in England), among both the educated and the peasants. Soon his followers, although not organized into any “Church”, were rivalling other sects such as the Baptists, the Stundists, the Molokans and the Dukhobors in numbers and influence.

---

<sup>137</sup> Madame Blavatsky wrote that “that which the clergy of every dogmatic religion - pre-eminently the Christian - points out as Satan, the enemy of God, is in reality, the highest divine Spirit - (occult Wisdom on Earth) - in its naturally antagonistic character to every worldly, evanescent illusion, dogmatic or ecclesiastical religions included.” (*The Secret Doctrine*, London, 1888, vol. 2, p. 377; quoted in Maria Carlson, “No Religion Higher than Truth”, Princeton University Press, 1993, p. 124). Theosophy influenced many Russian *intelligentsy*, as was recognised by such philosophers as Vladimir Soloviev and Nicholas Berdiaev (L. Perepelkina, *Ecumenism: A Path to Perdition*, St. Petersburg, 1999, chapter 9).

<sup>138</sup> Soldatov, “Tolstoj i Sergij: Iude Podobnie” (Tolstoy and Sergius: Images of Judas), *Nasha Strana* (Our Country), N 2786; *Vernost’* (Fidelity), N 32, January 1/14, 2006.

L. Solonevich points out that for centuries the Russian Empire had lived out of necessity in the conditions of a military camp. Such conditions required obedience and discipline, but “this obedience and this discipline were not particularly sweet. In the last one hundred years Russia has experienced, so to speak, a permanent revolution. A permanent rebellion against the authorities and against discipline. This rebellion took the most various forms – from Pugachevschina to Tolstoyism. And if we take our greatest writer as an example, we can now, after our ‘great and bloodless’ [revolution of 1917], value his deeds more or less in accordance with their merits. The Tolstoyan rebellion did very much both for the undermining of the Russian monarchy (‘I cannot keep silent’) and for the undermining of Russian Orthodoxy (‘The Gospel of Tolstoy’) and for the undermining of the Russian family (‘The Kreutzer Sonata’), and even for the undermining of the Russian courts, which in *Resurrection* are portrayed as a talentless and feelingless machine – while the Russian courts were the most merciful and conscientious in the world.” 139

It was the publication of Tolstoy’s novel *Resurrection* in 1899 that was the last straw for the Church. The novel, which sold more copies than any of his earlier works, portrayed a society so rotten and oppressive that revolution was inevitable. It also subjected the teaching and sacraments of the Orthodox Church to ridicule. If the government felt that it could not censor Tolstoy and thereby make a political martyr out of him, the Church, spurred on by Pobedonostsev, felt otherwise...

On February 24, 1901, to the outrage of all the liberals, the Holy Synod anathematized Tolstoy, declaring: “Well known to the world as a writer, Russian by birth, Orthodox by baptism and education, Count Lev Nikolayevich Tolstoy, seduced by intellectual pride, has arrogantly risen against the Lord and His Christ and His holy heritage, and has plainly in the sight of all repudiated his Orthodox Mother Church which reared and educated him and has dedicated his literary activity and the talent given to him by God to disseminating among the people teachings opposed to Christ and the Church, and to destroying in the minds and hearts of people their national faith, that Orthodox faith which has been confirmed by the Universe and in which our forefathers lived and were saved, and to which Holy Russia until now has clung and in which it has been strong...

“In his writings Count Lev Tolstoy has blasphemed against the holy sacraments, denying their grace-filled character, has not venerated the Orthodox Church as his Church, has spoken evil of the clergy, has said that he considers that to venerate Christ and worship Him as God is blasphemy, while saying of himself, by contrast: ‘I am in God, and God in me’. It is not the Church that has rejected him, casting him off from herself, but he himself has rejected the Church: Lev himself has of his own will fallen away from the Church and is no longer a son of the Church, but is hostile to her. All attempts of the clergy to admonish the prodigal have failed to produce the desired fruits: in his pride he has considered himself cleverer than all, less fallible than all and the judge of all, and the Church has made a declaration about the falling away of Count Lev Tolstoy from the Russian Orthodox Church.”

---

139 Solonevich, “Etiudy Optimizma” (Studies in Optimism), in *Rossia i Revoliutsia* (Russia and the Revolution), Moscow, 2007, p. 59.

Tolstoy was opposed especially by the extraordinary priest St. John of Kronstadt, who demonstrated by his wonderful life abounding in good works and extraordinary miracles, that Christianity “does not stand in the wisdom of men, but in the power of God” (I Corinthians 2.5). He wrote of Tolstoy that he had “made himself into a complete savage with regards to the faith and the Church.” He called him not only a heretic, but also an antichrist, and refused to receive honorary membership of Yuriev university if Tolstoy was to receive the same honour.<sup>140</sup> St. John lamented that “the Church of God on earth, the beloved bride, is impoverished, she suffers from the savage attacks on her from the atheist Leo Tolstoy...” He prophesied a terrible death for him.<sup>141</sup>

For Tolstoy, wrote St. John, “there is no supreme spiritual perfection in the sense of the achievements of Christian virtues – simplicity, humility, purity of heart, chastity, repentance, faith, hope, love in the Christian sense; he does not recognize Christian endeavours; he laughs at holiness and sacred things – it is himself he adores, and he bows down before himself, like an idol, like a superman; I, and no one else but me, muses Tolstoy. You are all wrong; I have revealed the truth and am teaching everyone the truth! The Gospel according to Tolstoy is an invention and a fairy tale. So, Orthodox people, who is Lev Tolstoy? He is a lion roaring [*lev rykayushchiy*], looking for someone to devour [I Peter 5.8]. And how many he has devoured with his flattering pages! Watch out for him.”<sup>142</sup>

St. John was a fervent monarchist. “With all our heart,” he said, “we shall thank God that He gave and up to the present day still gives us autocratic and monarchical tsars in accordance with His heart, preserving the succession of the Romanov dynasty and the spirit of Orthodoxy in them, for the magnification of the Faith and the Church of the Orthodox and of the Russian state. Our Tsar is a righteous man of pious life. God has sent him a heavy cross of sufferings as to His chosen one and beloved child. Remember: if there will be no monarchy, there will be no Russia. Only the monarchical order gives stability to Russia; under a constitution it will all split up into pieces.”

And he foretold cruel overseers and terrible sufferings for the people if the autocracy were to be overthrown...

St. John was opposed not only to Tolstoy, but also to the whole “proto-renovationist” current in the Church led by Bishop Sergei. “These people,” he wrote, “are rejecting the Church, the sacraments, the authority of the clergy and they have even thought up a journal *The New Way* [which published reports on the religio-philosophical meetings in St. Petersburg]. This journal has undertaken to search for God, as if the Lord had not appeared to people and had not revealed the true way. They will find no other way than in Christ Jesus, our Lord. [...] It is Satan who reveals all of these new ways and stupid people who don’t understand what they are doing

---

140 V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia from Peter I to our days), Moscow, 1997, p. 379.

141 See the documentary film of Tolstoy’s last ten years in Natalia Goncharova, “Tri Zhizni” (Three Lives), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QkH12-FVw5>.

142 St. John, in Rosamund Bartlett, *Tolstoy. A Russian Life*, Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Harcourt, 2011, p. 397.

and are driving themselves and their nation to ruin by spreading their satanic ideas among the nation.”<sup>143</sup>

St. John especially bemoaned Tolstoy’s influence on youth: “Our *intelligent* youths have subverted the social and educational order, they have taken politics and the law-courts upon themselves without being called to do so by anyone; they have taken to judging their masters, their teachers, the government and all but kings themselves; together with their head, Leo Tolstoy, they have judged and condemned the universal and fearful Judge Himself... Verily, the day of the dread Judgement is near, for the deviation from God which was foretold has already occurred and the forerunner of the antichrist has already revealed himself, the son of perdition, who opposeth and exalteth himself above all that is called God, or that is worshipped.”<sup>144</sup>

Fr. John was supported by the better clergy, such as the future metropolitan and hieromartyr Fr. Joseph (Petrovykh), who wrote: “Lack of faith, impiety and all kinds of harmful tendencies are now pouring over Holy Rus’ in a still more swollen river. They were restrained by this powerful personality [Fr. John], who was put forward by the Providence of God to oppose the heretic Tolstoy.”<sup>145</sup>

Fr. John had great influence with the royal family, and the tsar visited him secretly. This influence was noted and feared by a new player in church and court circles – the false elder Gregory Rasputin. As Bishop Theophan (Bystrov), at that time inspector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, witnessed: “Rasputin indicated with unusual skill that he had reservations [about Fr. John]... Rasputin... said of Fr. John of Kronstadt... that he was a saint but, like a child, lacked experience and judgement... As a result Fr. John’s influence at court began to wane...”

This was a great tragedy for Russia, for St. John may have been the only person who could have weaned the Royal Couple away from the destructive influence of Rasputin... Nevertheless, Fr. John continued to speak out boldly against the liberals, “those monsters of cruelty, those people whose aim is to live for themselves and for their own pleasure, not for the cause – those egotists, who do not empathize with their brethren... The mind works in them without the heart. Their hearts are not warmed by love for God and man, and they deny the existence of God, the foundations and bases of our common holy life, the rules of morality. Here is your education, students! This is because of your stupid education, Messrs. Pedagogues!”<sup>146</sup>

Rarely in history has the struggle between good and evil crystallized so clearly as in the struggle between Lev Tolstoy and St. John of Kronstadt for the soul of the Russian people.

---

<sup>143</sup> St. John, in Vladimir Tsurikov (ed.), *Philaret, Metropolitan of Moscow 1782-1867*, The Variable Press, USA, 2003, p. 25.

<sup>144</sup> Soldatov, *op. cit.*; Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, p. 249.

<sup>145</sup> St. Joseph of Petrograd, *In the Father’s Bosom: A Monk’s Diary*, 3864; in M.S. Sakharov and L.E. Sikorskaia, *Svoischennomuchenik Iosif Mitropolit Petrogradskij* (Hieromartyr Joseph, Metropolitan of Petrograd), St. Petersburg, 2006, p. 254.

<sup>146</sup> Kizenko, *op. cit.*, p. 88.

“Concerning St. John’s relations with the Jews,” writes I.K. Sursky, “it should be noted that he believed the policy of the Russian Tsars in regard to non-baptized Jews, in terms of isolating them from the mass of the Russian people in the Pale of Settlement, to be a very wise decision, since he thought that only such a policy would deliver the Russian people from inevitable subjugation to the Jews, which subsequently did happen in Russia. For this reason batyushka did not give his blessing in 1890 to V. Solovyev’s project to expand the rights of the Jews in Russia, which project was later rejected also by the Tsar himself.

“Meanwhile, a direct confrontation between St. John and the Jews arose only during the revolution of 1905. St. John’s detractors asserted that his activities were directed only towards making money, that all his molebens and blessings were done strictly for pay. Crude slander! He never asked for anything. He took only what was given him, and even that only to pass on to the poor. He was hardly ever at home, and thus his home furnishings were extremely modest, even though more than a million rubles a year passed through his hands. Only Pharisees and hypocrites manage not to have any enemies and be respected by all. Christ and His apostles had many enemies and died from their terrible malice. The righteous one of Kronstadt could not but likewise have enemies.

“The great pastor’s dirtiest and lowliest enemy was the Jewish press. For three years (1905-1908) it daily mocked the pious pastor, mocked his miracles, his charity, the veneration of his followers. Slandorous stories were made up, feminine veneration of him was vilified, popular ardor towards him was spit upon. St. John courageously spoke out against the revolution, and in his homilies he reminded the authorities of their duty to suppress rebellion. The Russian leadership amazedly learned from him that Apostle Paul himself obligates the use of the sword. The Jews could not forgive St. John for this. Becoming supporters of Leo Tolstoy, who rejected the church and state, the Jews rained down a whole torrent of dirt upon St. John, who had stood up for the defense of the Orthodox Church and the Russian state.

“Once, during the bringing out of the Holy Gifts from the altar, a Jewish student approached the saint and hit him in the ear with all his might, as a result of which St. John lost hearing in that ear and spilled the Holy Communion. Later on there was an armed seamen’s rebellion in Kronstadt, instigated and fanned by revolutionary Jews. These latter decided to use the event in order to make short work of St. John. However, the saint guessed at their trickery and did not allow himself to be talked into going and persuading the rebels to lay down their arms. After the failure of their plan, the revolutionaries decide to lure St. John into a trap and, taking advantage of his incessant concern for the sick, passed his entourage a message that an ill person was in need of the saint’s prayers. The saint had a foreboding that he would be met by enemies en route, and several times he warned his entourage, but they continued to plead with him for the supposedly sick person. The saint was led into a very rich house and was taken to the ailing person in the next room. When St. John went in there, the room was locked from the inside and the noise of a struggle could be heard. Then the women who had accompanied batyushka immediately remembered his foreboding of misfortune, tried to break into the room, and finally had to send for the coachman, who broke down the door. By that time St. John’s iniquitous attackers had managed to

give him several knife wounds and had almost suffocated him. The coachman delivered St. John from his attackers and took him home. As soon as the saint regained consciousness, he immediately made the witnesses swear a terrible oath not to tell anyone of what had happened until his death, in order to avoid a pogrom.

“The remaining three-and-a-half years of his life the holy martyr suffered such terrible pain from his wounds that he could not sleep at all. Only the Divine liturgy allowed him to have a couple of hours of relief from the unbearable pain, and so despite his frailty he continued to serve daily until his very death, and when he could no longer walk at all, he lay in the altar and took communion.

“Thus during the Divine liturgy on 20 December 1908, at which the saint was present together with all the people who were praying for him, he quietly reposed in the Lord. He was buried in the burial vault of St. John’s monastery.”<sup>147</sup>

\*

At the eighth of the religio-philosophical meetings, devoted to the theme of freedom of conscience, Bishop Sergei argued that only if the State ceased to use the Church as a weapon would it become possible “to raise the question of freedom of conscience. Otherwise it will be only by virtue of indifferentism that the State can give freedom to the sects along with the Church”. But “Russian State power cannot be indifferent or atheist if it does not want to renounce itself”.<sup>148</sup>

In other words: if the State was truly the defender of Orthodoxy, as it claimed, it should free the Church from political tasks that were alien to her nature. Otherwise, freedom would simply help the sectarians and atheists to fight against the Church, while she remained unable to defend herself freely. Thus the questions of Church reform and freedom were inescapably linked...

It was not only liberals like Sergei who favoured Church reform. The former revolutionary-turned-monarchist L.A. Tikhomirov published an article arguing that

---

<sup>147</sup> Sursky, *Otets Ioann Kronshadtiskij*, Belgrade, 1941. N. Menshikov, who knew St. John well, wrote just after his death: “‘Woe unto you,’ said Christ, ‘when all men shall speak well of you, for so did their fathers to the false prophets’ (Luke 6.26). No one but Pharisees and hypocrites succeed in having no enemies and in being generally honoured. The just man of Kronstadt could not escape having enemies. Nihilists and the godless intellectual classes spoke of him with ridicule and contempt; his own attitude towards them was that of humorous disdain. And a considerable number of the clergy, especially of the higher ranks, maintained towards him an attitude of offended envy. The third, the coarsest and basest enemy of the great priest was the Jewish press. Profiting from the relaxation of censorship after the reforms of 17 October, the Jewish press, in the course of three years, made a laughing-stock of the righteousness of this aged man, jeering at his miracles, his charities, and the veneration of his admirers. Slandorous legends about him were invented; dirt was thrown at the pure devotion of women; and the national impetus [to venerate him] was spat upon.

“As is known, Father John courageously stood out against the revolution, and in his sermons reminded the authorities of their duty to repress the disorders. He recommended both the masses and the authorities to comply with the thirteenth chapter of the Epistle to the Romans: ‘For he (the ruler) beareth not the sword in vain; for he is the minister of God, an avenger to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil.’ Hence the authorities learned, to their surprise, that the use of the sword in advised by the Apostle. The Jews never forgave Father John for this. Having taken Count Leo Tolstoy, who denied both the Church and the State, under their patronage, they came down like a ton of bricks upon Father John, who rose to the defence of the Church and the State...” (*Russian Orthodox American Messenger*, January, 1909)

<sup>148</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

the State should “give the Church independence and the possibility of being the kind of organization she must be in accordance with *her own* laws, while remaining in union with her”.<sup>149</sup> The problem was that both conservatives and liberals could argue for Church reform, but for completely different motives. Tikhomirov wrote as one who had seen the revolution from within, and turned away from it with all his heart, acknowledging the only true defence against it to be the strengthening of Church consciousness among the people. The liberals, on the other hand, were motivated, not by a desire to see the Church free and therefore able to exert a more powerful influence on society, but rather the opposite: a desire to humble the State and destroy the Church’s influence once and for all. As for the liberal *bishops* such as Sergius, they leapt onto the band-wagon of the reform of Church-State relations, and of what later came to be called *renovationism*, in order to further their own careers...

The religio-philosophical meetings were brought to an end by Pobedonostsev in April, 1903. Just before that, Zinaida Hippus, the wife of Merezhkovsky, wrote in her diary: “This is what our teaching Orthodox Church consists of. Of believers: such as Father John of Kronstadt, who blindly and in a childlike manner believes in the ancient manner, with a child-like, genuine holiness. To whom our demands, our life, *our* faith are incomprehensible, unnecessary and seem accursed. Of indifferent and stupid hierarch-bureaucrats. Of sweet, semi-liberal ecumenists like Metropolitan Anthony [Vadkovsky]. Of kind and quiet semi-Buddhists, such as Fr. Sergei. Of wild and evil ascetics of thought. Of petty, crude, egoistical positivists such as Fr. Sollertinsky. Of cruel and vain moralist-positivists such as Fr. Gr. Petrov... The professors of the theological academy are almost all positivists, sometimes careerists; there are some with young, student souls, but they understand little, for by education they are profoundly uncultured.

“So this is what the Orthodox Church consists of at the given moment of history.

“I say this, *knowing* what I am talking about, I have experience. And believing in her genuineness, in the truth of the invisible Church.”

But did this “God-seeking” intellectual really understand the Church? Her quasi-Protestant reference to the invisible Church, and her frustration with St. John of Kronstadt, makes one doubt it...

For “this was the point,” as Firsov writes: “believing in the invisible Church, many God-seekers preferred to reason about the problems of the historical Church on a metaphysical plane. This kind of reasoning was profoundly alien to the political realist, K.P. Pobedonostsev,” who said “Enough!” and brought the meetings to an end.<sup>150</sup>

\*

Another kind of challenge to the Church came from the right, from what were called the “New Theologians”, who railed against the supposed scholasticism of

---

<sup>149</sup> Tikhomirov, “Gosudarstvennost’ i religia” (Statehood and religion), *Moskovskie Vedomosti* (Moscow Gazette), March, 1903, p. 3; in Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 137.

<sup>150</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 121-122.

contemporary Russian theology. One target was Moscow Metropolitan Makary (Bulgakov)'s *Dogmatic Theology*, which was considered to be lacking in inspiration. Thus Professor Nicholas Glubokovsky, while not denying that the virtues of Makary's book were "undoubted and huge", nevertheless argued that "the author is dragged towards the past, lives by its traditions and is governed by former methods. For him dogma is a finished theoretical formula that is undeniably obligatory in its abstract, irrefutable completedness. In this case only one scientific operation is permitted in relation to it - the establishment of its truth by the logically interrelated connections of all its parts the crushing force of its external arguments. Hence the whole construction inevitably acquires the character of *a priori* dryness and bookish lifelessness, and the scientific exposition turns out to be directly scholastic..."<sup>151</sup>

The future hieromartyr-bishop of the Catacomb Church, Michael Alexandrovich Novoselov, advocated a more living, experiential approach to theology in general and anti-heretical polemics in particular. "Our school theology," he wrote, "on the soil of which the struggle against the opponents of the Church is waged, is foreign to religious experience and not only inspires nobody and brings nobody to God, but even kills the living shoots of religious life which are apprehended in the pious family and in church. The disgust or distrust which theology elicits in many alumni of our theological (and sometimes also secular) educational institutions is hardly a secret to anyone. Indifference to the faith or its rejection - that is our heritage.

"Look: who rules the mind and the aroused conscience of the Russian man? Literature, philosophy, science - only not theology, which in its extreme schematism decisively refuses to see the living human soul with its demands, torments and doubts. It does not take the man with his present spiritual requirements and does not raise him, cautiously and penetratingly, to a higher level of self-knowledge and self-feeling. This role secular literature has taken upon itself, although unfortunately it is not always in agreement with Christian ideals.

"Who has good success with us in the purely religious sphere? Vladimir Soloviev, Khomiakov, Samarin, Kireevsky, Nesselov - that is, people who are particularly foreign to the methods of school theologising. How do such spiritual writers (who, however, are significant more for those who are not yet far from the Church, and still more those living in it) such as Bishop Theophan, Bishop Anthony of Ufa, Fr. John Sergiev (I have in mind his book, *My Life in Christ*) attract people to themselves? By renouncing the stereotypical, the dead and the deadening, the formal-dialectical method of thinking. They have gone along a new path of theological thought, a path which, it would seem, should most accurately be called 'psychological'..."<sup>152</sup>

The call for a more living approach to theology, while not wrong in itself, contained potential dangers. One was that "exciting" but heretical theologians (Novoselov mentions Vladimir Soloviev) were preferred to "boring" but Orthodox ones like Metropolitan Makary.

---

<sup>151</sup> Glubokovsky, *Russkaia bogoslovskaja nauka v ee istoricheskom razviti i novejshej sostoianii* (Russian theological science in its historical development and contemporary condition), Moscow: St. Vladimir Brotherhood, 2002; <http://proroza.narod.ru/Glubokovsky.htm>, p. 2.

<sup>152</sup> Novoselov, "Zabytij put' opytogo Bogopoznania" (The Forgotten Path of the Experiential Knowledge of God), 1902, Vyshnij Volochek; [http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print\\_page&pid=653](http://catacomb.org.ua/modules.php?name=Pages&go=print_page&pid=653).



Another was that false diagnoses of the causes of Russian theology's supposed "deadness" were offered. As, for example, that it was not Russian enough.

Thus, as Protopriest Valentine Asmus writes, "Professor M.M. Tareev of the Moscow Theological Academy tried to demonstrate that Russian Orthodoxy had to cast off the yoke of Byzantine asceticism, which had dried up the Russian religious genius. A vivid representative of 'the national theology' was Tareev's colleague, Vladimir Alexeevich Troitsky, in monasticism Hilarion (he was ordained to the episcopate after the revolution). He shared the ambiguity of Slavophilism, which well understood the universal meaning of Christianity and at the same time was inclined to see in Orthodoxy 'the wealth of tribal faith' (Khomiakov), as if it were naturally inherent in the Russians and Slavs as a whole. 'The spirit of Slavdom is defined by Orthodoxy' (Troitsky, *The Church as a Union of Love*, Moscow, 1998, p. 333). 'I always somehow feel a lie in the position of the Slav Catholic'. Everything specifically Catholic 'must be extremely opposed to the Slavic soul. The betrayal of Orthodoxy is... the betrayal of Slavdom, a going over to a western key in mood and in life' (this was said about the Poles, p. 334). The remarkable thought of Tertullian that the human soul is by nature Christian is here narrowed to a single tribe taken on its own. The Russian man even in the fall preserves such natural resources as are not to be found in others, and even flirting with the devil is for him child's play. 'The German has sold his soul to the devil, but the Russian has given it away in such way that - and in this is the undoubted superiority of the Russian - he can leave the devil, while the German has nothing with which to redeem himself' (p. 115)."<sup>153</sup>

Another danger was that the perception was created, whether justly or unjustly, that the reformers were striving to form an elite within the Church that would gradually replace the old cadres. Bishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) in particular was seen as trying to create a core body of learned monks who would replace the old professorial cadres. Thus, "recalling the 1890s, [Professor] N.N. Glubokovsky used to remark that it was precisely at that time that [there arose] the artificial development of a new monasticism, which created a special 'direction' in the Russian Church that announced and practised 'in the spirit of true churchliness' that 'everything is permitted, allowed and forgiven to monks'. Later, wrote Glubokovsky, 'there developed tendentious agitation for the monastic tonsure to be declared one of the sacraments, and if there were meant to be no more than seven, then it was necessary to dethrone marriage and put monasticism in its place, which would serve God following the example of the redemption on the Cross "through the compassionate love" of Christ alone...'<sup>154</sup>

Glubokovsky is here referring to Bishop Anthony's controversial theory of redemption, according to which Christ saved us simply through the power of His compassionate love and not through offering any kind of "expiation" or "satisfaction" of God's justice. This product of the new, "living" theology, which was shared by other

---

<sup>153</sup> Asmus, "Archiepiskop Ilarion Troitskij i Pravoslavnoe Bogoslovie" (Archbishop Hilarion Troitsky and Orthodox Theology)", *Bogoslovskij Sbornik (Theological Anthology)*, issue 7, Moscow, 2001; <http://proroza.narod.ru/Asmus-1.htm>, p. 1.

<sup>154</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 91.

leading theologians such as Bishop Sergei (Stragorodsky) and Archimandrite Hilarion (Troitsky), bordered on heresy, and was to cause major arguments in the Russian diaspora in the 1920s. Thus one of the earliest critics of Bishop Anthony was the future Hieromartyr Archbishop Victor of Vyatka. He noted already in 1912 that the “new theology” of Bishops Anthony and Sergei “would shake the Church”. Later, after Sergei issued his pro-Soviet “Declaration” of 1927, which caused a huge schism in the Russian Church, Archbishop Victor saw in the “Declaration” a direct result of Sergei’s pre-revolutionary teaching on salvation...155

---

155 Hieromartyr Victor, “Novie Bogoslovy” (The New Theologians), *Tserkov’* (The Church), 1912; reprinted by Orthodox Action, Moscow, N 1 (11), 2000; Protopriest Michael Polsky, *Novie Mucheniki Rossijskie* (The New Martyrs of Russia), 1949-57, Jordanville, vol. 1, p. 601.

## 11. THE RUSSIAN PEASANTRY

“Contemporaries,” writes S.A. Smith, “seeing endemic poverty in the countryside, noting that the size of the average farm was shrinking in size [in accordance with the very rapid growth in the population, from 74 million to 167.5 million between 1860 and 1914], and believing that the burden of redemption payments continued to be heavy (these had been imposed in 1861 to remunerate the landowners for the land they assigned to their former serfs), were convinced that the standard of living of the rural population was deteriorating. Certainly, peasant lives remained poor and insecure, but it is likely that the overall standard of living of the rural population was slowly rising, for per capita growth of agricultural output exceeded the growth of populations, and the amount of grain and other foodstuffs retained by the peasant household also increased. The increasing height of army conscripts suggests that nutrition was improving. There is also some evidence that the burden of taxation, rents, and interest rates was falling in real terms, to an average of around one-fifth of household income, although this is not uncontroversial. Finally, deposits in rural saving banks were healthy. This slow improvement reflected the fact that peasants were finding new sources of income in trade and handicrafts, such as brewing, making butter, spinning yarn, or tanning leather, and in wage work in agriculture, domestic service, forestry, transportation, and factory industry, usually by leaving the village on a seasonal basis.”<sup>156</sup>

Nevertheless, the standard of living rose more in some regions than in others, and “at the turn of the century,” writes Dominic Lieven, “the government was less scared by working-class militancy than by growing evidence of peasant discontent. In June 1901 A.A. Polovtsov wrote: ‘after the students’ disorders there have followed strikes and factory workers’ battles with the police. Next the peasant mass will rise up with a demand for land. Today’s militia [the conscript army], torn away from this very land for a short period, will not use its weapons to curb these appetites, which it itself shares. This will be the end of the Russia which we know.’ Nine months later, when a wave of arson and rioting swept the countryside in Poltava and Kharkov provinces, Polovtsov’s prediction seemed amply justified. In the wake of these agrarian troubles the Secretary to the Committee of Ministers, Anatol Kulomzin, sought to reassure his wife. There had always, he wrote, been agrarian riots of this kind in Russia, during which peasants customarily paid back stewards and foremen for a multitude of old scores and minor injustices. Troops had refused to open fire on only one occasion, and even then out of simple dislike for the officer who gave the order. Alexander Kireev had less reason to hide his fears since his comments were confined to his private diary. ‘I think we can cope with the students and co. without difficulty, but millions of peasants... that’s a completely different matter.’

“Witte’s response was to claim, correctly, that ‘the picture of the peasants’ miserable condition is greatly exaggerated’, particularly by opponents of the government’s economic policy who sought to hide their selfish interests or ideological preferences behind claims that the Ministry of Finance was ruining the peasantry. Throughout the 1890s Witte opposed direct subsidies or cheap credit to agriculture as a waste of scarce

---

<sup>156</sup> Smith, *Russia in Revolution*, Oxford University Press, 2018, p. 28-29.

resources. In his view investment in industry was more useful even for the rural population because jobs in the cities would reduce land hunger in the villages and, above all, provide agriculture with markets for its produce and therefore with the incentive to modernize. Witte doubted whether big capital investments in noble estates could ever be justified given the low costs of production in the Americas and Australasia, whose agricultural produce was now flooding the world market. Though more sympathetic as regards cheap credit for peasant farms, he argued that the structure of peasant landowning made large-scale lending to the peasantry very dangerous. By law most peasant farms belonged not to individuals or even families but to the whole village community. Nor could this land be sold or mortgaged. As a result there was no way to secure loans or recover debts from the peasantry, as the latter knew only too well.

“By the early twentieth century, however, it was no longer possible for Witte to shrug off attacks on his indifference to peasant needs. Political pressure to ‘do something about agriculture’ was building up, as was fear of peasant discontent. After a tour of the provinces at the turn of the century even the rather dim Dmitri Sipyagin, the Minister of Internal Affairs, commented that ‘we are standing on a volcano’. In addition, the state’s finances were in increasing disarray, and the need to increase its revenues pressing.

“Nicholas II was kept well informed about the problem of both the peasantry and the treasury. In addition to receiving regular reports on these subjects from his ministers, he also on occasion was sent special memoranda by other high officials. In the spring of 1903, for instance, the Emperor received an analysis of his country’s budgetary crisis from Peter Saburov, a senior official whose career had included service both as an ambassador and as a financial expert, a very unusual combination in Victorian Europe. Saburov warned Nicholas that the huge and always increasing costs of the arms race ‘together with the sad economic position of the mass of the tax-paying population naturally arouse fears for the stability of the state’s finances... To restore the state’s fiscal power is only possible by means of raising the economic position of the peasantry... But it is already becoming clear that to fulfil this necessary but complicated task heavy sacrifices from the treasury will be needed.’

“Both Serge Witte and Vladimir Kokovtsov, who succeeded the critically ill Edvard Pleske as Minister of Finance in 1904, shared Saburov’s concern about the parlous state of Russia’s finances. Kokovtsov indeed commented that ‘I look with alarm on our economic and financial position’ and condemned what he described as the ‘fantasies’ that underlay much government expenditure. ‘These fantasies I see all around,’ he added: ‘in the exorbitant and unreasonable strengthening of the fleet, in our active foreign policy waged at the expense of the peasant’s hungry stomach... [in] the automatic attempt to get money for everything instead of stopping this saturnalia of expenditure and beginning to reduce the tax burden to a measure where it corresponds with the growth in income.’ But whereas Witte and Kokovtsov, like Saburov, believed that excessive armaments were the key to Russia’s financial problems, neither shared his view that international agreement to the reduction of armaments was possible, or indeed his conviction that the first step in this direction should be made through a deal between Nicholas II and the German Kaiser. Nor could the Tsar have any illusions on

this score since the failure of his appeal for a reduction of armaments in 1898 had taught him the impossibility of halting the arms race. But, as Serge Witte pointed out to Nicholas in January 1902, if the escalation of defence costs could not be halted, it was hard to see how the peasants' tax burden could be greatly reduced or large sums provided for the modernization of village life and peasant agriculture. The conclusion drawn by Witte was that improvement of the peasants' lot would have to come less from the largesse of the treasury than from changes in the system of peasant landholding. The farmer, he told Nicholas, must have individual rights and freedom, including unrestricted property rights to his land. In other words, Witte was calling for the abolition of the peasant commune, the cornerstone of Russia's rural economy and society.

"Ever since the abolition of serfdom in 1861, indeed to some extent even before that, the commune had been the most important institution in Russian rural life. The peasant community, which was usually but not always made up of inhabitants of a single village, was administered and judged by its own members through officials elected by itself. It also bore collective responsibility for paying the state's taxes. Although in principle the administrative, judicial and fiscal institutions of the village were distinct from the community's collective ownership of the land, in practice the power of the commune was enormously enhanced by the fact that it controlled, and in many cases periodically redistributed, the villagers' basic source of wealth.

"Defenders of the commune believed it was a form of social welfare, which would ensure that no peasant would go without the means of survival. They felt that at least until the capitalist economy had developed to the point where millions of secure jobs existed in the cities, the only way to avoid pauperization was to ensure that any peasant, even if he was temporarily resident in a town, would have a plot of land on which to fall back. Because the masses would not be destitute and would have rights to the use of property, it was believed that they would be more immune to radical and socialist propaganda than urban workers and landless agricultural labourers in the West. Not even the most ardent defenders of the commune would probably have argued that, from the narrow perspective of agricultural modernization, it was the best form of landownership; they did deny, and probably rightly, that it was as serious an obstacle to technical improvement as its enemies suggested. The fact that the commune was seen to be an old Russian institution which would preserve the country from the perils that had attended modernization in the West also added to its appeal. Anatol Kulomzin, for instance, was very much on the liberal and Westernizing wing of the ruling elite. He wrote, however, that even he swallowed whole the Russian nationalist view of the commune, so flattering to patriotic pride, and 'only troubles of 1905-6 which pointed to the socialist spirit which the commune had bred in the life of the peasantry finally sobered me.'" 157

Here was the central paradox: that the peasants' basic institution, the commune, both protected the peasants from socialism of the western, Marxist type, and fostered socialism of the eastern, "Asiatic" type. The latter we may call "peasant socialism", since it is found in many peasant societies. For some degree of communal ownership of land is a characteristic of almost all pre-industrial societies, and the transition from

---

157 Lieven, *Tsar Nicholas II*, pp. 80-83.

a mainly agricultural to a mainly industrial economy is almost always accompanied by the taking over of communal lands into private ownership.

Now the commune and “peasant socialism” was doomed in Russia from the moment that Alexander II decided, after the defeat in the Crimean War, to enter upon the path of industrialization. For industrialization required industrial workers living near industrial centres, which meant that peasants had to be free to sell up and move – in other words, they had to be free citizens in relation to their noble owners and free landholders in relation to their communes. The problem was that, while emancipation had made them citizens and freed them from the bonds of the landowner, it had not made them truly independent of the commune and therefore truly independent landholders. In fact, since emancipation had made many nobles poorer, persuading them, too, – seven out of ten of them<sup>158</sup> – to move to the cities, the communes had become even stronger, moving into the cultural void left by the nobility and controlling more land that used to belong to the nobility. (This was in contrast to, for example, Britain, where the landowning nobility remained powerful in the countryside long into the industrial age.) And so, though doomed in the longer term, peasant socialism for a time became more powerful and more aggressive.

Richard Pipes writes: “The *muzhik* had no notion of property rights in the Roman sense of absolute dominion over things. According to one authority, Russian peasants did not even have a word for landed property (*zemel'naia sobstvennost'*): they only spoke of possession (*vladenie*), which in their mind was indissolubly bound up with physical labor. Indeed, the *muzhik* was not even able clearly to distinguish the land to which he held legal title by virtue of purchase from his communal allotment and from the land which he leased, all of which he called ‘our land’: ‘The expression “our land” in the mouth of the peasant includes indiscriminately the whole land he occupies for the time being, the land which is his private property... the land held in common by the village (which is therefore only in temporary possession of each household), and also the land rented by the village from neighbouring landlords.’ The *muzhik*’s whole attitude toward landed property derived from a collective memory of centuries of nomadic agriculture, when land was as abundant as water in the sea and available to all. The ‘slash-and-burn’ method of cultivating virgin forest had gone out of use in most of Russia in the late Middle Ages, but the recollection of the time when peasants roamed the forest, felling trees and cultivating the ash-covered clearings, remained very much alive. Labor and labor alone transformed *res nullius* into possession: because virgin soil was not touched by labor, it could not be owned. To the peasant’s mind, appropriation of lumber was a crime, because it was the product of labor, whereas felling trees was not. Similarly, peasants believed that ‘he who cuts down a tree with a beehive in it is a thief, because he appropriates human labor; he who cuts down a forest which no one has planted benefits from God’s gift, which is as free as water and air.’ Such a viewpoint, of course, had nothing in common with the rights of property as upheld in Russia’s courts. No wonder that a high proportion of the criminal offenses for which peasants were convicted had to do with illegal cutting of trees. This attitude was not motivated by class antagonism: it applied as much to land and forest owned by fellow peasants. The belief that the expenditure of *manual* labor alone justified wealth was a fundamental article of faith of the Russian peasantry, and

---

<sup>158</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

for this reason it despised landlords, bureaucrats, industrial workers, priests, and intellectuals as 'idlers'. Radical intellectuals exploited this attitude to denigrate businessmen and officials."<sup>159</sup>

Pipes probably exaggerates the contempt of the ordinary peasant for non-peasants here, and in particular for priests. The priest was often as poor as himself, and had to work his own allotment in order to survive. In the Soviet period the solidarity between priest and peasant parishioners proved to be a powerful bond in many villages. In general, however, there can be no question but that a different attitude to landownership put many peasants at odds not only with the property-owning classes, but also with the Tsar and the Church, which upheld the traditional – that is to say, the Roman – concept of ownership.

Pipes continues: "Such thinking underlay the universal belief of the Russian peasantry after Emancipation in the inevitable advent of a nationwide repartition of private land. In 1861, the liberated serfs could not understand why approximately one-half of the land which they had previously tilled was given to the landlords. At first, they refused to believe in the genuineness of such an absurd law. Later, after they had reconciled themselves to it, they decided that it was a temporary arrangement, soon to be annulled by a new law that would turn over to them, for communal distribution, all privately held land, including that of other peasants. Legends circulating in the villages had as one of their recurrent themes the prediction of the imminent appearance of a 'Savior' who would make all of Russia into a land of communes. 'The peasants believe,' according to A.N. Engelgardt, who spent many years living in their midst and wrote what is possibly the best book on their habits and mentality, 'that after the passage of some time, in the course of census-taking, there will take place a *general levelling of all the land* throughout Russia, just as presently, in every commune, at certain intervals, there takes place a repartitioning of the land among its members, each being allotted as much as he can manage. This completely idiosyncratic conception derives directly from the totality of peasant agrarian relations. In the communes, after a lapse of time, there takes place a redistribution of land, an *equalization* among its members. Under the [anticipated] general repartition, all the land will be repartitioned, and the communes will be equalized. The issue here is not simply the seizure of landlord land, as the journalists would have it, but the equalization of *all the land*, including that which belongs to peasants. Peasants who have purchased land as property, or, as they put it, 'for eternity', talk exactly as do all the other peasants, and have no doubt whatever that the 'lands to which they hold legal title' can be taken away from their rightful owners and given to others.' The soundness of this insight would be demonstrated in 1917-18.

"Peasants expected the national repartition of land to occur any day and to bring them vast increments: five, ten, twenty, and even forty hectares per household. It was a faith that kept the central Russian village in a state of permanent tension: 'In 1879 [following the war with Turkey] all expected that a 'new decree' would be issued concerning land. At the time, every small occurrence gave rise to rumors of a 'new decree'. Should a local village official... deliver the landlord a paper requiring some sort of statistical information about land, cattle, structures, etc., the village would at

---

<sup>159</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 116-117.

once call a meeting, and there it would be said that a paper had come to the landlord about the land, that soon a 'new decree' would be issued, that in the spring surveyors would come to divide the land. Should the police prohibit the landlord of a mortgaged estate to cut lumber for sale, it was said that the prohibition was due to the fact that the Treasury would soon take over the forest, and then it would be available to all: pay one ruble and cut all you want. Should anyone take out a loan on his estate, it was said that the landlords had gotten wind that the land would be equalized, and so they hurried to turn their properties over to the Treasury for cash.'

"Such thinking meant that the Russian village was forever poised to attack private (non-communal) properties: it was kept in check only by fear. This produced a most unhealthy situation. The revolutionary potential was an ever-present reality, in spite of the peasant's anti-revolutionary, pro-monarchist sentiments. But then his radicalism was not inspired by political or even class animus. (When asked what should happen to landlords who had been evicted from their lands in consequence of the 'Black Repartition', some peasants would suggest they be placed on a government salary.) Tolstoy put his finger on the crux of the problem when shortly after Emancipation he wrote: 'The Russian revolution will not be against the Tsar and despotism but against landed property. It will say: from me, the human being, take what you want, but leave us all the land.'

"In the late nineteenth century, the peasant assumed that the nationwide repartition would be ordered by the Tsar: in peasant legends of the time, the 'Savior', the 'Great Leveller', was invariably the 'true tsar'. The belief fortified the peasantry's instinctive monarchism. Accustomed to the authority of the *bol'shak* in the household, by analogy it viewed the Tsar as the *bol'shak* or master (*khoziain*) of the country. The peasant 'saw in the Tsar the actual owner and father of Russia, who directly managed his immense household' - a primitive version of the patrimonial principle underlying Russian political culture. The reason why the peasant felt so confident that the Tsar would sooner or later order a general partition of the land was that, as he saw it, it lay in the monarch's interest to have all the lands justly distributed and properly cultivated.

"Such attitudes provide the background to the peasant's political philosophy, which, for all its apparent contradictions, had a certain logic. To the peasant, government was a power that compelled obedience: its main attribute was the ability to coerce people to do things which, left to themselves, they would never do, such as pay taxes, serve in the army, and respect private property in land. By this definition, a weak government was no government. The epithet *Groznyi* applied to the mentally unbalanced and sadistic Ivan IV, usually rendered in English as 'Terrible', actually meant 'Awesome' and carried no pejorative meaning. Persons who possessed *vlast'* (authority) and did not exercise it in an 'awe-inspiring' manner could be ignored. Observance of laws for the peasant invariably represented submission to a *force majeure*, to the will of someone stronger, not the recognition of some commonly shared principle or interest. 'Today, as in the days of serfdom,' wrote the Slavophile Iurii Samarin, 'the peasant knows no other sure pledge of the genuineness of imperial commands than the display of armed force: a round of musketry still is to him the only authentic confirmation of the imperial commands.' In this conception, moral judgement of governments or their actions was as irrelevant as approval or



condemnation of the vagaries of nature. There were no 'good' or 'bad' governments: there were only strong and weak ones, and strong ones were always preferable to weak ones. (Similarly, serfs used to prefer cruel but efficient masters to kindly but ineffective ones.) Weak rulers made it possible to return to primitive freedom or volia, understood as license to do whatever one wanted, unrestrained by man-made law. Russian governments took account of these attitudes and went to great lengths to impress on the country the image of boundless power. Experienced bureaucrats opposed freedom of the press and parliamentary government in good part because they feared that the existence of an overt, legitimized opposition would be interpreted by the peasantry as a sign of weakness and a signal to rebel."160

Again, we may suspect Pipes of some exaggeration here. The large-scale peasant rebellions against Soviet power in Tambov province and Siberia in 1920-21, and still more the rebellion against collectivization in the Black Earth region in the late 1920s and early 1930s, show that large numbers of peasants *did* know the difference between a "good" and "bad" power, and by no means always identified might with right. Moreover, the rebellion in the Black Earth region was closely linked with the True Orthodox Church and a specifically Orthodox Christian doctrine of political legitimacy: that for Orthodox Russians only the Orthodox tsar could be a legitimate, God-established authority, and that the "authority" that overthrew him could only be an "anti-authority", established not by God but by the devil (Revelation 13.2).

Nevertheless, this traditional teaching came to the fore again in the peasantry only as a result of the fiery trial of the revolution, when the terrible sufferings caused by the new "authority" had forced the peasants to rethink their assumptions about power and return to the traditional teaching of the Church (especially the commandments on stealing, killing and envy). The very success of the revolution, and the rapidity with which all forms of deference to authority collapsed in 1917, witnesses to the truth of Pipes' thesis for the *majority* of the peasants. And therefore the traditional hypothesis of right-wing historians and publicists that the revolution was caused mainly by the ideas of westernizing intellectuals needs to be modified at any rate to this extent: that if Westerners and westernizing ideas started and led the revolution, its success was guaranteed by the support it received from peasants who were scarcely touched by western ideas, but who had fallen away from the traditional teaching of the Orthodox Church in other ways... Chekhov's story "The Peasants" (1897) and Bunin's "The Village" (1910) created a sensation by their revelation of the low moral level of much of village life, so different from the idealistic ideas of the *Narodniki* of an earlier generation...

Pipes continues: "At the turn of the century, observers noted subtle changes in the attitudes of the peasantry, particularly the younger generation. They were religiously less observant, less respectful of tradition and authority, restless, and somehow disaffected not only over land but over life in general.

"The authorities were especially perturbed by the behaviour of those who moved into the cities and industrial centers. Such peasants were no longer intimidated by uniformed representatives of authority and were said to act 'insolently'. When they

---

160 Pipes, op. cit., pp. 117-119.

returned to the village, permanently or to help out with the field work, they spread the virus of discontent. The Ministry of the Interior, observing this development, objected, on security grounds, to further industrialization and excessive rural mobility, but, for reasons previously stated, it had little success.

“One of the causes of changes in the mood of the peasantry seems to have been the spread of literacy, actively promoted by the authorities. The 1897 census revealed a very low level of literacy for the Russian Empire as a whole: only one in five (21 percent) of the inhabitants could read and write. But disaggregated the statistics looked considerably better. As a result of the combined efforts of rural schools and private associations, literacy showed a dramatic spurt among the young, especially males: in 1897, 45 percent of the Empire’s male inhabitants aged ten to twenty-nine were recorded as literate. At this rate, the population of the Empire could have been expected to attain universal literacy by 1925.

“Literate peasants and workers read most of all religious books (the gospels and lives of saints) followed by cheap escapist literature, the Russian equivalent of ‘penny dreadfuls’ – a situation not unlike that observed in England half a century earlier...

“Growing literacy, unaccompanied by proportionately expanding opportunities to apply the knowledge acquired from reading, probably contributed to the restlessness of the lower classes. It has been noted in other regions of the world that schooling and the spread of literacy often produce unsettling effects. African natives educated in missionary schools, as compared with untutored ones, have been observed to develop a different mentality, expressed in an unwillingness to perform monotonous work and in lower levels of honesty and truthfulness. Similar trends were noted among young Russian peasants exposed to urban culture, who also seemed less ready to acquiesce to the routine of rural work and lived in a state of powerful, if unfocused expectations aroused by reading about unfamiliar worlds.”<sup>161</sup>

Literacy enabled the peasants to read godly literature, but also ungodly. Anti-Orthodox and anti-monarchist ideas would naturally spread fastest among the literate peasants...

Orlando Figes points out that “the growth of the cities far outstripped the pace of church-building in them, with the result that millions of new workers, having been uprooted from the village with its church, were consigned to live in a state of Godlessness. The industrial suburb of Orekhovo-Zuevo, just outside Moscow, for example, had only one church for 40,000 residents at the turn of the century. Iuzovka, the mining capital of the Donbass, today called Donetsk, had only two for 20,000.”<sup>162</sup>

Of course, industrial workers were still half-peasants, and often used to return to their villages at harvest time. But there, instead of recovering their Church consciousness in the more godly atmosphere of the village, they tended to infect the villagers with their own corrupt urban ways. This tendency was accentuated with

---

<sup>161</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 119-120.

<sup>162</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 64-65. Iuzovka was called after its founder, a Welshman called Hughes.

time, as the older, more godly generation died off, and the younger, revolutionary generation took its place.

Moreover, continues Figes, “the traditional extended peasant family began to break up as the younger and more literate peasants struggled to throw off the patriarchal tyranny [sic] of the village and set up households of their own. They looked towards the city and its cultural values as a route to independence and self-worth. Virtually any urban job seemed desirable compared with the hardships and dull routines of peasant life. A survey of rural schoolchildren in the early 1900s found that half of them wanted to pursue an ‘educated profession’ in the city, whereas less than 2 per cent held any desire to follow in the footsteps of their peasant parents. ‘I want to be a shop assistant,’ said one schoolboy, ‘because I do not like to walk in the mud. I want to be like those people who are cleanly dressed and work as shop assistants.’ Educators were alarmed that, once they had learned to read, many peasant boys, in particular, turned their backs on agricultural work and set themselves above the other peasants by swaggering around in raffish city clothes. Such boys, wrote a villager, ‘would run away to Moscow and take any job’. They looked back on the village as a ‘dark’ and ‘backward’ world of superstition and crippling poverty – a world Trotsky would describe as the Russia of ‘icons and cockroaches’ – and they idealized the city as a force of social progress and enlightenment. Here was the basis of the cultural revolution on which Bolshevism would be built. For the Party rank and file was recruited in the main from peasant boys like these; and its ideology was a science of contempt for the peasant world. The revolution would sweep it all away...”<sup>163</sup>

---

<sup>163</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dream*, London: Penguin, 2002, p. 259.

## 12. THE RUSSIAN ARMY

In addition to the Church and the peasantry there was a third major mainstay of the Tsarist regime: the army, which was made up, of course, largely of peasants. The army had to defend the borders of the largest state in the world and double up as a police force in times of emergency. And so, “in 1900, according to one estimate, the Russian government was spending ten times more on its army than on education and the navy received more than the key ministries of Agriculture and Justice.”<sup>164</sup>

The Tsar particularly valued and loved the army; he loved nothing more than marching with it or inspecting it. However, as Margaret Macmillan writes, “the newly emerging political class [i.e. the liberals] saw the army as an army of the absolutist regime, its officers drawn from a narrow segment of society. Russian public opinion and Russian intellectuals did not take pride in colonial conquest or past military victories because such things seemed to have little to do with them. In 1905, while the Russo-Japanese War still went on, Alexander Kuprin enjoyed great success with his novel, *The Duel*, which showed army officers as, among other things, drunken, dissolute, venal, lazy, bored, and brutal.”<sup>165</sup>

Foreigners recognized the courage of the ordinary Russian soldier, but were more sceptical about his superiors. As Max Hastings writes, “after attending Russian manoeuvres, the British military attaché wrote: ‘we saw much martial spectacle, but very little serious training for modern war’. France’s Gen. Joseph Joffre, invited to inspect Nicholas’s forces in August 1913, agreed... The Russian army was burdened with weak leaders and chronic factionalism; one historian has written that it retained ‘some of the characteristics of a dynastic bodyguard’. Its ethos was defined by brutal discipline rather than skill or motivation...”<sup>166</sup>

Orlando Figes writes: “The patrimonial principle survived longer in the army than in any other institution of the Russian state. Nothing was closer to the Romanov court or more important to it than the military. The power of the Empire was founded on it, and the needs of the army and the navy always took precedence in the formulation of tsarist policies. All the most important reforms in Russian history had been motivated by the need to catch up and compete in war with the Empire’s rivals in the west and south: Peter the Great’s reforms had been brought about by the wars with Sweden and the Ottomans; those of Alexander II by military defeat in the Crimea...”

“Many historians have depicted the army as a stalwart buttress of the tsarist regime. That was also the view of most observers until the revolution. Major Von Tettau from the German General Staff wrote in 1903, for example, that the Russian soldier ‘is full of selflessness and loyalty to his duty’ in a way ‘that is scarcely to be found in any other army of the world’. He did ‘everything with a will’ and was always ‘unassuming, satisfied and jolly – even after labour and deprivation’. But in fact there were growing tensions between the military – in every rank – and the Romanov regime.

---

<sup>164</sup> Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 183.

<sup>165</sup> Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 257.

<sup>166</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to War 1914*, London: William Collins, 2014, pp. 15-16.

“For the country’s military leaders the root of the problem lay in the army’s dismal record in the nineteenth century, which many of them came to blame on the policies of the government. Defeat in the Crimean War (1853-6), followed by a costly campaign against Turkey (1877-8), and then the humiliation of defeat by the Japanese – the first time a major European power had lost to an Asian country – in 1904-5, left the army and the navy demoralized. The causes of Russia’s military weakness were partly economic: her industrial resources failed to match up to her military commitments in an age of increasing competition between empires. But this incompetence also had a political source: during the later nineteenth century the army had gradually lost its place at the top of government spending priorities. The Crimean defeat had discredited the armed services and highlighted the need to divert resources from the military to the modernization of the economy. The Ministry of War lost the favoured position it had held in the government system of Nicholas I (1825-55) and became overshadowed by the Ministries of Finance and the Interior, which from this point on received between them the lion’s share of state expenditure. Between 1881 and 1902 the military’s share of the budget dropped from 30 per cent to 18 per cent. Ten years before the First World War the Russian army was spending only 57 per cent of the amount spent on each soldier in the German army, and only 63 per cent of that spent in the Austrian. In short, the Russian soldier went to war worse trained, worse equipped and more poorly serviced than his enemy. The army was so short of cash that it relied largely on its own internal economy to clothe and feed itself. Soldiers grew their own food and tobacco, and repaired their own uniforms and boots. They even earned money for the regiment by going off to work as seasonal labourers on landed estates, in factories and mines near their garrisons. Many soldiers spent more time growing vegetables or repairing boots than they did learning how to handle their guns. By reducing the military budget, the tsarist regime created an army of farmers and cobblers.

“The demoralization of the army was also connected to its increasing role in the suppression of civilian protests. The Russian Empire was covered with a network of garrisons. Their job was to provide more or less instant military assistance for the provincial governors or the police to deal with unrest. Between 1883 and 1903 the troops were called out nearly 1,500 times. Officers complained bitterly that this police duty was beneath the dignity of a professional soldier, and that it distracted the army from its proper military purpose. They also warned of the damaging effect it was likely to have on the army’s discipline. History proved them right. The vast majority of the private soldiers were peasants, and their morale was heavily influenced by the news they received from their villages. When the army was called out to put down the peasant uprisings of 1905-6 many of the units, especially in the peasant-dominated infantry, refused to obey and mutinied in support of the revolution. There were over 400 mutinies between the autumn of 1905 and the summer of 1906. The army was brought to the brink of collapse, and it took years to restore a semblance of order.

“Many of these mutinies were part of a general protest against the feudal conditions prevailing in the army. Tolstoy, who had served as an army officer in the Crimean War, described them in his last novel *Hadji-Murad*. The peasant soldiers, in particular, objected to the way their officers addressed them with the familiar ‘your’ (tyi) – normally used for animals and children – rather than the polite ‘you’ (vyi). It was how

the masters had once addressed their serfs; and since most of the officers were nobles, and most of the soldiers were sons of former serfs, this mode of address symbolized the continuation of the old feudal world inside the army. The first thing a recruit did on joining the army was to learn the different titles of his officers: 'Your Honour' up to the rank of colonel; 'Your Excellency' for generals; and 'Your Radiance' or 'Most High Radiance' for titled officers. Colonels and generals were to be greeted not just with the simple hand salute but by halting and standing sideways to attention while the officer passed by for a strictly prescribed number of paces. The soldier was trained to answer his superiors in regulation phrases of deference: 'Not at all, Your Honour'; 'Happy to serve you, Your Excellency'. Any deviations were likely to be punished. Soldiers would expect to be punched in the face, hit in the mouth with the butt of a rifle and sometimes even flogged for relatively minor misdemeanours. Officers were allowed to use a wide range of abusive terms – such as 'scum' and 'scoundrel' – to humiliate their soldiers and keep them in their place. Even whilst off-duty the common soldier was deprived of the rights of a normal citizen. He could not smoke in public places, go to restaurants or theatres, ride in trams, or occupy a seat in a first- or second-class railway carriage. Civic parks displayed the sign: DOGS AND SOLDIERS FORBIDDEN TO ENTER. The determination of the soldiery to throw off this 'army serfdom' and gain the dignity of citizenship was to become a major story of the revolution.

"It was not just the peasant infantry who joined the mutinies after 1905. Even some of the Cossack cavalry – who since the start of the nineteenth century had been a model of loyalty to the Tsar – joined the rebellions. The Cossacks had specific grievances. Since the sixteenth century they had developed as an elite military caste, which in the nineteenth century came under the control of the Ministry of War. In exchange for their military service, the Cossacks were granted generous tracts of fertile land – mainly on the southern borders they were to defend (the Don and Kuban) and the eastern steppes – as well as considerable political freedom for their self-governing communities (*voiskos*, from the word for 'war'). However, during the last decades of the nineteenth century the costs of equipping themselves for the cavalry, of buying saddles, harnesses and military-grade horses, as they were obliged to in the charters of their estate, became increasingly burdensome. Many Cossack farmers, already struggling in the depression, had to sell part of their livestock to meet their obligations and equip their sons to join. The *voiskos* demanded more and more concessions – both economic and political – as the price of their military service. They began to raise the flag of 'Cossack nationalism'...

"The government's treatment of the army provoked growing resentment among Russia's military elite. The fiercest opposition came from the new generation of so-called military professions emerging within the officer corps and the Ministry of War itself during the last decades of the old regime. Many of them were graduates from the Junker military schools, which had been opened up and revitalized in the wake of the Crimean defeat to provide a means for the sons of non-nobles to rise to the senior ranks. Career officials dedicated to the modernization of the armed services, they were bitterly critical of the archaic military doctrines of the elite academies and the General Staff. To them the main priorities of the court seemed to be the appointment of aristocrats loyal to the Tsar to the top command posts and the pouring of resources into what had become in the modern age a largely ornamental cavalry. They argued,

by contrast, that more attention needed to be paid to the new technologies – heavy artillery, machine-guns, motor transportation, trench design and aviation – which were bound to be decisive in coming wars. The strains of modernization on the politics of the autocracy were just as apparent in the military as they were in all the other institutions of the old regime...”<sup>167</sup>

There were similar problems in the Navy, in spite of the particular emphasis the tsar made on Navy funding after the 1905 war. The chief of the Naval General Staff, Vice-Admiral Prince Alexander Lieven was quite open about it. “Although most naval officers preferred to debate technical and strategic issues, in reality, wrote Lieven, the question of personnel was the most important and most dangerous problem facing the navy, as the mutinies during the 1905 revolution had shown. Lieven was under no illusion that relations between officers and sailors could be divorced from class conflict in the broader society. Between officers and men, he wrote, ‘there exists an abyss from birth which it is difficult to cross from either side. Recently under the influence of agitation there has even been created a directly hostile attitude among peasants towards the lords. But even without this, the intellectual and moral level of the two sides to so different that it is difficult for them to understand each other.’...”<sup>168</sup>

Defeat at the hands of Japan in 1905, writes Dominic Lieven, “made the need for radical reform especially evident. Disputes rages over what reforms were needed and how to implement them. The upper ranks of the army were a wasps’ nest of individual ambitions and jealousies that intersected with patron-client networks and arguments over fortresses, operational plans, and other professional concerns. The creation of the Duma in 1906 complicated the war minister’s job. After the changes in the electoral law in June, 1907, parliament was dominated by liberal-conservatives and nationalist parties that supported generous military budgets and took a strong interest in the resurrection of Russian military power. In terms of military matters, the Duma’s leading member was Aleksandr Guchkov, head of the liberal-conservative party in power (1906-11)... Nicholas distrusted most politicians, but he especially disliked Guchkov, whom he viewed (correctly) as an unscrupulous adventurer. But the conflict between the monarchy and parliament was also an inevitable result of the creation of representative institutions. In seventeenth-century England, control over the army had been a key source of conflict between Charles I and Parliament in the years leading up to the Civil War. Similarly, control over the army was at the core of the Prussian constitutional crisis of the 1860s. By winning this conflict for the crown, Bismarck did much to shape not just civil-military relations in the German Empire but also German politics as a whole...”<sup>169</sup>

In the end the army proved to be one of the Russian Empire’s critical weak points. In 1905 it was more or less loyal. But in 1917 it was the open treason of the generals, and the wavering loyalty of the Guards regiments in Petrograd, that forced the Tsar to abdicate from the throne...

---

<sup>167</sup> Figes, *A People’s Tragedy*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 55-59.

<sup>168</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Towards the Flame. Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, pp. 161-162.

<sup>169</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 146.

### 13. THE MACEDONIAN QUESTION

Macedonia, according to Stevan K. Pavlowitch, it "has always been the centre of the Balkans which neighbouring states, and foreign powers interested in the peninsula, have vied with one another in trying to control. In modern times [the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries], it was the region that remained longest in Turkish hands. Serbs, Bulgars and Greeks had their various aspirations for its largely undifferentiated slavophone population. Out of this rivalry - at once nationalistic, cultural and ecclesiastical, as always in the Balkans - slowly began to emerge a separate Macedonian consciousness, recognised by none of the three contending nation-states, who were busy serbianising, bulgarianising and hellenising their outlying Macedonian territories."<sup>170</sup>

So who did the inhabitants of Macedonia think they were? Misha Glenny writes: "The question of the origins of the modern Macedonians, who feel themselves categorically to be a Slav people [with a large Albanian minority] distinct from Serbs or Bulgars, provokes more intellectual fanaticism than any other in the southern Balkans. One scholar, let us say from Skopje, will assume that this nation has existed for over a thousand years; the next, perhaps a well-meaning westerner, will claim that Macedonians first developed a separate identity from Bulgaria about one hundred years ago; a third, for the sake of argument a Serb, will swear that the Macedonians only emerged as a nation at the end of the Second World War; and a fourth, probably a Greek or Bulgarian, will maintain doggedly that they do not exist and have never done so..."

"... In contested regions like Macedonia, national identity or identities do not remain stable. They change over a few generations; they mutate during the course of a war; they are reinvented following the break-up of a large empire or state; and they emerge anew during the construction of new states. Balkan nationalism evokes such ferocious passions because, paradoxically, it is so labile..."<sup>171</sup>

We must also not forget the Romanians, who from the beginning of the century, as Jelavich writes, "began to show a great interest in the Vlach population, which spoke a Romance language and was scattered throughout the area. Although Romania obviously could not advance claims for Macedonian territory, the issue could be used to gain compensation elsewhere. The Albanian position received very little recognition..."<sup>172</sup>

"The Greek national leaders had long expected eventually to absorb the entire area. Their arguments were based chiefly on the historical association of Greece, both classical and Byzantine, with the region. In a time before serious ethnographic studies were made, these leaders could sincerely believe that the population was indeed Greek. Certainly, Greeks and Muslim Turks formed the majority of the city inhabitants. The ecclesiastical jurisdiction exercised by the Constantinople Patriarchate after the abolition of the Peć and Ohrid authorities in the eighteenth centuries had

---

<sup>170</sup> Pavlowitch, "The Church of Macedonia: 'limited autocephaly' or schism?", *Sobornost*, 9:1, 1987, p. 42.

<sup>171</sup> Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999*, London: Granta Books, 2000, p. 158.

<sup>172</sup> Jelavich, *op. cit.*, p. 91.



given the Greeks control over cultural as well as religious matters. They thereafter tended to count all the Orthodox who were under the control of the Patriarchate as Greeks.... The establishment of the Bulgarian Exarchate [in 1870] was bitterly resented, because it ended the advantages previously held by the Greek churches. Even after it became apparent that the majority of the Christian people were Slavic, the Greek leaders continued to claim the area on a national basis; they argued that many of the inhabitants were what they called Slavophone Greeks, that is, individuals who were Slavic in language, but Greek in national sentiment.

"The Greek fears concerning the Exarchate," writes Pavlowitch, "were soon fully justified. Wherever two-thirds of a district voted for it, the Orthodox population could join this organization. This possibility naturally appealed to many Slavic-speaking people, for whom the attractions of a service in Church Slavic were much greater than those of one in Greek. The areas under the jurisdiction of the Exarchate thus expanded rapidly; the San Stefano boundaries [i.e. those marked out by the Treaty of San Stefano between the Russians and the Turks in 1878] were not greatly different from the lines of this religious authority. In the 1890s the Exarchate was able to add more districts. If nationality was to be used as the basis assigning ownership, Bulgaria had the advantage at the end of the century. Most Bulgarian leaders and the Bulgarian people were passionately convinced Macedonia was indeed rightfully theirs.

"Of the major rivals, Serbia was in the weakest position. Until 1878 its chief attention had been directed toward Bosnia, Herzegovina, and Old Serbia, which covered part of the Kosovo vilayet. After the Habsburg occupation of the two provinces, Serbia could expand only southward. In the agreement of 1881 with Vienna, [King] Milan had received assurances of support for such a move. Serbia thus entered with enthusiasm into the struggle for Macedonian lands, and exerted great efforts to demonstrate that the Macedonian Slavs were Serbs. Studies were made of the local languages and customs, and statistics were collected. Serbia opened consulates in 1887 in Thessaloniki and Skopje, and soon afterward in Bitola and Priatina. A major propaganda campaign was launched inside Macedonia. From the beginning the efforts of the Serbs were hindered by their lack of an ecclesiastical organization equal to that of the Patriarchate and the Exarchate. They nevertheless made considerable advances before 1912."<sup>173</sup>

"It has been argued that if the Serbs, too, like the Bulgars, had separated themselves from the Greek-dominated patriarchate of Constantinople at that time, they could have achieved considerable success in those areas where Macedonian Slavs had not yet taken sides. For it was not all that difficult to give inchoate national traits a definite mould with the systematic action of church and school.

"At first, the authorities of the autonomous principality of Serbia sympathised with Bulgarian aspirations. But they increasingly took fright after 1870 when, according to the statute granted to it, the autonomous Bulgarian Church began to expand. The sultan's firman established the authority of the Bulgarian exarch over a *millet* that was both territorial and ethnic. Broadly speaking, the dioceses of northern Bulgaria came within its jurisdiction, but upwards of two-thirds of the Orthodox Christian inhabitants of any other district could vote to join the exarchate. The principle of one

---

<sup>173</sup> Jelavich, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-93.

territorial bishop thus came to be infringed occasionally, with a patriarchal and an exarchal bishop residing in the same see...

"... [The exarchate] thrived as a legal institution for Bulgarian national aspirations, and it sent out its priests and teachers to proselytise the slavophones of Macedonia. As a result it came to control territories that were to become Serbian in 1878... The reaction to these successes took the form of occasional calls for a separate archbishopric of Ohrid, but especially of Serbian government efforts to join forces with the Greeks. The idea was to convince the patriarchate that it was in its own interest to take into account the feelings of a majority of the faithful in making appointments to European sees, and to appoint ethnic Serbs where appropriate. Such efforts were at first hampered by the Serbo-Turkish wars of 1876-8 and the subsequent unpopularity of the Serbs with the Porte. It was not until the 1880s that Serbia entered the fray in Macedonia, with a proselytising programme of its own.

"By 1885, the ecumenical patriarchate had accepted the principle of sending ethnic Serbs to certain dioceses, provided they were Ottoman citizens, politically loyal to the Porte, and properly qualified canonically. But such candidates were not available at first, and it would take another eleven years before diplomatic pressure got the patriarchate to accept, but also the Porte to agree to, the first such Serbian bishop (Raaka-Prizren, 1896), with two more by 1910 (Skopje, Veles-Debar). In these years at the turn of the century, with another set of slavophone bishops and priests who, furthermore, were fully canonical, whole districts chose to return from the exarchate to the patriarchate..."<sup>174</sup>

The tragedy of Macedonia consisted in the fact that it was as much a civil war among the Orthodox Christians as a war between the Orthodox and the Muslims. Between 1903 and 1908 these inter-Orthodox conflicts cost some eight thousand lives.<sup>175</sup> Moreover, even Orthodox clergy joined in the armed struggle. Thus the Kresna uprising against the Turks in 1878, which took place on the new frontier between Bulgaria and Macedonia, was led by a Bulgarian or Macedonian priest, Pop Georgievski-Berovski. This rebellion was quickly crushed, and for some years the Ottomans were able to restore peace to the region. However, open warfare was now replaced by the building up of secret societies in both Bulgaria and Greece. At least three different Bulgarian societies fought with each other for leadership of the Macedonian struggle for independence. They also fought with the Bulgarian government, trying to persuade or force it into entering into a war of liberation in Macedonia. The Bulgarian Prime Minister Stambulov tried to resist their influence, but in 1895 he was killed by members of the Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organization (IMRO). A reign of terror followed in which Macedonian terrorists threatened to overthrow the Bulgarian State...

"Behind the scenes," writes Evans, "Abdulhamid II turned in desperation to Germany for help. Soon German officers were training Ottoman troops, and German engineers were building a new railway to Baghdad, financed by German banks. All of this, however, undermined the sultan's authority within the empire, and his refusal to

---

<sup>174</sup> Pavlowitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 43-44.

<sup>175</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, London: Allen Press, 2015, p. 20.

reintroduce the 1876 Constitution led to the emergence of conspiracies to try and oust him. Shortly after his accession, Abdulhamid had abandoned the policy of trying to create an Ottoman national identity. Perhaps reacting to the loss of a very large proportion of the empire's Christian population in the Balkans, and the migration of hundreds of thousands of Muslims from the Caucasus and from the new Balkan states to Anatolia, he had substituted the policy with a new ideology of pan-Islamism. From now on the sultan's religious status as the Caliph was emphasized in Ottoman propaganda as the basis for the allegiance of his people. Increasingly, Abdulhamid put his empire's troubles down to an international conspiracy of the Christian world, and in particular to the Christian minority in Anatolia, mostly well-off traders and merchants whom the Treaty of Berlin had obliged him to protect. In 1892-3, Muslim crowds, egged on by officials who claimed the Armenians were trying to destroy Islam, began massacring the area's Armenian population. When Armenian nationalist groups retaliated, they were crushed by the Ottoman Army, after which local and regional officials encouraged further violence against them, aided by Kurdish irregulars sent in by the sultan.

"The worst atrocity occurred with the burning alive of more than 3,000 Armenians in the cathedral of Urfa in December 1895. A protest demonstration of Armenians in Constantinople was suppressed and was followed by widespread killings of Armenians in the capital. Foreign intervention, again urged by Gladstone, never became a reality. The massacres continued until 1897, by which time between 100,000 and 300,000 Armenians had been killed."176

\*

Meanwhile, in 1895 a Greek secret society called *Ethniki Etairia* tried to revive the traditions of the Greek Revolution's *Philiki Etairia*. Glenny writes: "Just as IMRO was preparing to destabilize Bulgaria, so did the Etairia become a virtual state within the Greek state. The Etairia included many Greek Macedonian émigrés in its ranks, but the main focus of its aspirations was Crete..."177

In 1896 the Cretans, whose slogan was "Freedom or Death!", rebelled against the Ottomans and called on the Free Greeks on the mainland to support them. They responded by landing an army onto the island. "The great powers, smelling another Eastern Crisis, attempted to mediate between Turkey and Greece by suggesting that Istanbul offer Crete autonomy. By the middle of 1897, the Greeks were still procrastinating and so the Sultan decided to declare war on Greece. Turkish troops massed in Epirus on Greece's northern border and soon put the Greeks to flight. [They were also defeated at Domokos in Thessaly, where around 45,000 troops were assembled on each side.178] Before long the Ottoman troops were marching on an open road to Athens. Once again the great powers stepped into the breach and imposed a peace-deal on the two sides.

---

176 Evans, *op. cit.*, pp. 688-689.

177 Glenny, *op. cit.*, p. 193.

178 Evans, *op.cit.*, p. 690.

"The outcome was at first glance advantageous to the Greeks, as Crete was at last given extensive autonomy. But this apparent victory masked hidden dangers. The Greek army had suffered a great setback at Epirus. The Athenian coffers were empty; and the state had incurred an enormous debt. As part of the peace treaty, Athens was forced to hand over control of its budget to a great-power commission. Furthermore, its network of agents in Macedonia had been destroyed.

"King George of Greece (1863-1913) had justified the military intervention in Crete by pointing out that 'Britain... had seized Cyprus; Germany had taken Schleswig-Holstein; Austria had laid claim to Bosnia and Herzegovina; surely Greece had a better right to Crete!' The argument was not unreasonable, but had the Etairia and King George reasoned more soberly they would have concluded that the Ottoman Empire would be forced to relinquish control of Crete at some future date. By succumbing to the romantic movement for the liberation of Crete and finding itself at war with the Ottoman Empire, Greece was too weak at the end of the nineteenth century to combat the influence of IMRO in Macedonia, and unable to respond when the Ottoman Empire allowed the Bulgarian Exarchate to establish three new bishoprics in Debar, Monastir (Bitola) and Strumitsa. This area extended like a long hand across the middle of Macedonia, marking out the dark shadows of a near future when the Greek Patriarchists and Bulgarian Exarchists would do battle for the souls of the villages...

"Conversions of whole villages were common. Sometimes they took place at the end of a gun barrel, sometimes there were compelling economic reasons, as H.N. Brailsford discovered at the time. 'I was talking to a wealthy peasant who came in from a neighbouring village to Monastir market. He spoke Greek well, but hardly like a native. 'Is your village Greek,' I asked him, 'or Bulgarian?' 'Well,' he replied, 'it is Bulgarian now, but four years ago it was Greek.' The answer seemed to him entirely natural and commonplace. 'How,' I asked in some bewilderment, 'did that miracle come about?' 'Why,' said he, 'we are all poor men, but we want to have our own school and a priest who will look after us properly. We used to have a Greek teacher. We paid him £5 a year and his bread, while the Greek consul paid him another £5; but we had no priest of our own. We shared a priest with several other villages, but he was very unpunctual and remiss. We went to the Greek Bishop to complain, but he refused to do anything for us. The Bulgarians heard of this and they came and made us an offer. They said they would give us a priest who would live in the village and a teacher to whom we need pay nothing. Well, sirs, ours is a poor village, and so of course we became Bulgarian.'..."179

The situation gradually descended into chaos. In March, 1903 the Austrian consul in Monastir reported: "The Committee [IMRO] is extorting money from Bulgarians, Greeks, Vlachs, Christians and Muslims, with indescribable arrogance. Christians who don't pay are murdered while the Muslim landowners must reckon with arson attacks on all their property...

"The longing for order among these unbearable circumstances and for a new, strong administration is becoming ever more intense... people do not want reforms,

---

179 Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 194-195, 199.

autonomy or whatever - the majority of Macedonians want nothing more than... the same fate as Bosnia [i.e. occupation by Austria-Hungary].

"Punitive executions continue to comprise standard fare of the guerrilla band activities. In the last 14 days alone, there has been a revenge murder of the Greek priest in Zelenic, the death of the teacher from Strebene, and of a Patriarch supporter from Ajtos... [then] the Serbian priest from Vrbjani and an Albanian landowner from Lenista... whose throat was slit."<sup>180</sup>

During the spring of 1903 the village of Kruševo, whose 10,000 inhabitants were almost all Orthodox - Vlach, Greek and Slav, anticipating an attack by IMRO, approached the Ottoman authorities and requested that they strengthen their garrison. Sure enough, on August 2, "Ilinden" (St. Elijah's day), 300 guerillas assaulted Kruševo. Having killed the whole garrison, they occupied the town and proclaimed it a republic... The revenge of the Turks was terrible. The town was bombed and gutted. Irregulars and bashi-bazooks then went on a spree. "In addition to the thousands of murdered civilians and rape victims, 119 villages were burnt to the ground, 8,400 houses were destroyed, forcing 50,000 refugees to flee into the mountains, where many more died during the bitter winter that followed. Both the IO and the EO [other Macedonian revolutionary organizations] were almost obliterated and, after watching the Slav *cetas* intimidate Greek villages, the Greek *andartes* swept through western Macedonia forcing the reconversion of Exarchate communities to the Patriarchate.

"The *andartes* now administered solace to those Patriarchate villages which had courageously resisted IMRO during the uprising. However, in the villages genuinely committed to the Exarchate or IMRO, the Greeks behaved like vengeful bullies, executing suspected renegades and holding the Patriarchate version of the Mass [Divine Liturgy] at gunpoint if the priest or townspeople were unwilling to perform the service. This Greek backlash was orchestrated by the gun-toting bishop of Kastoria, Germanos Karavangelis. This extraordinary figure who roamed the countryside in a dark English raincoat with a black scarf wrapped around his priest's hat, 'had a Männlicher slung over one shoulder, a bandolier over the other, a belt round the middle from which hung his holster carrying a large pistol and a knife.' Karavangelis appeared consciously to cultivate an image of threatening romanticism. The bishop considered Bulgarian influence in the region to be the greatest threat to Greek national interests. He therefore advocated close friendship and cooperation between the Greeks and Turks of Macedonia, but only as an expedient. Karavangelis admitted openly that the only issue in Macedonia was the future contours of the Balkan states once the Turks had been thrown out.

"As IMRO's influence shrivelled and almost died, Karavangelis and his colleagues began to receive more money, weapons and men from the Greek Kingdom. This renewed Greek activity and the retreat of Bulgarian aspirations hastened a change in Serbian policy, too. Nikola Pašić, the old Radical leader and now Prime Minister, had long given up hope that his ideal of a federal solution for the Macedonian Question

---

<sup>180</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 201-202.

might be realized. Serbia would now be fighting for clerical and territorial influence not just against Greeks and Bulgarians, but also against the Turks and Albanians. Demonstrating again that neither Greeks, Serbs nor Bulgarians have natural allies, Pašić issued an order to Serbia's diplomatic representative: 'to protect our compatriots from the damaging consequences of the monopoly of Patriarchate organs which have placed themselves in the service of Hellenism to the detriment of the non-Greek adherents to the Patriarchate church; and to counter the activity of Exarchate agents whose Committees are appearing with weapons in those areas of eminent interest to us: Porec, Kisevo, Drimkol, Dibra, Köprülü.' The suppression of Ilinden had therefore failed to crush the nationalist struggle. On the contrary, it had made it worse. The struggle was spreading, but the balance of forces had changed. Like Bishop Karavangelis, the government of Istanbul considered the Bulgarian insurgency the most threatening. The Greek and Serbian guerrillas concentrated their efforts on expunging Bulgarian or Albanian influence on each other's - they proved less of a nuisance for the Ottoman forces. Indeed, the Christian guerrillas had to an extent assumed the state's role of policing the territory."<sup>181</sup>

---

<sup>181</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 205-207.

## 14. REGICIDE IN SERBIA

In 1897 Russia and Austria-Hungary had come to an agreement to preserve the status quo in the Balkans. However, this agreement came under threat in 1903, when a group of over one hundred military conspirators, upset at King Alexander of Serbia's pro-Austrian orientation and proposed cuts to the military budget, killed him and Queen Draga, her two brothers, the prime minister and the war minister in a particularly brutal manner.<sup>182</sup>

This murder brought the Karadjordjević dynasty back to power in the person of King Peter I, who had been in exile in France and Switzerland since 1858.

The reaction of the Serbs to the murder of the Lord's Anointed was extraordinarily indifferent. The day after the murder was celebrated as a holiday; the streets were decorated with flags. The conspirators were not only not prosecuted: they were fêted. They filled the senior posts in the new government, and their leader, Dragutin Dimitrijević, nicknamed "Apis" (after the Egyptian god), was even thanked for his work by parliament and became a national hero. The leader of the largest, Radical Party, Nikola Pašić, wanted to limit the influence of the regicides; but even he was forced to recognize the legitimacy of the coup and oppose efforts to bring the regicides to trial.<sup>183</sup>

In fact, the murder, and the shameless reaction to it, was a symptom of a wider revolutionary malaise in contemporary Orthodox Christendom as a whole. This malaise took on a predominantly nationalist character in the Balkans, and an internationalist character in Russia. Soon it was soon to bring down upon it the wrath of God and the end of the whole "Sardian" period of the Orthodox Christian Empire from St. Constantine the Great to Tsar Nicholas II...

For, as Rebecca West writes, "when Alexander and Draga fell from that balcony the whole of the modern world fell with them. It took some time to reach the ground and break its neck, but its fall started then..."<sup>184</sup> "The assassination not only set Serbia on a new path of confrontation with Austria-Hungary, it helped to build the chain of events which led to the summer of 1914."<sup>185</sup>

For God is not mocked; He does not allow anyone to touch His anointed.

\*

---

<sup>182</sup> John Etty, "Serbian Nationalism and the Great War", *History Today*, February 27, 2014. For a description of the murder, and the circumstances leading up to it, see Christopher Clark, *Sleepwalkers: How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2013, pp. 7-13. There were other reasons for the murder. Thus the Interior Minister Djordje Genčić "objected to the king's marriage to Draga..., whose reputation in society was so bad that the entire Cabinet resigned when the couple became engaged. 'Sire,' Genčić told the king, 'You cannot marry her. She has been everybody's mistress - mine included.' The king's response - a slap in the face - was enough to drive Genčić into the arms of Apis's conspiracy" (Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 691).

<sup>183</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 13-20.

<sup>184</sup> West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, p. 12.

<sup>185</sup> Margaret MacMillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile Books, 2014, p. 388.

The new king was surrounded by conspirators. Even if he had wanted to resist the irredentist mood in Serbia, it is doubtful that he could have done so. For he reigned but did not rule in a country ruled by elected politicians and unconvicted regicides.

This was evident from the very first day of his reign, when the Prime Minister Avvakumović pointedly introduced him to the Russian minister *before* the Austrian minister. "That formally signified," wrote the Belgrade *Daily Chronicle*, "that Austria-Hungary has no relations with the present cabinet."<sup>186</sup> This was because under the old Obrenović dynasty Serbia had been in a subservient position to Austria, an economic colony of the great Catholic empire of the West. But introducing the king first to the Russian minister was equivalent to saying that the old pro-Austrian orientation of Serbian foreign policy was over, and that Serbia's Great-Power patron was now the great Orthodox empire of the East. And this in turn signified that Serbia was no longer going to take such a passive attitude towards Austria's occupation of Bosnia with its large Serb population...

The next day the king swore an oath to "maintain inviolate the Constitution". And on June 25 he made a proclamation peppered with references to the Constitution: "I will be a true constitutional King of Serbia. For me all constitutional guarantees of freedom and popular rights, which are the basis of all regular and prosperous development as well as of all national progress and constitutional life, are sacred trusts which I will always carefully respect and guard. I expect everyone to do the same."<sup>187</sup> This meant that the real rulers of Serbia would remain the elected politicians... Then he went on: "Imbued with these sentiments, to the past I consign the past, and I leave it to history to judge each according to his deeds..." In other words, the murderers of the King Alexander would not be threatened by him. Nor would he undermine the policy of trying to gather all Serbs everywhere under one political roof...

Under the Obrenovićs a secret treaty had given Austria-Hungary a virtual veto over Serbian foreign policy. But now Serbia became more independent both politically and economically of her Catholic neighbour. Thus in 1904 Serbia signed a secret customs treaty with Bulgaria whose contents were communicated to the Russians, but not the Austrians, who "suspected the two Balkan powers were moving towards a union".<sup>188</sup>

Belgrade now, writes Clark, "stepped up the pace of irredentist activity within the [Austrian] empire, focusing in particular on Bosnia-Herzegovina. In February 1906, the Austrian military attaché in Belgrade, Pomiankowski, summarized the problem in a letter to the chief of the General Staff. It was certain, Pomiankowski declared, that Serbia would number among the empire's enemies in the event of a future military conflict. The problem was less the attitude of the government as such than the ultra-

---

<sup>186</sup> Ulrick Loring and James Page, *Yugoslavia's Royal Dynasty*, London: The Monarchist Press Association, 1976, p. 60.

<sup>187</sup> Loring and Page, *op. cit.*, p. 62. Evidence of this irredentist, revanchist mood was provided by Edith Durham, who records the following conversation among her companions in a railway carriage in December, 1903. Her companions "were all Serbs, young and aflame with patriotism... Talk all ran on unredeemed Serbia and King Peter who is to realize the national ideal. 'Now we have a King who is as good as yours,' they said, 'and Serbia will have her own again!'" (*The Burden of the Balkans*, London, 1905, p. 86).

<sup>188</sup> MacMillan, *op. cit.*, p. 388.



nationalist orientation of the political culture as a whole: even if a 'sensible' government were at the helm, Pomiankowski warned, it would be in no position to prevent the 'all-powerful radical chauvinists' from launching 'an adventure'. More dangerous, however, than Serbia's 'open enmity and its miserable army' was the 'fifth-column work of the [Serbian] Radicals in peacetime, which systematically poisons the attitude of our South Slav population and could, if the worst came to the worst, create very serious difficulties for our army...'189

"During 1905-6, a crisis unfolded in which trade policy, armaments orders, high finance and geopolitics were closely intertwined. Vienna pursued a threefold objective: to secure a commercial treaty with Serbia, to ensure that Serbian armaments orders would continue to be placed with Austrian firms, and to contract a major loan to Belgrade.

"The failure to achieve agreement on any of these questions produced a drastic cooling of relations between the two neighbours, and the outcome was an unmitigated disaster for Vienna. The Serbian armaments orders went to the French firm Schneider-Creusot instead of to the Austrian rival, Škoda of Bohemia. The Austrians reacted by closing the border to Serbian pork, triggering a customs conflict that came to be known as the 'pig war' (1906-9). But this was a counter-productive measure, since Serbia quickly found other export markets (especially in Germany, France and Belgium) and at last began to build slaughterhouses on a substantial scale, thus emancipating itself from its long-standing dependence on Austro-Hungarian processing facilities. Finally, Belgrade secured a major loan again not from Vienna, but from Paris (offered in return for the placement of armaments orders with French firms)."190

As nationalist passions mounted in Serbia, the question arose: in their quest for a Greater Serbia on whom could they rely among the Great Powers now that Austria was no longer an ally? Possibly France, with whom the Serbs were now closely linked financially and militarily. Obviously Russia, where public opinion was turning more bellicose and nationalist...

And yet there were two major problems with regard to Russia. First, Russia's main client in the Balkans was Bulgaria, which she had liberated in 1877-78 – and the Bulgars were the Serbs' fierce rivals for control over Macedonia, a situation not changed fundamentally by the secret treaty of 1904. Secondly, the Russian Tsar was more conscious of the wider geopolitical picture than other Orthodox statesmen, and did not support Serbia's nationalist irredentism, which could lead to disastrous consequences for the multi-national Russian empire and which had its roots, not in Orthodoxy or pro-Slav feeling as such, but in the French revolution. The tsar was trying to resist nationalism and irredentism both within Russia's borders and outside them. But it was a difficult task in view of the increasing nationalism of the Russian press. Moreover, the appointment of the ardent pan-Slav and Slavophile Baron Nikolai Hartwig as Russian minister in Belgrade after the Bosnian crisis made things worse. Largely unchecked by his superior, Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, Hartwig

---

189 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 82.

190 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 29.

exercised an extraordinary and baleful influence over Serbian foreign policy until his sudden death in July, 1914 just as his martial ambitions were about to be fulfilled...

The suspicion was that Serbia now, under the Karadjordjevićs, would not so much *follow* Russia as the leader of the Orthodox world as *use* her to protect herself when her aggressive foreign policy would bring her into inevitable conflict with the more powerful states of Austria-Hungary or Ottoman Turkey...

## 15. THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

“In November 1902,” writes Richard Pipes, “high-ranking Russian officials held a secret conference in Yalta to discuss China’s complaints about Russia’s treaty violations and the problems caused by the reluctance of foreigners to invest in Russia’s Far Eastern ventures. It was agreed that Russia could attain her economic objectives in Manchuria only by intense colonization; but for Russians to settle there, the regime needed to tighten its hold on the area. It was the unanimous opinion of the participants, Witte included, that Russia had to annex Manchuria, or, at the very least, bring it under closer control. In the months that followed, the Minister of War, A.N. Kuropatkin, urged aggressive action to protect the Trans-Siberian Railroad: in his view, unless Russia was prepared to annex Manchuria she should withdraw from there. In February 1903, Nicholas agreed to annexation.”<sup>191</sup>

Another bone of contention was Korea. “The ruler of Korea,” writes J.M. Roberts, “had only taken his title of emperor in 1897; only in 1901 did his government first decide to send representatives to foreign countries (even the Chinese had already done this). Several nations had interests in Korea: the Americans and British had long encouraged the ‘opening’ of the country to trade and reform (as they saw it), the Russians and the Japanese competed there for political supremacy and possible territorial aggrandizement, and (in theory as the suzerain power but actually increasingly powerless in Korean affairs) the Chinese went on claiming that Korea was a dependency of the Middle Kingdom. This was one reason for the Japanese (who had successfully occupied Seoul in the 1890s during a war against China) to promote ‘westernizing’ influences in the court and among officials.”<sup>192</sup>

“I do not want to take Korea for myself,” said the Tsar in October, 1901, “but in no way can I allow the Japanese to become firmly established there. This would be a *casus belli*. A conflict is inevitable, but I hope that it will not take place earlier than in four years’ time – then we will have dominance at sea. This is our main interest. The Siberia railway will be finished in five to six years’ time.”<sup>193</sup>

“Russia’s main interest in Korea,” writes Dominic Lieven, “lay in the proximity of that country’s northern border to Vladivostok, which made domination of the whole country by another great power worrying. In addition, the Russian navy lusted after a Korean port and feared that if the Japanese controlled both sides of the Straits of Tsushima they could easily cut communications between Vladivostok and Port Arthur. The Koreans themselves looked to Russia for protection from Japan, which was clearly the greatest threat to their independence, and offered Russia many inducements to occupy itself in their affairs. But the greatest single complicating factor in

---

<sup>191</sup> Pipes, *The Russian Revolution 1899-1919*, London: Collins Harvill, 1990, p. 13.

<sup>192</sup> Roberts, *History of the World*, London: Helicon, 1992, pp. 61-62.

<sup>193</sup> Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II*, Belgrade, 1939, vol. I, pp. 215-216.

Russia's relations with Korea was the large timber concession which a number of aristocrats close to Nicholas had secured on the river Yalu, with the aim of building up a Russian bridgehead in northern Korea.

"The leaders in the Yalu enterprise were A.M. Bezobrazov and V.M. Vonlyarlyarsky. Both came from prominent families of the Russian aristocracy and were former officers of the Chevaliers Gardes, the most exclusive regiment in the Russian army. Bezobrazov gained access to Nicholas II through the former Minister of the Imperial Court, Count I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov. Neither Bezobrazov nor Vonlyarlyarsky were interested in the Yalu enterprise for the sake of personal gain. They saw their company as a means by which non-official patriots could out-manoeuvre bureaucratic caution and push forward Russia's cause in the East. There was to be a latter-day version of Britain's East India Company but without its initially commercial priorities. The whole scheme bore the stamp of aristocratic arrogance and amateurism. Its leaders were convinced of their own innate superiority to mere bureaucrats. Without knowing the East, they nevertheless urged on Nicholas the belief that the Orientals would back down in the face of a confident show of Russian power. There was more than a touch of opera to the Bezobrazov affair. Rather typical was the fact that at one point secret correspondence between Bezobrazov and Nicholas II was sent through their respective batmen so that the ministers should be kept in the dark about it. But there was nothing funny in the effect of Bezobrazov's influence, which was both to increase Nicholas's distrust of his official advisers and to encourage him to take a tougher and more intransigent line with the Japanese and Chinese governments. In October 1901, for instance, the Emperor told Prince Henry of Prussia that 'I do not want to seize Korea - but under no circumstances can I allow the Japanese to become firmly established there. That would be a *casus belli*.' Here was the voice of Bezobrazov not of Nicholas's ministerial advisers, whose position on Korea was much less bellicose.

"Bezobrazov, Vonlyarlyarsky and their supporters in particular urged on Nicholas two ideas to which he was very inclined to listen. They told him that Russia was a proud and mighty country which should speak in a strong voice and take no cheek from foreigners, least of all Orientals. This Guards officers' patriotism was music to his ears. His aristocratic advisers, loathing the bureaucracy and above all Witte, also told Nicholas that he was the captive of his ministers, who colluded in keeping information from him, imposing their own views and sabotaging his instructions when they conflicted with their own interests. By 1900 Nicholas felt this to be true, not merely as regards Far Eastern policy but across the whole range of government business. Frustrated by his seeming powerlessness and aware of mounting criticism of his rule, he turned more and more to unofficial advisers in an effort to secure alternative sources of information and greater freedom from ministerial control. Among these advisers Bezobrazov was typical in his aristocratic control. Among these advisers Bezobrazov was typical in his aristocratic origins and in his appeal to Nicholas's patriotic and anti-bureaucratic instincts. In July 1901 Alexander Polovtsov commented that 'in no field of policy is there a principled, well

considered and firmly directed course of action. Everything is done in bursts, haphazardly, under the influence of the moment, according to the demands of this or that person and the intercessions emerging from various corners. The young Tsar feels more and more contempt for the organs of his own power and begins to believe in the beneficial strength of his own autocracy, which he manifests sporadically, without preliminary discussion and without any link to the overall course of policy.'

"As in his domestic policy Nicholas sought to balance between his groups of advisers, drawing information from both and thereby seeking a basis on which he could determine policy for himself. This had a disastrous impact on Russia's Far Eastern policy in 1902-3 and on the way it was perceived by foreigners, above all the Japanese. It was not merely that Bezobrazov's advice was dangerous and mistaken. Outsiders did not know what Petersburg's policy was. Faced by criticism that divisions between ministers and unofficial advisers were causing government policy in East Asia to be incoherent and uncoordinated, in August 1903 Nicholas appointed Admiral Alekseev Viceroy of the Far East and subordinated to him all responsibility not only for civil and military affairs but also for diplomatic relations with Tokyo and Peking. This was to make a bad situation worse. Alekseev was a sailor, not a diplomat or a statesman. By definition neither he nor other officials in the East could have a balanced overall grasp of the Empire's many interests for they were committed to pursuing a forward policy in their own bailiwick.

"The Japanese now had to deal with Alekseev in Port Arthur but they knew, of course, that the Viceroy's decisions would have to be ratified by the Tsar, and therefore by those high officials to whom he chose to listen, in Petersburg. Confusion was compounded by the fact that during the critical period between August and November 1903 Nicholas II was seldom in his capital, spending most of his time on official and private visits to Western Europe. Though Japanese counsels were themselves divided, had Russia consistently stood out for a free hand for herself in Manchuria in return for Japanese control over Korea, Tokyo would almost certainly have agreed in the end. The demilitarization of northern Korea could have been obtained through such a deal had Petersburg offered some concessions in southern Manchuria. But the Russians overestimated the strength of their position, and the incoherence and delay in their responses to Tokyo convinced the Japanese that Petersburg was simply prevaricating. Nicholas's own statements betrayed his uncertainty and miscalculations. In October 1903 he telegraphed to Alekseev: 'I do not want war between Russia and Japan and will not permit this war. Take all measures so that there is no war.' In late December, however, he commented that the situation reminded him of the 1895 crisis when Japan backed down under firm Russian pressure and surrendered Port Arthur. Referring to Japan, Nicholas remarked: 'all the same it is a barbarian country. Which is better: to risk war or to continue with concessions?' In February 1904 the Japanese permitted Russia no more wavering and attacked Port Arthur."<sup>194</sup>

---

<sup>194</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, pp. 97-100.

At first, the whole country united behind the Tsar in a war that everybody assumed Russia would win. "There was an outburst of patriotism, and government propaganda portrayed the Japanese as 'the yellow peril' and 'the Asian hordes' which were threatening the whole of European civilization. Tow Russian soldiers, it was said, were worthy any three Japanese. With the Russian ships trapped in harbour, the Japanese controlled the sea and this enabled them to land troops in Korea to besiege Port Arthur [which fell in January, 1905]. A Russian army advancing from Manchuria to relieve Port Arthur was attacked by a smaller Japanese army and forced to retreat at Mukden."<sup>195</sup>

At the Battle of Mukden (February-March 1905), one of the biggest battles in history before the First World War, the Russians received a crushing blow to their pride at the hands of the "barbaric" Japanese, losing 89,500 in killed and prisoners, while the Japanese lost 67,500.<sup>196</sup>

Finally, in May, Admiral Makarov's Baltic fleet, which had sailed all the way around the world to the Korean bay of Tsushima, was annihilated. "15 Russian battle ships and 54 other ships were sunk and many others were captured."<sup>197</sup> The Russians lost 5000 sailors killed with 6000 captured, while only 117 Japanese sailors died. <sup>198</sup> Tsushima took place on the anniversary of the tsar's coronation, a coincidence that was not lost on the Royal Couple.

The Russo-Japanese war is the first instance of a phenomenon that was to be of major importance in 1917: the financing of Russia's enemies by American Jews. Archpriest Lev Lebedev asserts that "at the end of 1903 the American Jewish banker Jacob Schiff, Morgan and also 'First National Bank' and 'National City Bank' loaned Japan 30 million dollars so that she should attack Russia<sup>199</sup>... The Japanese information services were actively *helped by the Jews*. Some of them acted as spies in the Russian army, others tried to demoralize it, which is witnessed by the commander-in-chief of the armies in the Far East, General Kuropatkin. In 1906 the well-known journalist M.O. Menshikov wrote in *Novoe Vremia*: 'The [enemy in the] last terrible war... was armed with the most active participation of the Jews. In order to thrust Japan against Russia, it was necessary to arrange for Japan not only external loans, but also the most ardent sympathy [for Japan] in America and England. This sympathy, as has now been established beyond doubt, was artificially stirred up in the American press, which was almost completely in Jewish hands. In the course of a whole series of years an army of Jewish hacks has slandered Russia, poured an unbelievably

---

<sup>195</sup> Norman Lowe, *Mastering Twentieth-Century Russian History*, Houndmill: Palgrave, 2002, p. 68.

<sup>196</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 274.

<sup>197</sup> Lowe, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>198</sup> Frank Furedi, "The Rise of the Rising Sun", *BBC History Magazine*, vol. 6, N 9, September, 2005, p. 49. (V.M.)

<sup>199</sup> In all Schiff loaned \$200 million to Japan during the war, while preventing other firms from lending to Russia (A. Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti let vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, p. 347). Oleg Platonov gives the figure of \$400 million, and says that Schiff financed the sending of revolutionary propaganda to Russian prisoners of war in Japan (*Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, pp. 354. 355). (V.M.)

dirty torrent of abuse on her, and stirred people up to hate and despise everything Russian. As a result public opinion, and not only in America, was confused. The huge reading world was pitifully deceived...’ At the height of the war the Paris newspaper *Presse* noted: ‘Japan has not been waging war against Russia alone. She has a powerful ally – Jewry.’...”<sup>200</sup>

Although many experts still thought that Russia could win the war if she continued, she sued for peace. In September, 1905, at Portsmouth, U.S.A., thanks to the very tough negotiating stance of Tsar Nicholas, skilfully carried out by Witte, favourable terms were won for Russia. She did not have to pay an indemnity, and lost only Port Arthur and the south of Sakhalin. Japan was given a free hand in Korea.<sup>201</sup> Nevertheless, the loss of prestige was great, and gave renewed encouragement to the revolutionaries.

During the war, “the revolutionary newspaper *Liberation*, which was published abroad, counted up the forces of the ‘liberation movement’ and gave, with some exaggeration, the following reply to the question: ‘What do we have?’: ‘The whole of the intelligentsia and part of the people; all the *zemstva*, the whole of the press, a part of the city Dumas, all the corporations (jurists, doctors, etc.)... The socialist parties have promised their support... The whole of Finland is with us... Oppressed Poland and the Jewish population languishing within the Pale of Settlement are for us.’ But the same newspaper did not hide its fears: ‘If the Russian armies defeat the Japanese... then freedom will be quietly strangled under the cries of “Hurrah!” and the tolling of the bells of the triumphant empire.’”<sup>202</sup>

“In many ways,” writes Ferguson, “the Japanese had won by being more European than the Russians; their ships were more modern, their troops better disciplined, their artillery more accurate. To Leo Tolstoy, the titan of Russian letters, Japan’s victory looked like a straightforward triumph of Western materialism. By comparison, it was the Tsarist system that suddenly looked ‘Asiatic’ – and ripe for overthrow. Now, it seemed, the Japanese could concentrate on acquiring the other indispensable accessory of a great power: a colonial empire.”<sup>203</sup>

And so in 1910 they annexed Korea...

In the last analysis, however, the Russians did not lose because they had fallen behind their enemies in the technologies of the West. They paid the price for proudly disdaining the Japanese as “monkeys”. And, according to St. John of Kronstadt, the real cause of the defeat was the leaders’ negligent attitude

---

<sup>200</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 417-418.

<sup>201</sup> In August, 1905 the Korean emperor wrote to the tsar imploring him to liberate his country from Japanese oppression. See “Joong Ang: Koreiskij imperator umolial Nikolaia II spasti stranu ot Iaponia”, <http://russian.rt.com/inotv/2015-08-12/Joong-Ang-Korejskij-imperator-umolyal>, August 12, 2005.

<sup>202</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 261.

<sup>203</sup> Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 55.

towards Orthodoxy.<sup>204</sup> The theft of Russia's greatest holy thing, the wonderworking Kazan icon of the Mother of God, on June 29, 1904 indicated that the Mother of God had withdrawn her protection from Russia. For "not in vain", wrote Archbishop Nikon (Rozhdestvensky), "has there long been the belief in the people that as long as this holy icon is intact, and stands guard between Christian Europe and the heterodox, pagan-Muslim world of Asia, we can be calm. But if she, our fervent Intercessor, leaves her place, then woes and misfortunes threaten us, and we shall remain defenceless..."<sup>205</sup>

The Russians lost also because "a house that is divided against itself cannot stand" (Mark 3.25) – and Russia was divided against herself. Thus "at the end of 1904, on the eve of the preparation of a general attack against the Japanese army near Lyaodun, strikes began in the major Russian military factories and on the railways, which left the Russian army without ammunition and food and allowed the Japanese to take back the initiative. The first defeats of the Russian army elicited the genuine joy of the liberals and a flow of congratulations on this score to the emperor of Japan..."<sup>206</sup>

In spite of that, "the Russian army conducted its retreat in good order, and its losses in manpower turned out to be almost two times fewer than those of the Japanese... The experience of the war of 1904-1905 allowed Russia in the next three to four years to carry out a military reform and modernize her armaments, munitions and technical equipment in all sections of the army. In spite of colossal credits by the standards of those times from England and the USA, and the participation of Germany in the technical fitting out of the army and fleet, Japan was so exhausted by this military encounter that it was only fourteen years later, at the very end of the First World War, that she was able to re-establish her pre-war military potential and join the Entente."<sup>207</sup>

\*

The war with Japan caused particular problems for the Russian Orthodox Mission in Japan, headed by Archbishop Nicholas (Kasatkin). A peasant from Smolensk province, St. Nicholas first went to Japan in 1861. Encouraged to learn Japanese by St. Innocent, enlightener of Alaska, in 1870 he founded an astonishingly successful mission that by 1910 numbered 32,000 native converts, 28 priests, seven deacons and 150 catechists.

The story of how St. Nicholas gained his first convert is instructive. The Japanese were quite xenophobic at that time and it was very difficult being a foreigner. At one point, while Nicholas was still studying, the samurai Sawabe

---

<sup>204</sup> "The leader of our army A.N. Kuropatkin left all the icons given to him in captivity with the Japanese pagans, while he took all the secular things. What an attitude to the faith and the holy things of the Church! It was for this that the Lord is not blessing our arms and the enemies are conquering us" (in S. Fomin & T. Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1998, vol. 1, p. 373).

<sup>205</sup> Archbishop Nikon, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 374.

<sup>206</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*

<sup>207</sup> *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 24, December 15/28, 2005, p. 14.



Takuma came to the Saint's home and pulled his sword, telling him he was going to kill him before he could start his preaching. St Nicholas asked the samurai why he was going to kill him before he knew what he was going to preach, and proposed that the two sit together so that he might explain his message to Sawabe. Then at the end, if Sawabe did not like it, he could kill the saint. The honourable samurai agreed. By the end of the conversation, Sawabe was convinced of the truth of Christianity and became the first convert, and eventually the first Japanese Orthodox priest.

St. Nicholas aroused the admiration of all, including the Japanese. In July, 1882 he presided over the first All-Japanese Orthodox Council. A delegation from Peking was also present. During the Boxer Uprising in Peking in 1900 222 Chinese Orthodox converts were martyred for Christ.<sup>208</sup>

On the eve of the Russo-Japanese war, "alarmed by the possibility of war with their co-religionists, the Orthodox Japanese turned to their bishop. He replied that they, like all Japanese, were obliged by their oath to carry out their military duty, but to fight was not at all the same as to hate one's enemy, but meant to defend one's fatherland. The Saviour Himself bequeathed patriotism to us when He sorrowed over the lot of Jerusalem.<sup>209</sup> The archpastor himself decided to stay in Japan with his flock, even if there was a war...

"It began in February 1904. Then Bishop Nicholas handed over all ecclesiastical affairs to the council of priests, and himself served his last liturgy before the war. At the end of the service in his farewell sermon to his flock he called on it to pray for victory for their fatherland, but he, as a subject of the Russian Emperor, could not take part in the common service; but he would be happy to see his flock carrying out their duty. In his encyclical of February 11, 1904, Bishop Nicholas blessed the Japanese to carry out their duty, not sparing their lives, but reminded them that our fatherland is the Church, where all Christians constitute one family; he told them to pray for the re-establishment of peace and asked for mercy to prisoners of war.<sup>210</sup> After this he shut himself away and gave himself over to exploits of prayer...

"Nobody in Russia understood the hierarch of Japan as well as Emperor Nicholas II. At the end of the war the Tsar wrote to him: 'You have shown before all that the Orthodox Church of Christ is foreign to worldly dominion and every tribal hatred, and embraces all tribes and languages with her love. In the

---

<sup>208</sup> [http://www.orthodox.cn/history/martyrs/188207jpcouncil\\_en.htm](http://www.orthodox.cn/history/martyrs/188207jpcouncil_en.htm).

<sup>209</sup> As he wrote in his diary for January 30 / February 12, 1904: "Pray to God that He give victory to your emperor's army. Thank God for the victories He gives. And sacrifice to the needs of the war... Fight, not out of hatred to the enemy, but out of love for your fellow-citizens... In a word, do everything that is required of you by love for your Fatherland. Love for the Fatherland is a holy feeling. The Saviour consecrated this feeling by His example: out of love for His earthly Fatherland He wept over the wretched lot of Jerusalem. But besides our earthly Fatherland we also have a Heavenly Fatherland. This Fatherland of ours is the Church, of which we are all equally members and through which the children of the Heavenly Father truly constitute one family. Therefore I am not separating from you, brothers and sisters, and I remain in your family. And we shall together fulfill our duty with regard to our Heavenly Fatherland." (V.M.)

<sup>210</sup> Many wounded Russian prisoners of war were nursed by their Japanese co-religionists. (V.M.)

difficult time of the war, when the weapons of battle destroy peaceful relations between peoples and rulers, you, in accordance with the command of Christ, did not leave the flock entrusted to you, and the grace of love and faith gave you strength to endure the fiery trial and amidst the hostility of war to keep the peace of faith and love in the Church created by your labours..."211

On July 19 / August 1, 1904 St. Nicholas wrote some penetrating remarks on the spiritual causes of Russia's defeat: "The Japanese are beating us, all the peoples hate us, it seems as if the Lord God has poured out His wrath upon us. And how could it be otherwise? Why should we be loved and pitied? Our nobility has been corrupted over the centuries by serfdom and has become debauched to the marrow of its bones. The simple people has been oppressed over the centuries by the same serfdom and has become ignorant and crude to the highest degree; the service class and the bureaucrats have lived through bribery and stealing from the State and now at all levels of service, wherever it is possible to steal, there is the most shameless and universal stealing from the State. The upper class is a collection of monkeys; they are imitators and worshippers, now of France, now England, now Germany and of every other thing that is foreign. The clergy, oppressed by poverty, can hardly repeat the catechism - are they capable of developing Christian ideals and sanctifying themselves and others through them?... And with all that we have the very highest opinion of ourselves: we only are true Christians, we only have real enlightenment, while there we see only darkness and corruption... No, it is not for nothing that the present woes have overwhelmed Russia - she herself has drawn them upon herself. Only work it, O Lord God, that this may be the punishing staff of Thy love! Do not allow, O Lord, that my poor Homeland should be destroyed to the end! Save and have pity!"

Again, on May 20 / June 2, 1905 he wrote: "Russia is not a naval power. God gave her land covering one sixth of the world and stretching without interruption across the continent, without any islands. And she could have taken possession of it peacefully, exploiting its wealth and converting it to the good of her people; she could have taken care of the material and spiritual well-being of her citizens. But all this was not enough for the Russian government; it is expanding its possessions more and more; and by what means! Is it really a good thing to attempt to conquer Manchuria and take it from China?"

"'We need a warm-water port.' Why? To give our sailors something to boast about? Well, let them now boast in the unheard-of shame of their defeat [at Tsushima]. It is obvious that God was not with us, because we destroyed His righteousness.

"'Russia has no outlet to the ocean.' What for? Do we have trade here? None at all. The fleet had done a good job defending a handful of Germans who are conducting their German trade here... All we needed were a few ships to catch those who are stealing from our fishermen, and a few fortresses on the coast; in

---

211 *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 1982; in Fomin and Formina, *op. cit.*, vol. I, p. 372.

the event of war these same fortresses would defend the ships and would not allow the enemy to take control of the coast.

“‘Why do you need Korea?’ I once asked Admiral Dubasov. ‘It should be ours by natural right,’ he replied. ‘When a man stretches out his legs, he is chained down by what is on his legs; we are growing and stretching our legs. Korea is on our legs, we cannot stop stretching out to the sea and making Korea ours.’ So that’s what they did! They cut off our legs!

“And God is not defending His people because it has done unrighteousness. The God-Man wept over Judaea, but did not defend it from the Romans. I used to say to the Japanese: ‘We will always be friends with you, because we cannot bump into each other: we are a continental power, you are a naval power; we can help each other, supplement each other, but there will never be a reason for enmity.’ I always said this boldly right up to our taking Port Arthur from the Japanese after the Chinese-Japanese war. ‘God, what have they done now!’ were my first words and groan when I heard about this unclean act of the Russian government. Now we can see to what misfortune it has brought Russia.

“... It was not need for a fleet that created the Russian fleet, but vainglory; while lack of talent prevented us from arming it properly, which is why everything ended in dust. Will Russia at least now renounce the role of a great sea power that does not belong to her? Or will she continue in her blindness and try again to create a fleet, exhausting her resources, which are very much needed for more vital, truly vital things, like the education of the people, the exploitation of her internal resources and such like? She will be unprecedentedly powerful if she firmly and clearly recognizes herself to be a continental power, but fragile and weak – like a weak hermaphrodite – if she again begins to see herself as also a great sea power which must therefore have a big fleet, which in such a case will always be the prey of her enemies and the source of shame for herself. Help her, O Lord, to become cleverer and more honourable!... My soul is in torment for my dear Fatherland, which its ruling class has made stupid and dishonourable...”

Archbishop Nicholas may have been a sharp critic of his Homeland, but his noble affirmation, in word and deed, of the primacy of faith over politics did not go unappreciated. After the war he was awarded the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky by the Tsar, and the Holy Synod raised him to the rank of archbishop. His death in 1912 was covered by all the newspapers of Japan. His life witnessed vividly to the fact that Christianity, while supporting true patriotism, is a *universalist* religion which always places the universalist message of the Gospel above the interests of any individual State or nation.

## 16. THE PRESS AND THE LIBERALS

We have noted that one of the causes of the defeat of the Russians in the war with Japan was the defeatist attitude of the liberals in the rear, which was magnified by the diatribes of the press. The press became an important factor in international relations for the first time in the Crimean War, when reports in the British press of military incompetence and insanitary conditions in the hospitals, together with photographs from the battlefield, had had an important influence on public opinion, and thence on the government. It became even more important in the Balkan crises of the 1870s when reports of Turkish atrocities in *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Manchester Guardian* were an important ally to Gladstone in his campaign to jolt Disraeli's government out of its pro-Turkish indifference. By the 1890s all the major powers had reason to fear the press. In the early 1900s the British press came under the dominion of Lord Northcliffe, and was largely uncensored. Even in monarchical Germany and Russia it was beginning to flex its muscles...

St. Theophan the Recluse appealed: "Stop the mouths of the journalists and newspapermen. Declare unbelief a state crime, and ban materialist views under the threat of the death penalty."

A generation later, in 1901, St. John of Kronstadt linked "the lying press" with the power of Jewry. The press "... has been gradually invading the sphere of life of recent centuries and is becoming a dominant factor in the historical acts of the peoples. They go wherever the press draws them. They are drawn to serve the Jews, for since the beginning of the 19th century the Jews have begun to take control of the press. This took place on the orders of the founder of the universal Jewish union. He taught it the way to get control of the peoples and kingdoms. The victory of Jewry is guaranteed by the fact that the apostates from Christianity see allies in those who are similar to them in their apostasy; but they are woefully wrong. The Jews can be allies only with themselves..."<sup>212</sup>

"Already in the 70s," wrote Alexander Solzhenitsyn, "the 'unbridledness of the Russian press' had been noted more than once by Dostoyevsky. In relation to the State it displayed itself even at the conference of March 8, 1881 under the just-crowned Alexander III, and more than once after that: the journalists behaved like self-willed representatives of society."

"The expression: 'Three hostile newspapers are more dangerous than 100,000 hostile soldiers' has been ascribed to Napoleon. This phrase became very applicable to the Russo-Japanese war. The Russian press was openly defeatist throughout the war, in each of its battles. And, still more important: it did not hide its sympathy for terrorism and revolution..."<sup>213</sup>

---

<sup>212</sup> St. John, *Nachalo i Konets Nashego Zemnogo Mira* (The Beginning and End of our Earthly World), Moscow, 2004, p. 115.

<sup>213</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

On August 25, 1904 the Tsar made his first significant concession to the views of the newspaper publishers and their readership by appointing Prince P.S. Sviatopolk-Mirsky, a liberal conservative, as Minister of the Interior in place of Plehve, who had been murdered by the SRs' Combat Organization. This represented a sharp change of policy in a liberal direction.

The talk was all about a constitution; and the mania was stirred up by the press, which unchecked in 1905. According to Solzhenitsyn, it "was seen during the Duma period as, in the words of Witte, mainly 'Jewish' or 'half-Jewish': more precisely, with a predominance of leftist or radical Jews in the key correspondent and editors' posts. In November, 1905 D.I. Pikhno, the editor of the Russian national newspaper *Kievlianin* (whose Balkan correspondent during the Balkan Wars was the revolutionary Trotsky), who had already been in this post for 25 years and studied the Russian press, wrote: 'Jewry... has placed huge stakes on the card of the Russian revolution... The serious part of Russian society had understood that at such moments the press is a force, but it did not have this power - it was in the hands of its opponents, who spoke in its name throughout Russia and forced themselves to be read, because there were no other publications, and you can't create them in one day... and [society] was lost in the multitude of lies in which it could not find its way.'

"L. Tikhomirov saw nothing national in this, but in 1910 he made the following comments on the character of the Russian press: 'Tearing on the nerves... One-sidedness... They don't want decency, gentlemanliness... They have no ideal, and have no understanding of it.' And the public brought up by this press 'demands glibness and hooliganism, it cannot value knowledge, and does not notice ignorance'.

"And, from completely the opposite political extreme, a Bolshevik publicist [M. Lemke], expressed himself as follows on the character of this press: 'In our post-reformation era ideas have become cheap, while information, sensation and unabashed authoritarian ignorance fill the press.'

"Speaking, more specifically, about culture, Andrew Bely complained in 1909, although he was by no means a rightist or 'chauvinist': 'The leaders of national culture turn out to be people who are foreign to this culture... Look at the lists of those working on the newspapers and journals of Russia: who are the musical and literary critics of these journals? You will see almost exclusively Jewish names: among these critics there are some talented and acute people, there are some among them who understand the tasks of a national culture, perhaps, more profoundly than the Russians: but they are exceptions. The general mass of Jewish critics are completely foreign to Russian art. They write in an Esperanto jargon and terrorize every attempt to deepen and enrich the Russian language.'

“In those same years the far-sighted Zionist Vl. Zhabotinsky complained about the ‘leading newspapers sustained on Jewish money and filled with Jewish workers’ and warned: ‘When the Jews hurled themselves *en masse* to create Russian politics, we foretold them that nothing good would come out of it, neither for Russian politics, nor for Jewish.’

“The Russian press played a decisive role in the pre-revolutionary Cadet-revolutionary storming of the government: its mood was powerfully picked up and expressed by Duma deputy A.I. Shingarev: ‘Let this power sink! We will not cast *this* power even a bit of rope!’ It is appropriate to mention here that the First Duma stood up in memory of the victims of the Belostok pogrom (not agreeing... that this was an armed battle between anarchists and soldiers); the Second Duma – in honour of the murdered terrorist Iollos. But when Purishkevich suggested standing in honour of those killed at their posts as policemen and soldiers, he was forbidden to speak and excluded from the session: at that time it seemed unthinkable to the enflamed parliamentarians to sympathize with those who kept simple order in the State, which was necessary for all of them, and for a generally quiet life.

“A member of the Union of [Jewish] Complete Equality, A. Kulisher, drew the truthful conclusion – but late, looking back at the past in the émigré *Jewish Tribune* in 1923: ‘In Russian-Jewish society before the revolution there really were people and whole groups whose activity can be characterized precisely as... the absence of a feeling of responsibility for the turmoil in the minds of Russian Jewry... the spreading of an indefinite and light-minded ‘revolutionism’... The whole essence of their politics consisted in being more leftist than anyone else. Always remaining in the role of irresponsible critics, never going to the end, they saw their purpose in saying: ‘Not enough!’ ... These people were ‘democrats’... But there were also democrats who called themselves ‘The Jewish *Democratic* Group’ who attached this adjective to every unsuitable noun, composing an intolerable Talmud of democratism... They created around themselves an irresponsible mood of groundless maximalism, with no precise limit to their demands. This mood manifested itself with destructive consequences in the revolution.’ The destructiveness proceeding from this press was indeed one of the weakest, most vulnerable points in the Russian State by 1914 and 1917...”<sup>214</sup>

Indeed, the stream of slander turned out by the Jewish-controlled press against the Tsar was one of the major causes of the revolution... In her press, we see how Russia was a microcosm, as it were, of one of the main problems of modern civilization... No ruler now, however powerful or autocratic, could afford to ignore the opinions, however misguided, of “the common man” – or, more commonly, of that relatively small group of newspaper owners who presumed to speak in his name...

---

<sup>214</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 428-431.

## 17. BLOODY SUNDAY

In the 1890s Russian industry had known growth rates of 8 or 9 percent. However, as Beryl Williams writes, “depression set in after 1900, causing sharp price rises, reversing wage gains, increasing unemployment, and affecting particularly the new boom towns of the south and west, where the Russo-Japanese war exacerbated the problem, as wheat exports in the Far East collapsed.... There were peasant revolts in 1902-03, strikes increased, and the opposition movements became more organized.”<sup>215</sup>

“By 1902-3,” writes Dominic Lieven, “rumblings of revolution, or at least of fundamental constitutional change, were in the air. Not everyone heard them. Even in April 1904, three months before his assassination, the Minister of Internal Affairs, Vyacheslav Plehve, did not believe in ‘the closeness of danger’ to the regime. Plehve’s optimism was partly based on the belief that ‘in the event of things going to extremes, the government will find support in the peasantry and urban lower-middle class’. In addition he recalled having survived earlier times of crisis and panic. ‘I have lived through more than one moment like the one we are living through now,’ he commented. ‘After the First of March [1881: the day Alexander II was assassinated] Count Loris-Melikov said to Plehve on the day after Alexander III rejected Alexander II’s constitution that “the Tsar will be killed and you and I will be hanged on a gallows”. Nothing happened though.’

“Other senior officials were less optimistic, often understanding better than Plehve that opposition to the government was by now much broader and deeper than had been the case a quarter of a century before. Kireev himself commented, as early as October 1900, that ‘I have seen a lot of intelligent people recently and in one voice, some with joy... others with horror, they all say that the present system of government has outlived its era and we are heading towards a constitution.’ Even the very conservative Konstantin Pobedonostsev agreed on this. A year later Kireev stated that in upper-class and senior bureaucratic circles ‘in the eyes of the great majority a constitutional order is the only salvation’. He himself believed, however, that ‘it is precisely this [constitutional order] which will in fact destroy us’. Like Alexander Polovtsov his eyes were turned towards the peasant masses, with their huge numbers and their potential for anarchy and socialism. ‘For the *time being* the peasants are still firm, still untouched. They are, as before, monarchists. But anyone can throw them into a muddle.’

“Those with the greatest interest in throwing the masses ‘into a muddle’ were of course the revolutionary socialist parties. Russian revolutionary socialism in the early twentieth century was divided into two currents, one Marxist, the other not. The former strand was represented by the Social Democrats, who in 1903 split into two factions, Menshevik and Bolshevik. The non-Marxist strand comprised the Socialist Revolutionary Party, formally

---

<sup>215</sup> Williams, “Russia 1905”, *History Today*, May, 2005, p. 46.

constituted only in 1901, but deriving its ideas, traditions and older cadres from the nineteenth-century Russian socialist movement. In terms of ideas, the greatest distinction between the two was that the Marxists believed that the urban workers would spearhead the socialist revolution, which could only occur after capitalism had fully developed. The Socialist Revolutionary Party, on the other hand, claimed that a coalition of peasants, workers and poorer members of the intelligentsia and lower-middle class would achieve the socialist revolution, which could come immediately if the revolutionary parties pursued the proper tactics and exploited their opportunities.

“Unlike the Social Democrats, the Socialist Revolutionaries [called SRs] carried out a campaign of terror against leading officials as part of their strategy, killing three ministers between 1901 and 1904 alone and in the process sowing a good deal of alarm and confusion in the government. Partly for this reason the security police tended to regard the Socialist Revolutionaries as a more immediate and dangerous threat than the Social Democrats. The evaluation was not the product of mere panic or short-sightedness. The Marxists’ dogmatism and their obsession with the working class seemed to make them unlikely leaders of a successful revolution in a still overwhelmingly peasant country in which capitalism was only beginning to take root. Moreover, the fact that the majority of Social Democratic leaders were non-Russians, and a great number were Jews, made it seem less likely than ever that they would be able to compete with the Socialist Revolutionaries for the support of the Russian masses. Events were in part to prove the police right. When the monarchy fell in 1917 it was indeed the Socialist Revolutionaries who enjoyed by far the most popularity among the masses, not only in the countryside but also generally in the cities. Russia’s socialist future should have lain in their hands. The combination of their own ineptitude, Lenin’s intelligence and ruthlessness, and the specific conditions of wartime Russia were to deprive the Socialist Revolutionaries of the spoils of victory...”<sup>216</sup>

\*

Russian educated society now took a decisive turn to the left. “The whole of Russian educated society, with very few exceptions, was in a state of sharp, irreconcilable, blind opposition to the authorities. It was in these years that the short, categorical and martial phrase ‘Down with the autocracy!’ was put forward and became a popular phrase...”<sup>217</sup>

On September 17, 1904 representatives of the Union of Liberation met secretly in Paris with SRs and Polish and Finnish nationalists to create a united front against the autocracy.

In July, 1904 Plehve was assassinated. Under pressure from his mother, the Dowager Empress, the Tsar now chose Prince Peter Sviatopolk-Mirsky to take

---

<sup>216</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, pp. 89-91.

<sup>217</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 198.



his place as Interior Minister. However, Sviatopolk-Mirsky was a liberal who opposed his predecessor's policies, was strongly opposed by the conservative officials in his ministry, and did not in any case want the job.

Lieven writes: "Disillusionment soon set in on both sides. Svyatopolk-Mirsky spoke in eloquent but rather nebulous terms to the press about a new era of trust and reconciliation between government and society, in the process unleashing a torrent of hopes about fundamental political change. In early October the Grand Duke Constantine, an intelligent and decent cousin of the Emperor, wrote in his diary that the new minister had come to dinner. 'He makes a good impression by his broad views. It frightens me that everyone - society and the press - are very carried away with him. How can disenchantment not follow, since in the nature of thing it will be impossible for him to put into effect much of what he would like to do?' Very soon Svyatopolk-Mirsky found himself under increasing pressure from a growing liberal movement which wanted to go much further than the minister desired or the Tsar would allow. Paul Benckendorff commented that Svyatopolk-Mirsky 'is very astonished by what is going on' and was bewildered by the forces he had unleashed. Public opinion was getting more and more excited but the minister, bereft of firm ideas, had no hope of steering it."<sup>218</sup>

As Alexander Bokhanov writes, "the minister gave several interviews to the newspapers, met with representatives of liberal circles and popularized his political programme, whose main points were: religious tolerance, the broadening of local self-government, the provision of great rights to the press, a change in policy in relation to the border regions, an allowance of workers' meetings for the discussion of economic questions. These declarations produced a sensation.

"Political activists of a liberal persuasion were very sceptical about them. They were convinced that the time of the autocracy was drawing to a close, and did not want to bind themselves with any obligations to the 'departing authorities'. One of the most well-known activists among the liberals, Paul Nikolayevich Miliukov, wrote in the summer of 1904 on the pages of the illegal newspaper *Liberation*: 'We shall be patriots for ourselves and for a future Russia, we shall remain faithful to the old 'people's proverb' - 'Down with the autocracy!' This is also patriotic, and at the same time guarantees us freedom from the danger of being in the bad company of reactionaries.'

"At the very height of the 'Sviatopolk spring', at the end of September and beginning of October, 1904, a leading group of Russian liberals grouped around the newspaper *Liberation*, which had been published since 1902 under the editorship of P.B. Struve, first in Stuttgart, then in Paris, conducted a congress of opposition parties in Paris. Various liberal and radical unions took part in it. Of the most significant only RSDRP [the Russian Social Democrat Party] was absent. This meeting unanimously approved a resolution on the liquidation of

---

<sup>218</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 135-136.

the autocracy and replacing it with 'a free democratic structure on the basis of universal suffrage' and on the right of 'national self-determination of the peoples of Russia'.

"At the congress was present the flower of the Russian liberal intelligentsia, which later formed the core of the most powerful liberal party in Russia - the constitutional-democratic party ('the cadets'). These gentlemen, fighters for freedom and 'European rules' considered it appropriate to define common actions with the extreme tendencies and groups that had stained themselves with bloody murders, for example, the party of the social revolutionaries ('S-Rs'), which emerged in 1902 and placed terror at the head of the corner of its 'strategy and tactics'.

"Already after the revolution, when all the noble-hearted liberal word-mongers had been scattered by the crude reality of Russian life, some of them came to their senses and confessed their criminal lightmindedness. In the emigration at the beginning of the 1930s the well-known cadet V.A. Maklakov wrote about the notorious Paris congress: 'On the part of liberalism, this agreement was a union with the revolution that threatened it. The salvation of Russia was possible only through the reconciliation of the historical authority with liberalism, that is, the sincere transformation of the autocracy into a constitutional monarchy. By instead concluding this union with the revolution, the liberalism of *Liberation* lost this exit; it preferred to serve the triumph of the revolution.'

"Mirsky's proclaimed 'epoch of trust' very soon began to demonstrate its hopelessness. It turned out that it was easy to make promises, but very difficult to fulfil them. In particular, right in the centre of the discussions and debates was the old and painful question of the creation of a pan-Russian representative organ, its competency and the path to its formation. It immediately came up against the problem of the unassailability of the monarch's prerogatives. Prince N.D. Sviatopolk-Mirsky was convinced that the autocracy and representation were compatible, but many others in the ruling circles did not share this position. They feared that the creation of any unappointed, elected organ would inevitably generate confusion in the administration and would contribute to the paralysis of power, which the enemies of the throne and the dynasty would unflinchingly use. At the end of 1904 there were more and more reasons for such fears.

"Passions fired up especially during and after the congress of *zemstvo* activists, which took place in Petersburg from November 7 to 9, 1904. The minister of the interior allowed the congress, but asked the participants to occupy themselves with 'practical questions of *zemstvo* life'. However, in the atmosphere of social tension and of the sharp politicization of the whole of public life, the practical realization of such a direction was impossible.

"The *zemstvo* deputies discussed some of their specific questions briefly, but the centre of their attention was in the stream of general political problems. It

was accepted that the convening of a 'national representation' was necessary, that a political amnesty should be introduced, that 'administrative arbitrariness' should be stopped, that the 'decrees on intensified guard' should be rescinded, that personal inviolability should be guaranteed, and that religious tolerance should be affirmed. Although those assembled left for the authorities the initiative in carrying out transformations and rejected the calls of some participants to support the demand for the convening of a Constituent Assembly, nevertheless the event that took place was unprecedented. For the first time subjects of the tsar, gathered together in the capital of the empire, did not petition the monarch on personal matters, but spoke out with demands of a political character.

"The most blatant was one very important demand-resolution, 'point ten', which declared that only a constitutional order, limiting autocratic power, could satisfy public opinion and give Russia 'peaceful development of state life'.

"This thesis elicited sharp objections from the moderate participants in the congress led by the well-known liberal *zemstvo* activist D.N. Shipov, who categorically declared that he did not share the constitutionalist point of view. In his lengthy speech he defended the old Slavophile thesis: 'The people has its opinions, the tsar makes the decisions', and did not allow any written agreements and guarantees between the authorities and the people, considering that their relations were built, not on juridical formal principles, but on unassailable moral principles. This reasoning was not influential, and during the voting the majority cast their votes for a constitution.

"The decisions of the *zemstvo* congress aroused considerable interest and became the subject of lively discussion in the press and in private gatherings. At first it was supposed that the deputation of *zemstvo* activists would be received by the Interior minister and the tsar, which would be seen as a turning of the authorities towards constitutionalism. The conservative traditionalists were angry. Great-Prince Sergei Alexandrovich [uncle of the Tsar and governor-general of Moscow] wrote in his diary on November 10: 'I heard about the details of the *zemstvo* congress in St. Petersburg: they voted for a constitution!! A deputation of *zemstvo* activists has been received by Mirsky, and will be received by the Tsar!! (It was not - A.B.) Unhappy man," and he added: 'It sometimes seems to me that I'm going out of my mind.'

"The authorities were shocked: it could not satisfy such extreme demands, since this de facto meant the self-liquidation of the historical power. But they could not leave things as they were before. At the beginning of December 1904 meetings of high officials of the empire took place in Tsarskoe Selo, at which urgent measures to transform the inner structure were discussed.

"At the centre of the discussions was a programme put forward by the Interior minister. The special attention of the participants was drawn to the point about elected representatives in the State Council (until then all members had been appointed personally by the monarch). The majority of those

assembled expressed themselves against this. The over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod, K.P. Pobedonostsev, entreated the tsar in the name of God not to limit the autocracy, and this position was supported by the minister of finances V.N. Kokovtsov, the president of the Committee of ministers, S.Yu. Witte and most of the others. The tsar wavered at the beginning, but soon unambiguously spoke for keeping the authority inviolable."<sup>219</sup>

“Under strong pressure from the Grand Duke Sergei and warned by Witte that Svyatopolk-Mirsky’s proposal was a long step towards a constitution, Nicholas rejected the key point of his minister’s proposal. The Emperor commented that ‘I will never agree to a representative form of government because I consider it harmful to the people whom God has entrusted to me.’ What remained of Svyatopolk-Mirsky’s programme after the conference, namely some rather vague promises of civil rights, would not satisfy society...

“Underlying the mutual recriminations between Nicholas II and Svyatopolk-Mirsky there was a deeper problem. In his classic study of the origins of the French Revolution Alexis de Tocqueville commented that the most dangerous moment for a repressive regime was when it began to reform itself. Under a resolute and united authoritarian government, opposition was deterred by the knowledge that it would be repressed without hesitation or mercy. Once the government began to allow greater leeway to society, however, difficulties mounted. Brave spirits were tempted to see how far freedom could be pushed. For the government, finding the right mix of repression and concession required much more skill and judgement than simply sticking to an unwavering policy of coercion. As reforms were introduced and society began to emancipate itself from the regime’s control, splits almost invariably occurred within the government between those who argued that change was coming too rapidly and others who argued that change was not coming fast enough. Both sides tended to believe that their opponents’ line threatened political stability and the regime’s survival. Divisions within the government led to uncoordinated and tentative actions which themselves encouraged the regime’s opponents. Prince V.P. Meshchersky, the very conservative editor of *Grazhdanin*, made most of these points in an editorial which appeared shortly after Svyatopolk-Mirsky announced the onset of an era of trust between government and society. Meshchersky added that in Russia at present ordered reform would be particularly difficult since the government’s prestige was low, many of its enemies were irreconcilable, and reforms could easily be interpreted as concessions born of fear and weakness. Meshchersky was a reactionary, a homosexual, a past master at Petersburg intrigue and a well-known unofficial adviser to both Alexander III and Nicholas II. For all these reasons he was widely hated by his contemporaries and has enjoyed a bad press with historians. But the Prince was not stupid and on this occasion, as on many others, his political analysis was quite shrewd...”<sup>220</sup>

---

<sup>219</sup> Bakhanov, *Imperator Nikolaj II*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 226-230.

<sup>220</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 137-138.

At the same time, the government was beginning to lose control of the workers' union movement in St. Petersburg. In 1900-01 the Ministry of the Interior, supported by Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich, had sponsored a scheme whereby a monarchist official of the ministry, Sergei Zubatov, created workers' trade unions that would give expression to workers' complaints against their employers while remaining loyal to the Tsar and without turning to revolutionary activity. At first highly successful, the movement fell into disfavour after the Odessa general strike of 1903, and revolutionaries were elected to the leadership of the unions in St. Petersburg. Zubatov was dismissed, being replaced by a priest, Father George Gapon.

As Lieven writes, "Zubatov, an intelligent and professional police chief, had understood that police trade union had to be closely and carefully supervised otherwise they could result in a labour movement organized by the government being captured by its opponents and escaping from the regime's control. By 1904 the Petersburg police leadership was much less careful and professional than Zubatov had been. Even while Plehve was still alive, Gapon was being converted to socialism by the lieutenants whom he was supposedly using on the government's behalf to create a loyal workers' movement. 'By March 1904 he conspiratorially revealed a "plan" to his group, a radical plan aiming at civil liberties, a responsible ministry, the eight-hour day, unions, universal education, and sweeping land reforms, a plan they [his supposed lieutenants] had put in his mind in the first place.' Throughout 1904 the police regarded Gapon as loyal and left him unsupervised, though by the autumn the threat represented by his movement should have been clear..."<sup>221</sup>

Gapon's original intentions appear to have been good and his frame of reference patriotic: "he wanted to 'build a nest among the factory and mill workers where Rus', a truly Russian spirit, would prevail.' He aimed to promote this spirit by encouraging self-help, temperance, and the peaceful acculturation of the workers. To this end he set up tearooms, clubs, and mutual aid funds as well as arranging lectures on economic and other topical themes."<sup>222</sup>

But then he began listening to the workers' more political complaints; he took advice from the Union of Liberation and from some disaffected Social Democrats. Gradually he was drawn to political activism...

\*

On December 20, 1904, four workers belonging to Gapon's Assembly of Russian Factory and Plant Workers were dismissed by the management of the Putilov Factory, St. Petersburg's largest. By January 8 120,000 workers were on strike; the city was without electricity and newspapers. On January 9, Gapon, having decided that the workers must register their petition publicly, ignored

---

<sup>221</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, p. 139.

<sup>222</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 365.

the police's instructions and led a demonstration of some tens of thousands of workers with a petition for the Tsar towards the Winter Palace. They were forbidden to go further, but when some did, pushed from behind. "The opposition of the demonstrators and soldiers soon turned to gunfire from the crowd. The first victims turned out to be soldiers. A part of the armed force returned fire on the provocateurs..." 223 The troops killed perhaps 200 and injured 800. This tragic event was used by the *intelligenty* and revolutionaries as an excuse to undermine faith in the Tsar among the masses.

The first myth that needs to be dispelled is that the Tsar was heartless towards the condition of the workers. Of course, conditions for workers in Russia, as in every other industrialized country of the time, were harsh. But it needs to be borne in mind, as Nicholas Kazantsev writes, that "before 'Bloody Sunday' special laws had been issued to secure the safety of workers in mining and factory industries, on the railways and in enterprises that were dangerous for their life and health, as for example in munitions factories, etc.

"Child labour until the age of 12 was forbidden, while adolescents and women could not be employed in factory work between 9 in the evening and 5 in the morning. Fines deducted from pay packets could not exceed one third of the packet, moreover every fine had to be confirmed by the factory inspector. Money from fines went into a special fund designed to satisfy the needs of the workers themselves.

"In 1903 workers' wardens elected by the factory workers on the corresponding sections were introduced. Moreover, in Tsarist Russia – again, before 'Bloody Sunday' – it was possible to resort to strikes. In factories controlled by the Labour Inspectorate there were 68 strikes in 1893, 118 in 1896, 145 in 1897, 189 in 1899 and 125 in 1900. While in 1912 social insurance was established.

"At that time the emperor's social legislation was undoubtedly the most progressive in the world. This caused Taft, the president of the United States at the time to declare publicly two years before the First World War in the presence of some high-ranking Russians: 'Your Emperor has created such a perfect workers' legislation as not one democratic state can boast of.'" 224

However, the demonstration was not really about workers' conditions...

The second question relates to the role of Gapon. "Perhaps Gapon did not believe that the authorities would disperse his 'peaceful' march? He himself answered this question later when he admitted that he knew full well that the authorities would not permit the protest to take place under any circumstances, because – very simply – it would not have been peaceful. The chief of the

---

223 Review of A.M. Khitrov & O.L. Solomina, *Khram-pamiatnik v Briussele* (The Memorial Church in Brussels, Moscow, 2005, *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 24, December 15/28, 2005, p. 14.

224 Kazantsev, "Provokator Gapon kak Znamia Perekrestyshej" (The Provocateur Gapon as a Banner for the Turn-Coats), *Nasha Strana* (Our Country), July 14, 2006, N 2799, p. 2.

Special Corps of the tsar's secret personal guard, and afterward historian, Alexander Spiridovich, wrote of this, 'Nobody had the idea then at the time [9 January 1905] that Gapon had played the role of traitor. It was some long time later that Gapon admitted that he had known, in inciting the workers to go before the tsar with their petition, that the authorities would never permit the demonstration; he also knew that they would bring in the troops against the workers, and all the same, he still urged them to demonstrate and in fact insisted they do so.'

"A great number of workers were members of the Social Revolutionary Party, and even though the party did not officially take part in the demonstration, many of their members participated in the march. A multitude of witnesses relate that many of the demonstrators were armed; they broke windows, they looted stores, they burned vehicles and even broke into houses! Thus, the shots of the security forces were not in cold blood, but in reply to the repeated provocations of the demonstrators...

"As for the fact that some of the demonstrators held icons, church banners, and portraits of the tsar, that can also be explained. A certain portion of the workers did not realize what was about to happen. They believed Gapon's fraudulent promises and did not know that the tsar was absent from the palace that day. These were the first to be surprised by the violent behavior of the other demonstrators. They indeed had peaceful intentions and believed that they would meet the tsar to hand over to him their humble petition. They also did not know that the content of the petition almost did not have anything to do with them at all..."<sup>225</sup>

In the petition composed by Gapon the demands included: an amnesty for political prisoners, the convening of a Constituent Assembly, the separation of the Church and State, a progressive income tax, the abolition of redemption payments from the peasants, an end to the war, the creation of elected trade unions and the abolition of the factory inspectorate. There was no way these demands could be considered as relating only to the conditions of factory workers...

"A few days before the march Gapon met with Pinhas Rutenberg, a member of the Socialist Revolutionary Party, from whom he was inseparable during the days of preparation for the march. At midnight of the eighth going into the ninth of January, Rutenberg, with Gapon present, composed the petition on behalf of the workers who would hand it to the Tsar - certainly not personally, since they knew that the tsar would be absent. In no way was the content of this document a simple request to improve the working conditions of the workers, but a provocative manifesto that demanded in a threatening tone the immediate devolvement of the absolute monarchy of Russia into a

---

<sup>225</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, pp. 121-122, 123.

constitutional monarchy with a democratic constitution and the promulgation of significant reforms of a socialist character.”<sup>226</sup>

Moreover, writes Spiridovich, “it was Rutenberg who had chosen the route the marchers would follow, including Gapon himself, and it was also Rutenberg who came up with the suggestion that, in case the troops began to fire, to erect barricades, to seize the arms depots, and to clear the streets, at all costs, to the Palace.”<sup>227</sup>

“From this it was evident,” writes Kazantsev, “that Gapon was completely led by the revolutionaries. But the masses went behind the *former* Gapon, who had organized his workers’ movement under the protection of the over-procurator of the Synod, Pobedonostsev.

“They went towards the Tsar with a by no means a peaceful request, as D. Zubov affirms, but with an ultimatum. Gapon went round the crowd of workers and said everywhere: ‘If the Tsar refuses us, then we have no Tsar.’ The crowd, as if enthralled, repeated his words and cried out: ‘We shall die!’ ... Fine ‘monarchical sentiments’ ...

“N. Varnashev, the closest fellow-struggler of the provocateur, tells us that Gapon was warning those close to him: ‘I will have two flags with me – a white and a red; flying the white flag will mean that the tsar accepts our demands, but flying the red will be a signal for revolutionary actions’ ... While the active participant in Gapon’s organization, I. Pavlov, cites the boastful declaration of Gapon: ‘We shall disarm the whole of the Petersburg police in ten minutes’ ... That’s a ‘Workers’ movement free of politics’ for you!...”<sup>228</sup>

“Mirsky and the police panicked. Instead of using Cossacks, whose charges were terrifying and whips painful but rarely fatal, the garrison’s infantry was under Uncle Vladimir, who was untrained for crowd control.”<sup>229</sup>

In fact, “the main perpetrator was the tsar’s uncle, Grand Duke Vladimir Alexandrovich, the commander of the St. Petersburg military district, who said he would enforce order at any cost; and he really did not care what the cost was for keeping order.”<sup>230</sup>

The Tsar sacked the commander. Then, on January 11, he “received a deputation of workers who repented to him that they had allowed themselves to be drawn into an anti-government provocation. His Majesty mercifully forgave them all and gave to each family of those who suffered an allowance equivalent to half a year’s pay of a highly qualified worker. The police

---

<sup>226</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 123.

<sup>227</sup> Spiridovich, in *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 123.

<sup>228</sup> Kazantsev, *op. cit.*

<sup>229</sup> Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

<sup>230</sup> Yuris Proshchae and Theodore Gaida, “‘Painful Points’ of Nicholas II’s Reign”, June 18, 2018, <http://orthochristian.com/113736.html>.



measures of the governments of the western countries, and especially the USA, at the beginning of the 20th century, to break up strikes and demonstrations led to far larger numbers of victims. It is sufficient to recall the shooting of the First of May strikers in Chicago and other cities in America, but democratically-inclined journalists prefer to keep silent about these facts."231

In a long letter to her sister Princess Victoria of Battenburg (27 January, 1905), the Tsarina complained of the lack of "real" men whom the Tsar could rely on for support. She did not blame the people, who were deceived by their leaders, but blamed the high society of Petersburg, that "rotten" city which did not represent the true Russia...232

\*

One of the few "real" men the Tsar could rely on was Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich. But he resigned his post as governor-general of Moscow. But the enemies gave him no peace in retirement. In the febrile atmosphere that followed Bloody Sunday, on February 4, he was killed by a bomb that exploded outside the palace that he and his wife, Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the sister of the Tsaritsa, was occupying in the Kremlin. At that moment she was leaving for her workshops. Alarmed by the sound of an exploding bomb nearby, she hurried toward the place and saw a soldier stretching his military overcoat over the maimed body of her husband. The soldier tried to hide the horrible sight from the eyes of the unfortunate wife. But the grand duchess dropped to her knees, on the street, and put her arms out trying to embrace the torn remains of her husband. The bomb had shattered his body to such an extent that fingers of the great prince were found, still in their gloves, on the roof of the neighbouring building.

The lofty spirit in which the Grand Duchess took the tragedy astounded everyone; she had the moral strength even to visit in prison her husband's assassin, Kaliayev, hoping to soften his heart with her Christian forgiveness.

"Who are you?" he asked upon meeting her.

"I am his widow," she replied, "Why did you kill him?"

"I did not want to kill you," he said. "I saw him several times before when I had the bomb with me, but you were with him and I could not bring myself to touch him."

"You did not understand that by killing him you were killing me," she said.

---

231 Kazantsev, *op. cit.*

232 Baroness Sophia Buksgevdén, *Ventsenosnaia Muchenitsa* (The Crown-bearing Martyr), Moscow: Russkij Khronograf, 2010, p. 184.

Then she began to talk to him of the horror of his crime before God. The Gospel was in her hands and she begged the criminal to read it and left it in his cell. Leaving the prison, the Grand Duchess said:

"My attempt was unsuccessful, but, who knows, perhaps at the last minute he will understand his sin and repent."

She then besought the tsar for clemency for him. And the emperor was ready to bestow it provided the bomber did not refuse it. He refused it...

On the memorial cross erected upon the site of her husband's death, the grand-duchess inscribed the Gospel words: "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do..." After some years she became a nun and founded the monastery of Saints Mary and Martha in Moscow. The transformation of this scion of royalty and renowned beauty into a strict ascetic astounded and intrigued high society...

\*

Other consequences of Bloody Sunday included protest meetings throughout the country, strikes in Riga, Warsaw, Baku and Odessa (where the crew of the battleship *Potemkin* joined the strikers) and the closing down of all institutions of higher learning.

Thus in the Baltic provinces "revolutionary turbulence ran high. In Latvia strikers protesting Bloody Sunday on 13 January were fired on by Russian troops, killing 73 and injuring 200. Through the summer agricultural and industrial workers went on strike, peasants refused to pay rents and sacked the estates of German landowners, and the public boycotted courts and administrative institutions run by Russians."<sup>233</sup>

This threatened to draw in foreign powers. Thus "William II promised Professor Theodore Schliemann, a leading spokesman for the Baltic Germans in Berlin, that if the Russian monarchy fell, Germany would not abandon the Balts..."<sup>234</sup> There is no question that the 1905 revolution could have led to international war...

On February 18 the tsar invited his subjects to submit suggestions "on matters concerning the improvement of the state and the nation's well-being", and issued a rescript to the new interior minister, Alexander Bulygin, telling him that the tsar had decided "to involve the worthiest men, endowed with the nation's confidence and elected by the people, in the preliminary working out and evaluation of legislative bills". This was a project for a parliament in all but name; and when the *zemtsy* held their second congress in Moscow in April they

---

<sup>233</sup> S.A Smith, *Russia and the Revolution*, p. 56.

<sup>234</sup> Dominic Lieven, *Towards the Flame. Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 190.

demanded a Constituent Assembly. All kinds of professional unions were formed, all making similar demands. On May 8 a congress of fourteen unions organized by the Union of Liberation in Moscow joined to form a Union of Unions under the chairmanship of Paul Miliukov.

The peasants also issued *prigovory* (or *cahiers*). “Much the most widely expressed demand was that the land should be awarded to those who cultivated it. Even the fact that a substantial minority of households now owned land privately did not weaken the general conviction that ‘It is essential to abolish private property in land and to put all privately owned state, monastery, and church land at the disposal of the whole people. Land should be used only by those who cultivate it.’ Otherwise the issued peasants felt most strongly about were reforming the inequitable tax system and introducing universal free primary education, for, as a Kursk village assembly put it, ‘One of the main reasons we have no rights is our ignorance and lack of education’...

“When they felt they were not being listened to, peasants tried other strategies. One serious attempt was made to organize them above the level of the volost: that was the creation of the All-Russian Peasant Union, which held two congresses. Its debates and resolutions reflected the spirit of village petitions quite closely, though the second congress went further by calling for direct political action through a national strike and a boycott of the landowners.

“Thereafter the Peasant Union suddenly fell apart, for reasons which are not wholly clear. All peasant associations above volost level were fragile, and the non-peasant organizers had other concerns by the end of 1905. Moreover, the regime treated it as an illegal organization and arrested its members. Perhaps in any case the peasants were not putting their hopes in the upcoming elections to the First Duma.

“They were also trying out more forceful tactics. They organized rent strikes, felled the landlord’s timber, and cut his hay. Increasingly, they also stole his property, making for estate outbuildings with their carts, breaking open the padlocks, and loading grain onto their carts to trundle back home. By summertime, when another poor harvest seemed likely, they were going further, driving the landlord out and making sure he would find it difficult to return by setting fire to the manor house. Two waves of arson began in Saratov gubernia in the east and Chernigov gubernia in the west; they engulfed much of the central black-earth region, where peasants were most poverty-stricken and short of land. The decision to burn the manor was usually taken in the village assembly and implemented immediately. Every householder was expected to take part in the action: ‘joint responsibility’ was the rule in defying the regime as much as in obeying it. Over much of the affected area the night sky was red with the glow of burning buildings: people called the spectacle the ‘red cockerel’. Often its appearance in a neighbouring village prompted the decision to burn. Nearly 3,000 manor houses, some 15 percent of the total, were destroyed during 1905-06. In addition, there was a great deal of vandalism as peasants ransacked libraries, plundering works of art and antiques which had

adorned the 'nests of the gentlefolk'. They were destroying a milieu which they had always regarded as belonging to alien occupiers..."<sup>235</sup>

And yet it was the peasants who were supposed to be the class most loyal to the Tsar... And many peasants were still loyal. But the revolutionary virus, combining with the peasants' long-held "Russian socialism" with regard to land ownership, had deeply infected their class also. Thus was the deepest fear of the authorities - that the peasants would join the revolution - being realized. For, as Tolstoy once wrote: "The Russian revolution will be directed, not against the Tsar and despotism, but against the ownership of land..."<sup>236</sup>

---

<sup>235</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, pp. 370-371. Cf. Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 167.

<sup>236</sup> Tolstoy, notebook for *War and Peace*, cited in Hosking, *Russia. Empire and People 1552-1917*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 303.

## 18. THE STRIVING FOR CHURCH-STATE SYMPHONY

The Tsar was deeply interested in the project of the convening of a Church Council for the first time since 1682 that would reform Church-State relations and restore the patriarchate that had been abolished by Peter the Great. According to some reports, doubted by Sergei Firsov<sup>237</sup>, he had even suggested his own candidature to the post of patriarch!<sup>238</sup>

The process that led to this discussion had begun a little earlier, in November, 1904, when a report sponsored by the Minister of the Interior, Prince Sviatopolk-Mirsky, was completed envisaging important changes in a liberal direction in both Church and State. This led to the convening of an important conference on December 2 that included all the government ministers and four of the Tsar's uncles. An *ukaz* called "On Plans for the Perfecting of State Order" was signed on December 12. The sixth point of this *ukaz* spoke of the sovereign's unbending desire to grant tolerance to schismatics and non-Orthodox confessions in the empire. The question this immediately raised was: how would this affect the interests of the dominant confession of the empire, the Orthodox Church? In order to answer this question, a note entitled "On the Contemporary Situation of the Orthodox Church" was composed by professors of the theological academies in the capital for the president of the council of ministers, Count Witte.

Firsov writes: "The note said that while externally free and protected by the State, the Orthodox Church was weighed down by heavy chains. The expulsion of the principle of *sobornost'* from Church life had led to a change in her spirit. The main cause of the disorders was recognized to be Peter's Church reform, as a result of which the Church's administration had turned into one of the 'numerous wheels of the complex machine of State'. The secular bureaucratic element was called a constant barrier between the Church and the people, as also between the Church and the State, while the only way to excite life from the dead was to return to the former, canonical norms of administration.

---

<sup>237</sup> Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' Nakanune Peremen* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes), Moscow, 2002, pp. 62-63.

<sup>238</sup> Thus according to the account of Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), "the senior hierarchs, including myself, were summoned to his Majesty. At that time, in accordance with the will of the Tsar, preparatory work was being conducted for the convening of a Council at which the restoration of the Patriarchate in Russia was to take place. And his Majesty, following the course of the matter, wanted to see us. When we assembled in the palace, the Tsar asked us whether we had chosen a candidate. We glanced at each other and were silent. Each of us was probably thinking about himself as the most fitting Patriarch. After quite a long pause we replied: 'No, your Majesty.' A short period ensued; the Tsar again summoned us to himself, and put the same question to us. In our embarrassment we were forced, as before, to give a negative answer. Then the Tsar, after looking at us in silence, fell into thought. Some moments passed. The Tsar again began to speak: 'If you have not found a candidate, then I have someone in mind.' We all listened attentively, waiting to see which one of us the Tsar would point to. But what was our amazement when the Tsar declared to us: 'I myself am a candidate'. Stunned, we could not even find anything to say in reply. And the Tsar continued: 'The heir to the throne has been born. When he has grown up a little, Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich will become the regent. The Empress has agreed to go into a monastery. And I will be tonsured.'" (in Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem Khristovym* (Russia before the Second Coming of Christ), Moscow, 1994, p. 394).

“Witte also subjected the contemporary situation of the Orthodox parish to sharp criticism; ‘only the name remained’ from it. The reasons for the fall of the parish were attributed by the authors of the note to the development of State centralization and the intensification of serfdom in Russia in the 18th and the beginning of the 19th centuries; the imposition of police duties on the clergy, as a consequence of which it was separated from its flock; the caste alienation of the clergy, and the payments it demanded for the carrying out of needs. But the autonomous re-establishment of small ecclesiastical units, which is what the parishes were, would not attain its aim if a general reform of the Church administration were not carried out: the parishes had to be linked by spiritual communion and pour into the community of the diocese, while ‘diocesan assemblies’ having Local Councils as their model should be convened periodically in parallel with the parish meetings.

“Later the note touched on the problem of the alienation from the Church of a significant part of the intelligentsia. Only the Church herself could resolve this problem and overcome the ‘spiritual schism’. The problem of the theological school was also raised; it was declared to be a task of the whole State, ‘for the degree of the influence of religion on the people depends completely on its organization’. The union of Church and State was wholeheartedly approved, while the ‘self-governing activity’ of the ecclesiastical and state organism, in the opinion of the authors, had to achieve the equilibrium destroyed by Peter the Great. With this aim it was necessary to convene a Local Council in which both white clergy and laity would participate. ‘In view of the present undeniable signs of a certain inner shaking both of society and of the masses of the people,’” pointed out Witte, ‘it would be dangerous to wait. Religion constitutes the main foundation of the popular spirit, and through it the Russian land has stood and been strong up to now.’

“And so in S.Yu. Witte’s note the question was posed not about particular changes, but about a general ecclesiastical reform, which would lead to a strengthening of the independence of the Orthodox Church and would sharply reduce the privileges of the over-procurator’s authority. After all, it was a secret to nobody that in speaking about ‘dry bureaucratic principles’, the president of the Committee of Ministers had in mind the rules that found their completed expression in the activity of the department of the Orthodox confession.

“It was at about the same time, in February, that another note appeared expressing the opinion of the capital’s Metropolitan Anthony [Vadkovsky]: ‘Questions relating to desirable transformations in the position of our Orthodox Church’. Vladyka reviewed concrete questions of the reform of the ecclesiastical administration that demanded a very speedy resolution. Referring to the discussions on religious toleration that had taken place in the Committee of Ministers, he noted: the authorities are opening to those who have separated from the Orthodox Church (the Old Ritualists, sectarians and others) ‘a definite position in the State’ without touching their inner church life, at the same time that the ‘ruling’ Church is deprived of such freedom. Citing the *Popovtzi* Old Ritualists who had accepted ‘the Austrian hierarchs’ as an example,

Metropolitan Anthony warned: 'The danger may occur that this community will be turned into the people's Church while the Orthodox Church will remain only the State Church'.

"In pointing to the Church's position within the State, Vladyka placed before the authorities a question of principle: had not the moment come to weaken the control of the secular authorities over the life of the Church? Other questions followed logically from that: should not the Church be given a greater freedom in the administration of her internal affairs? Should Orthodox priests also have the right to be permanent members of social-state institutions having their place in the parishes? After this it was natural to pose the further question on the desirability of providing the Church hierarchy with the right to participate in the sessions of the State Council, the Committee of Ministers and other higher state institutions with the right to vote in them.

"The note undoubtedly touched on the privileges of the over-procurator of the Most Holy Synod. After all, if the desires expressed by the metropolitan were to be satisfied, the Orthodox episcopate would receive the possibility of independently, with the mediation of the State, influencing legislative proposals touching the Church, that is, it would have the right of a political voice in the empire. It is understandable that K.P. Pobedonostsev could not welcome such self-will, the more so in that, besides questions on the position of the Orthodox Church in Russia, the metropolitan gave reasons for the need to review the structure of the Church and some aspects of the Church's administration, and spoke about the particular importance of recognizing the parish as a legal person and on the desirability of reviewing the laws that regulated the right of the Church to own, acquire and use property..."<sup>239</sup>

This debate highlighted two paradoxes within the present position of religion in the Russian empire, paradoxes that could be removed only *simultaneously* or not at all. The first paradox was that the 44th and 45th articles of the *Basic Laws* of the Empire guaranteed freedom of religion - **but** the Emperor had to be Orthodox and was obliged both to watch over the purity of the Orthodox Faith and to protect the Orthodox population of the empire from threats presented by schisms and heresies. And the second paradox was that the Orthodox Church was the dominant confession of the empire - **but**, since it was also a department of State, it was less, rather than more free in relation to the State than the other confessions. Increasing freedom of religion in the sense, not simply of allowing freedom to practise religious rites (which already existed), but of creating real *equality* between the religions from the point of view of the State (which did not yet exist) would have the effect of abolishing the first paradox - but only by removing the Emperor's role as guardian of the Orthodox faith and substantially increasing the threat to Orthodoxy from certain confessions in certain regions (for example, Catholicism in the west). This could be compensated for, in the view of the hierarchs, only by abolishing the second paradox at the same time - that is, by giving the Church a free hand

---

<sup>239</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 149-153.

to defend herself from the competition of other confessions without interference from the State.

Pobedonostsev suspected that Witte and Metropolitan Anthony were in league against him, and mounted a vigorous campaign to stop the projected reforms, defending the Petrine system. On March 13 he succeeded in persuading the emperor to remove the question of Church reforms from the competence of the Conferences of Ministers and Heads of State Departments and place it before the Holy Synod. However, this was only a seeming victory: the Holy Synod was no less in favour of the reforms than was Witte and the State. On March 17 the Synod recognized the necessity of reviewing the present situation of the Church vis-à-vis the State "in view of the changed situation of the heterodox confessions, the so-called Old Ritualists and sectarians, and transform the Church's administration". The restoration of the patriarchate was deemed desirable "for the sake of the honour of the Russian State", and it was suggested that a Local Council be convened in Moscow composed of the diocesan bishops and their representatives. On March 22 the seven members of the Synod signed an appeal to the Tsar to convene a Council "at the appropriate time" in Moscow, at which a patriarch would be elected and a series of major questions of Church life would be discussed.<sup>240</sup>

However, as Oldenburg writes, "protests against this plan came not only from those close to the over-procurator, but also from eminent theologians, convinced supporters of the restoration of parish self-government. 'The Church must be regenerated. But this regeneration must be conducted in the correct way, without repeating the self-willed methods of action of 1721 [i.e. Peter's *Spiritual Regulation*],' wrote M.A. Novoselov. Criticizing the Synod, he added: 'The haste is truly striking. It recalls the spectacle of the so-called St. Vitus' dance rather than a serious discussion of a holy and great work!'"<sup>241</sup>

This criticism was unfair. The question of the restoration of Church-State relations to its pre-Petrine, canonical condition had been discussed already for several years in many parts of society. It was seen as priority by many on both the right and the left. Moreover, unlike in 1721, when only the will of the Tsar had been involved, there was no self-will here on the part of the hierarchy, but a determination to effect the changes in a truly conciliar manner, through the convening of a Church Council – the only means known by the Orthodox Church, the Conciliar Church *par excellence*, for effecting real change in its organization and administration.

Once again, on March 31, Pobedonostsev succeeded in persuading the Tsar to put off the Synod's project, and to postpone giving Metropolitan Anthony an audience "for a certain time". As the Tsar wrote on the Synod's appeal: "I admit the impossibility of accomplishing, in the anxious times we are living through, such a great work requiring both calm and careful thought as the convening of

---

<sup>240</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 163.

<sup>241</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 276.



a Local Council. I reserve for myself, when the fitting time for this will come, in accordance with the ancient examples of the Orthodox Emperors, the task of giving this work momentum and convening a Council of the All-Russian Church for the canonical discussion of matters of faith and Church administration.”

However, Pobedonostev’s victory could only be temporary: society’s interest in the reforms was increasing, and even V.M. Skvortsov in the conservative journal *Missionerskoe Obozrenie* [*Missionary Review*], after pointing out that the martyred Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich had been in favour of the reforms, expressed the opinion that “the reform of the administration of the dominant Church has appeared as *the logical end and natural consequence of the confessional reform* which was so quickly and decisively pushed through by S.Yu. Witte and a special Conference of the Committee of Ministers”.<sup>242</sup> On May 5, the Tsar consented to see the metropolitan, who explained that to delay the reform was neither possible nor desirable. “But as long as Pobedonostsev is alive,” he said, “we cannot expect much.” On May 18 the Tsar officially thanked the Synod for the icon and the report that had been composed two months before, thereby indicating that Pobedonostsev’s bid to keep the Petrine system untouched had failed...

Meanwhile, on April 17, the Sunday of Pascha, 1905, a decree “On the Strengthening of the Principles of Religious Toleration” was published, abolishing the last significant discrimination against non-Orthodox religion. Such a decree had been dear to the heart of the Tsar since his early years, but he had desisted out of respect for his teacher, Pobedonostsev. St. John of Kronstadt, among others, was critical of the decree, seeing it as yet another product of the revolutionary unrest: “Look at what is happening in this kingdom at the present time: everywhere students and workers are on strike; everywhere there is the noise of parties who have as their goal the overthrowing of the true monarchical order established by God, everywhere the dissemination of insolent, senseless proclamations, disrespect for the authority of the ruling powers established by God, for ‘there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God’: children and young people imagine that they are the masters and commanders of their own fates; marriage has lost all meaning for many and divorces at will have multiplied endlessly; many children are left to the whims of fate by unfaithful spouses; some kind of senselessness and arbitrariness rule... Finally, an unpunished conversion from Orthodoxy into any faith whatever is allowed [the Decree of April 17, 1905]; even though the same Lord Whom we confess designated death in the Old Testament for those denying the law of Moses.

“If matters continue like this in Russia and the atheists and crazy anarchists are not subjected to the righteous retribution of the law, and if Russia is not cleansed of its many tares, then it will become desolate like the ancient kingdoms and cities wiped out by God’s righteous judgement from the face of the earth for their godlessness and their wickedness: Babylon, Assyria, Egypt,

---

<sup>242</sup> Skvortsov, in Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 172.

Greece-Macedonia. Hold fast, then, Russia, to your faith, and your Church, and to the Orthodox Tsar if you do not wish to be shaken by people of unbelief and lawlessness and if you do not wish to be deprived of your Kingdom and the Orthodox Tsar. But if you fall away from your faith, as many *intelligenty* have fallen away, then you will no longer be by Russia or Holy Rus', but a rabble of all kinds of other faiths that wish to destroy one another..."<sup>243</sup>

Immediately after the publication of the decree on religious toleration, tens of thousands of uniates in the western regions, who had been Orthodox only formally, returned to uniatism<sup>244</sup>, and the Orthodox began to suffer persecution. Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia addressed this problem in his report to the Pre-Conciliar Convention of 1906 entitled "On Freedom of Confession":

"Freedom of confession (not 'freedom of conscience': that is a senseless expression)," he said, "must of course be preserved in the State: there is no point in keeping anybody by force in the ruling Church; it is also necessary to excommunicate from the Church those who declare themselves to be outside her confession after exhorting them twice. But this is quite another matter than freedom of religious *propaganda*..."

"Orthodoxy has very little to fear from the preaching of foreign religious dogmas, and hardly any religion would decide to address Orthodox listeners with such preaching; this would mean hoping to draw people from the light of the sun to a dim kerosene lamp. The propaganda of heterodoxy is possible only through cunning, deception and violence. Who does not know by what means the Latins drew to themselves 200,000 Orthodox Christians last year? They persistently spread the rumour that the Royal Family and even St. John of Kronstadt was joining their heresy, assuring the people that supposedly all Catholics would be re-ascribed to the Polish gentry and be given lands, while the Orthodox would be returned to the status of serfs. But that was still only half the sorrow. Representing in themselves almost the whole of the landowning class in the western and south-western region, the Polish gentry and counts are oppressing the Orthodox in their factories... The peasants there are completely in the hands of these contemporary feudal lords, and when they meet them they kiss their feet.

"And so even now, when there is not yet equality of religious confessions, they are bestowing on the renegades from Orthodoxy both money and forests and lands, while the faithful sons of the Church are being insulted, deprived of employment and expelled together with their earnings from the factories. What will the situation be when there is equality of confessions?"

---

<sup>243</sup> St. John of Kronstadt, in Kizenko, *op. cit.*, pp. 247-248. At about the same time, St. John's friend and fellow-wonderworker, Protopriest Valentine Amphiteatrov said: "Pray well for the Sovereign. He is a martyr. Without him the whole of Russia will perish..." (Protopriest Valentine, in "Zhizneopisanie protopriera Valentina Amfiteatrova (II)" (Life of Protopriest Valentine Amphiteatrov), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), N 12 (659), December, 2004, p. 29).

<sup>244</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 276-277.

“The Protestants are acting by the same means in the north-western region, as are various sects in the Crimea and New Russia. Orthodoxy and the Orthodox, by contrast, despise such ways of acting. The Muslim or Jew, on accepting holy baptism, is often immediately lynched, that is, killed by his former co-religionists... Can the government leave them defenceless? Thousands of Christians have fallen into Mohammedanism in the last year; even several purely Russian families in Orenburg diocese have done so, having been subjected to threats, bribes and absurd rumours about the imminent re-establishment of the Kirghiz kingdom with its hereditary dynasty, together with expulsion and even the beating up of all Christians.

“If the governments of all cultured countries punish falsification in trade, as well as the spreading of sensational false rumours and deliberate slander, etc., then our government, too, if it is to remain consistent, must protect the Orthodox people from the deceit, blackmail and economic and physical violence of the heterodox. They are able to act only by these means, as did the Catholics during the time of the Polish kingdom, when they seduced the Orthodox into the unia.

“Let us remember one more important circumstance that is completely ignored when talking about religious toleration.

“If our flock were catechized both in the truths of the faith and in how they should look on various faiths, peoples and estates, it would be possible to present them to themselves and to the spiritual influence of their pastors in the struggle for faith and nationality.

“But our government – more precisely, our State – has been attracted since the time of Peter and after by the aims of purely cultural and state centralization, constricting, distorting and even half eclipsing the religious consciousness and religious life of the Orthodox people. In the 17th century the latter had nothing to fear from any propaganda (except that of the Old Ritualists, of course), because, if not each peasant family, at any rate every village had its own teachers of dogmas, who lived the same peasant life as all the other village dwellers. Moreover, discipline in Church and everyday life was as strong as among the Jewish *hassidim* or, to take a closer example, our contemporary *Yedinovertsy*, to whom also, thanks to their conditions of life, no propaganda presented any danger.

“But the government of the 18th century tore away the clergy from the people, driving the former into the ranks of a separate caste, and educating it, not in the concepts and everyday discipline of popular Orthodoxy, but in the traditions of the Latin school and scholastic theological theory. The people was further and further estranged from Church literature and Church services, and which is still more sad, remained alone in its religious way of life, in its fasts, its prayers, its pilgrimages. The clergy became more and more learned and cultured, while the people became more and more ignorant and less steeped in

Orthodox discipline. That is what happened with the Great Russian people, which was Orthodox from ages past. But what are we to say about the down-trodden, enslaved Western Little Russians and Belorussians, or about the descendants of the formerly baptized non-Russian peoples beyond the Volga and in Siberia?

“All these people, abandoned as regards spiritual development, chained to the land, had, willingly or unwillingly, to be reconciled to the thought that the Tsar, the lords, the bishops and the priests were reading sacred books and studying the holy faith for them, while they themselves would listen to them – learned people who could find the leisure and the means to read.

“The grey village hardly distinguishes between spiritual bosses and secular ones, spiritual books and science from secular ones. Everything that comes from the legislative authorities comes from God; everything that is published in the newspapers comes from the Tsar and the bishops. Look at what views on life our poor people has come up against: the mountains of proclamations, the blasphemous brochures, the caricatures of August Personages and Fr. John of Kronstadt and all the rest with which yester-year’s enlighteners have blessed their homeland.

“This is the clue how the people can believe the Catholic proclamations about his Majesty accepting this religion, and the revolutionary proclamations to the effect that the Tsar has supposedly ordered the landowners to be robbed, etc. And so, having taken into its hand the people’s conscience, can the Russian government renounce Orthodoxy before the people has been catechized in it consciously? If it would like to take an extra-confessional stance, then let it first return to the people the confessional conscience it leased from it, let it give out millions over several years for the establishment of catechists – at least one for every 300 people (now there is one priest for every 2000 Orthodox Christians). But until then it is obliged to protect the Orthodox people from violent deception, from economic compulsion to apostasy.

“We said that an elective authority will not dare to violate the people’s will, but it must get to know it and obey it. Government authority has, of course, lofty privileges, but it too is obliged to go in agreement, if not with everything that is contemporary, but in any case with the historically unchanged will of the people. It is in it that Russia, as a growing collective organism, as a nation, as an idea pouring out in history, is recognized. And what is this people in its history and its present? Is it an ethnographical group or a group, first of all, of self-defence at the level of the state? No, the Russians define themselves as a *religious* group, as a confessional group, including in this concept both the Georgians and the Greeks who cannot even speak Russian. According to the completely just definition of K. Aksakov and other Slavophiles, the Russian people thinks of itself as the flock of God, the Church, a society of people that accomplished their salvation with the guidance of its faith and through *prayer and labour*. The people looks on its life as a cross given it by God, and the whole of its earthly state prosperity it has entrusted to the Tsar. Let the Tsar with his boyars and

warriors repel the enemies of his Orthodox country, let him take taxes and recruits for this end, let the Tsar judge his servants and punish thieves, robbers and other evil-doers; all this is of little interest to the Russian man, his work is to struggle in labour and prayer, and to learn virtue from the people of God. And let the Tsar and his warriors take care that nobody hinders him in this.

“True, in this country there are many people who are foreign to the aim of life that is embraced by the whole people, that is, salvation. But they do not hinder Russian people in this, let them without hindrance live in accordance with their ‘pagan habits’ and pray to their gods, until they recognize the true faith. But, of course, not only the personal life of each man, but also the mission of the whole Orthodox country is seen by each Russian as consisting in exalting the light of Orthodoxy both among his own ‘heathen’, and beyond the frontiers of his native land, as is proved for us by the constant missionary colonization by Russians of the East and the North, beginning from the 9th century, and their constant consciousness of their historical duty to liberate their co-religionists from under the Turk and bring down his ‘God-hated kingdom’, for which a litany is raised at the New Year *moleben* since the days of Ivan III to the days of Nicholas II.

“To renounce this task, which the people has considered for nine centuries to be its most important work, and to establish equality of rights for all faiths in the Russian state – this means annihilating Russia as an historical fact, as an historical force; it means carrying out a greater violation on the thousand-year-old people than the Tatar khans or the usurpers of the Time of Troubles carried out...”<sup>245</sup>

The April decree on religious toleration was the first step on the path of the Russian Church towards ecumenism, what was known in those days as “indifferentism”. This, we may suppose, was not the last of the reasons why the Lord now unleashed the revolution...

---

<sup>245</sup> Archbishop Anthony, in Rklitsky, *Zhizneopisanie Blazhenneishago Antonia*, vol. 3, pp. 277, 278-281.

## 19. THE OCTOBER MANIFESTO

The final defeat of the Russian navy at Tsushima in May, 1905 increased the political tensions in Russia. A meeting in Moscow of representatives from the *zemstva*, the nobility and the municipal councils called for the convocation of a national representative body elected on a secret, equal, universal and direct ballot. On June 6 a delegation from the meeting led by Prince Sergei Trubetskoj was received by the Tsar, and on August 6 what became known as the Bulygin Constitution was published: a proposal for a consultative parliamentary body called the Duma.

Now the Tsar was never against *consultative* bodies. He welcomed every opportunity to find out more about the opinions and attitudes of his subjects. But he said: "I shall never in any circumstances agree to a representative form of government, for I consider it harmful for the people entrusted to me by God".<sup>246</sup> The Bulygin Constitution was far from being a representative form of government in the full western sense: its powers were limited, and "the inviolability of autocratic power" was retained. Nevertheless, it was seen as a major concession by the government to the liberal opposition.

But it was too little, too late. "Workers went on strike, peasants attacked landowners, students rioted, swathes of the Baltics and Caucasus became independent revolutionary fiefdoms."<sup>247</sup> In Guria in Georgia, for example, peasants refused to pay taxes and demanded to run their own affairs. On August 27 the government made another unexpected concession: university faculties were allowed to elect rectors and students to hold assemblies. Moreover, the police were told to keep out of the universities, making them in effect "no-go" areas. Soon workers and other non-students joined the student meetings, and, as Richard Pipes writes, "academic work became impossible as institutions of higher learning turned into 'political clubs': non-conforming professors and students were subjected to intimidation and harassment... In Witte's view, the university regulations of August 27 were a disaster: 'It was the first breach through which the Revolution, which had ripened underground, emerged into the open.'"<sup>248</sup>

The expert on Kremlin antiquities, Ivan Zabelin, wrote: "Everyone has stopped talking: instead they importunately DEMAND that their lives must improve, that the working day should be reduced and wages raised, and they demand this AT ONCE. They also demand the introduction of a democratic republic AT ONCE. Russia has become a madhouse... it's like an epidemic of plague or cholera."<sup>249</sup>

---

<sup>246</sup> Yana Sedova, "V Plenu Mifov i Stereotipov" (In Captivity to Myths and Stereotypes), *Nasha Strana* (Our Country), 17 July, 2010, pp. 1-2.

<sup>247</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 524.

<sup>248</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 36-37.

<sup>249</sup> Zabelin, *Dnevnik*, in Catherine Merridale, *Red Fortress*, New York: Picador, 2013, p. 261.

On September 5 Count Witte came back from negotiating the Treaty of Portsmouth (USA) with Japan. Russia surrendered the southern half of Sakhalin and the Liaotung peninsula with Port Arthur. There was no indemnity. In general, this was a good deal for Russia. However, there was no hiding the fact that a European great power had been defeated by an Asiatic one, and that, as Thomas F. Mullard pointed out, this “radically reshaped” the mood of the Orient: “There is no Asiatic country, from China to Persia, which has not felt the reaction to the Russo-Japanese war, and in which it has failed to wake new ambitions. These usually find expression in a desire to assert independence, to claim equality with the white races, and have had the general result of causing Western prestige to decline in the East.”<sup>250</sup>

Witte now used his restored prestige to speak in favour of the creation of a constitutional monarchy along the lines of the resolution of the *Zemstvo* Congress held in Moscow the month before. As chaos spread in the first half of October as a result of strikes organized by the Union of Unions, Witte argued that there were only two alternatives for the government: appoint a military dictator or make major concessions to the liberation movement: “The advance of human progress is unstoppable. The idea of human freedom will triumph, if not by way of reform then by way of revolution. But in the latter event it will come to life on the ashes of a thousand years of destroyed history. The Russian *bunt* [rebellion], mindless and pitiless, will sweep away everything, turn everything into dust. What kind of Russia will emerge from this unprecedented trial surpasses human imagination: the horrors of the Russian *bunt* may exceed everything known to history. It is possible that foreign intervention will tear the country apart. Attempts to put into practice the ideals of theoretical socialism – they will fail but they will be made, no doubt about it – will destroy the family, the expression of religious faith, all the foundations of law.”

The Tsar was not convinced by this memorandum, prescient though it was. He saw himself as having to choose between two courses: the first was to “appoint an energetic military man and try by all means to suppress the rebellion; then there would be a pause, and again in a few months one would have to act by force again; but this would mean torrents of blood and in the end would lead to the present situation, that is, the authority of the power would have been demonstrated, but the result would remain the same... The other path is to present the population with civil rights... Among other things, that would imply the obligation of passing every bill through the State Duma. This, in essence, is a constitution.”<sup>251</sup>

These words of the Tsar would seem to indicate that he did not believe in the use of force to suppress the rebellion. Nevertheless, he did think of making the reliable and loyal D.F. Trepov, the Governor-General of St. Petersburg, a kind of military dictator. However, when Trepov was asked “whether he could restore order in the capital without risking a massacre, he answered that ‘he

---

<sup>250</sup> Mullard, *America and the Far Eastern Question*, New York, 1909, pp. 1-2.

<sup>251</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 312-313.

could give no such guarantee either now or in the future: rebellion [*kramola*] has attained a level at which it is doubtful whether [bloodshed] could be avoided. All that remains is faith in the mercy of God.'

"Still unconvinced, Nicholas asked Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolayevich to assume dictatorial powers. The Grand Duke is said to have responded that the forces for a military dictatorship were unavailable and that unless the Tsar signed the manifesto he would shoot himself..."<sup>252</sup>

With "Nikolasha's" hysterical rejection, the Tsar gave in: if he could not impose a dictatorship, he would have to allow a constitution. For by now the existence of the regime itself was under threat. "The breakdown of law and order and the rise of crime and what contemporaries called 'hooliganism' added to the general disruption. The climax of the years came in October with a general strike, which paralyzed the entire country. It started with a printers' strike in Moscow on September 20th, and spread quickly to the capital and to the railway network."<sup>253</sup> A peasant *jacquerie* spread from the Baltic region into Central Russia, incited by false manifestos supposedly proclaiming that the Tsar had given the peasants the landowners' estates.<sup>254</sup> The country was descending into anarchy.

On October 13 two new goads of the regime were created simultaneously: the Constitutional Democratic Party under Paul Miliukov (the "Cadets") and the Petrograd soviet of worker's deputies, with Trotsky as one of its leaders, which was controlled by the socialists, who had twenty-one out of fifty seats on the Executive Committee. By November over eighty soviets were created across the country including several peasant soviets and three soldier ones. This "dual power" system foreshadowed the dual power that was to be established in March, 1917 when the tsar abdicated. And so if the revolution was born in October, 1917, it was conceived twelve years before, in 1905...

\*

In his Manifesto of October 17, 1905, which was entitled "On the Improvement of Order in the State", the Tsar declared: "The disturbances and unrest in St Petersburg, Moscow and in many other parts of our Empire have filled Our heart with great and profound sorrow. The welfare of the Russian Sovereign and His people is inseparable and national sorrow is His too. The present disturbances could give rise to national instability and present a threat to the unity of Our State. The oath which We took as Tsar compels Us to use all Our strength, intelligence and power to put a speedy end to this unrest which is so dangerous for the State. The relevant authorities have been ordered to take measures to deal with direct outbreaks of disorder and violence and to protect people who only want to go about their daily business in peace. However, in

---

<sup>252</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, p. 43.

<sup>253</sup> Williams, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

<sup>254</sup> Bukstgevdn, *op. cit.*, p. 168.



view of the need to speedily implement earlier measures to pacify the country, we have decided that the work of the government must be unified. We have therefore ordered the government to take the following measures in fulfilment of our unbending will:

1. Fundamental civil freedoms will be granted to the population, including real personal inviolability, freedom of conscience, speech, assembly and association.
2. Participation in the Duma will be granted to those classes of the population which are at present deprived of voting powers, insofar as is possible in the short period before the convocation of the Duma, and this will lead to the development of a universal franchise. There will be no delay to the Duma elect already been organized.
3. It is established as an unshakeable rule that no law can come into force without its approval by the State Duma and representatives of the people will be given the opportunity to take real part in the supervision of the legality of government bodies.

We call on all true sons of Russia to remember the homeland, to help put a stop to this unprecedented unrest and, together with this, to devote all their strength to the restoration of peace to their native land.”<sup>255</sup>

“Far less dramatically,” writes Stephen Kotkin, “but no less consequentially, he tsar also conceded – for the first time – a unified government with a prime minister... The model that Witte had in mind was Prussia’s, which afforded the minister-president the authority – used to great effect by Bismarck – to control all contact between individual ministers and the monarch.

“A strong cabinet coordinated by a prime minister might seem an obvious necessity in any modern state, but globally it had arisen relatively recently. In Great Britain, the prime ministership owed its largely unplanned origins to the circumstance that King George I (r. 1714-27), of the Brunswick House of Hanover (a German state), could not speak English (he spent at least half the year in Hanover); so responsibility for chairing cabinet sessions fell to a newly created post of *prime* or first minister, a circumstance that would become institutionalized: Prussia acquired a prime minister equivalent – minister-president – and a cabinet of ministers in stages from 1849 through 1852 in an improvisation to deal with the surprise advent of a legislature in 1848... But whereas the British Prime Minister was awarded to the majority leader in the House of Commons, meaning he owed his status not to royal but to elected parliamentary majorities, Prussia’s minister-president was appointed or removed by the monarch alone, without consideration of parliamentary (elected) majorities.

---

<sup>255</sup> *Polnoe sobranie zakonov Rossijskoi Imperii* (A Complete Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire), 3rd series, vol. XXV/I, N 26803).

“Russia followed not the British example – a genuinely parliamentary system – but the Prussian one. True, the Duma could summon ministers for a report, but the tsar retained absolute power over ministers’ appointments or dismissal, as well as an absolute veto over legislation, the right to dismiss the Duma and announce new elections, and the right to declare martial law. In addition, the ministers of foreign affairs, war, the navy and the court fell outside the prime minister’s portfolio...”<sup>256</sup>

The Manifesto secured the ending of the general strike, but little else. The revolutionaries saw it as a capitulation to their demands – and continued with their revolution. However, the attitude of most people in the provinces was: “Thank God, now there will be an end to the strikes and disturbances – ‘the Tsar has given liberty’, there is nothing more to demand. This liberty was understood in different ways, and in a very woolly way: but the popular masses came out onto the streets with portraits of the Tsar and national flags; they celebrated the publication of the manifesto and did not protest against it.”<sup>257</sup>

Witte was invited to chair the Council of Ministers. His position under the constitution was now critical – and critically ambiguous. Was he still primarily a servant of the Tsar – or a lackey of the Masons in the Duma?

Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: “When some time had passed, Witte began to praise his Majesty with sweet words for ‘the people’s representation’ in which the Tsar would find support. Nicholas II interrupted him: ‘Sergius Yulyevich: I very well understand that I am creating for myself *not a helper*, but *an enemy*, but I comfort myself with the thought that I will succeed in bringing up a state force which will turn out to be useful for providing Russia in the future with a path of peaceful development, without sharp undermining of those supports on which she has lived for so long.’ In the new order the old State Council, composed of high-ranking dignitaries appointed by the Tsar was preserved, as a kind of ‘higher chamber’. However, all this together with the Duma *was not a parliament*, since his Majesty was not intending to renounce his autocratic power. He made a public declaration about this during a reception of a monarchist organization: ‘The reforms I announced on October 17 will be realized unfailingly, and the freedoms given by me in the same way to the whole of the population are inalienable. But my Autocracy will remain *what it was of old*.’...”<sup>258</sup>

But could the Autocracy really remain what it was when there was now a mainly liberal Duma with not merely consultative, but also legislative powers? Although the Manifesto made no mention of the word “constitution”, many thought that it was a constitution permanently limiting his autocratic powers.

Of course, the Tsar’s power had never been unlimited in an absolutist sense – as Protopriest John Vostorgov said, “The supreme power in a pure, true

---

<sup>256</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin*, pp. 83-84.

<sup>257</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 315.

<sup>258</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 424-425.

monarchy is unlimited, but not absolute, for it is limited morally by the content of its ideal”<sup>259</sup> – which is the Law of God. It was because he always saw himself as under God’s law that when the Tsar came to review the Basic Laws of the Empire in April, 1906, he removed the word “unlimited” from Article 1 to describe the nature of his power, while retaining the word “autocratic”.

However, the Tsar remained above all *human* (as opposed to Divine, Church) laws in his realm, since he was the source of them. Therefore if he bestowed a law, or manifesto, or even a constitution, he was entitled to change it or remove it altogether. As N. Rodzevich wrote in *Moskovskie Vedomosti*: “Let us assume that the Tsar is not knowledgeable on military affairs. Well, he selects an experienced general and declares that without the agreement of this general no military question may be decided. A time comes and the Tsar realizes that the general selected by him gives bad advice; can he really not change his previous order and dismiss the general? Of course he may do so. Similarly, if the Duma does not warrant the Tsar’s confidence, would he not be justified in dissolving the Duma and then creating a new one or refusing to convoke one at all? This depends on the Autocrat’s will.”<sup>260</sup>

The Tsar’s right to dissolve the Duma, and promulgate new laws in the interval between elections was enshrined in Article 87. As Reginald E. Zelnik writes, “Because the same article also required that, for such laws to be valid, the next Duma must approve them within two months, Article 87 by itself did not directly undermine the new order, but it did create a situation where an insecure or embattled regime could promulgate a law to change the Fundamental Laws themselves, and thereby alter the composition of the next Duma.” Also, “the Fundamental Laws invested the tsar (still called ‘autocrat’) and his appointed ministers with what appeared to be full power over diplomacy and war, but made any increase in the military budget contingent on the approval of the Duma.”<sup>261</sup>

The relationship between Tsar and Duma was thus similar to that between the English King Charles I and parliament, or to that between the French King Louis XVI and the Estates General – with a similarly tragic outcome...

---

<sup>259</sup> Vostorgov, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 403.

<sup>260</sup> Rodzevich, in A. Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905*, Stanford University Press, 1992, p. 12.

<sup>261</sup> Zelnik, “Revolutionary Russia 1890-1914”, in G. Frazee (ed). *Russia. A History*, London: Constable, 2001, p. 258.

## 20. THE JEWS IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION

While the October Manifesto was not called a constitution *de jure*, it was a constitution *de facto*. That the introduction of a constitution would lead to revolution had been predicted in 1902 by an Austro-Hungarian attache in St. Petersburg, who sent the following perceptive memo to Vienna: "The Russian empire is everywhere in ferment. Unrest and apprehension prevail in all classes. This applies equally to labour, students, the nobility, including the highest Court society, industrialists, merchants, shopkeepers, and, last but not least, the peasants... The only proven method of dealing with this situation, which is often proposed abroad, is the granting of a constitution: if this were done here, the consequence would almost certainly be revolution..."<sup>262</sup>

This was because the Manifesto, far from calming political passions, excited them to the utmost. Anarchy increased as young revolutionaries rampaged in the cities; while the police, overstretched and unsure of their rights under the new constitution, hesitated to apply strong measures. Since the peasants were not promised land by the Manifesto, the wave of peasant violence continued.<sup>263</sup>

The press, freed from all preliminary censorship and almost exclusively owned by Jews, trebled the number of its publications and raged against the government. True, "the authorities maintained the right to fine, suspend, and close publications which 'published false information', 'fostered disorder' or 'provoked the population's hostility to officials, soldiers or government institutions'."<sup>264</sup> But such restraints were essentially powerless when Duma deputies were allowed to say what they liked, and cite any source of information, fake or otherwise. And so "newspapers delighted in reporting crime, violence, and scandal, and there was plenty of it to entertain readers with. Terrorism, the remarkable career of Azef, the maverick activities of Rasputin became daily press fodder. All this helped to discredit the authorities, including - perhaps especially - the emperor himself..."<sup>265</sup>

However, in Petersburg there was a new phenomenon: demonstrations in favour of the Tsar, the so-called "Black Hundreds", or monarchist counter-revolution... The view generally accepted in the West is that the "Black Hundreds" simply slaughtered masses of Jews. But the truth was somewhat different... The general pattern was as follows. First the revolutionaries, usually led by young Jews, would call on the population to strike and free prisoners from the prisons, and would themselves tear down the symbols of tsarist authority, although "undoubtedly both Russians and Jews took part in the destruction of portraits and monograms".<sup>266</sup> Then, a day or two later,

---

<sup>262</sup> Stephen Kotkin, *Stalin. Paradoxes of Power. 1878-1928*, London: Penguin, 2014, p. 56.

<sup>263</sup> "The October Manifesto said nothing about the land question, yet there was a wide presumption that the duma would enact a transfer of landlords' lands to the peasants." (S.A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

<sup>264</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 382.

<sup>265</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, pp. 382-383.

<sup>266</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 375.

when it was clear that the authorities were unwilling or unable to restore order, the anti-Jewish pogrom would begin.

Thus in Kiev the pogrom began on October 18. "A crowd of Jews seized the building of the City Duma, tore down national flags and mocked the portraits of the Tsar. One of the Jews cut the head out of a portrait [of the Tsar], put his own [in the hole] and shouted: 'Now I'm the Tsar!' Others declared to the stunned Kievans: 'Soon your St. Sophia cathedral will become our synagogue!'"<sup>267</sup>

"In its initial stage the pogrom undoubtedly had the character of revenge taken for the offence to national feeling. Subjecting the Jews they met on the street to blows, smashing shops and trampling the goods they took out of them into the dirt, the pogromists would say: "There's your freedom, there's your constitution and revolution; there are your tsarist portraits and crown". And then on the following morning, the 19th, a thousand-strong crowd made its way from the Duma to St. Sophia square carrying the empty frames from the broken portraits of the tsar, the tsarist monogram and smashed mirrors. They went to the university, repaired the damaged portraits and served a *moleben*, while 'Metropolitan Flavian exhorted the crowd not to behave badly and to disperse to their homes'. 'But at the same time that the people constituting the centre of the patriotic demonstration... maintained exemplary order in it, people joining it from the street allowed themselves to commit all kinds of violence in relation to the Jews they met and to people wearing the uniforms of academic institutions [students].' Then the demonstrators were joined by 'black workers, homeless inhabitants of the flea market and bare-footed people from the river-bank', 'groups of pogromists smashed up Jewish flats and stalls and threw out property and goods onto the street. Then they would be partly destroyed and partly stolen.'...

"The pogromists passed by the stalls of the Karaite Jews without touching them, and also 'those Jewish flats where they were shown portraits of the emperor'. [On the 19th the wealthiest Jewish shops in the centre were looted.] Proceeding from the fact that 'almost two thirds of all the trade in the city was in the hands of the Jews', [Senator] Turau calculates the losses, including the homes of the rich, 'at several million roubles'. They set out to destroy not only Jewish houses, but also the flats of well-known liberal social activists...

"In all during the days of the pogrom, according to the approximate estimate of the police (some of those who suffered were taken away by the crowd), 47 people were killed, including 12 Jews, while 205 were wounded, one third of them Jews.

"Turau concludes his report with the conclusion that 'the main cause of the Jewish pogrom in Kiev was the long-existing enmity between the Little Russian and Jewish population, based on the difference in their world-views. The

---

<sup>267</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

immediate cause was the insult to national feeling by the revolutionary manifestations, in which a prominent role belonged to Jewish youth.' The simple people saw 'the Jews alone as being to blame for the insults and imprecations against everything that was holy and dear to it. It could not understand the revolutionary movement after the concessions given it, and explained it by the striving of the Jews to gain "their own Yiddish freedom".' 'The failures of the war, at which Jewish youth always openly expressed its most lively joy, their avoidance of military service, their participation in the revolutionary movement, in a series of violent acts and murders of high-ranking people, and undoubtedly the irritation of the simple people against the Jews – that is why there were incidents in Kiev when many Russians openly gave refuge in their houses to poor Jews hiding from the violence, while sharply refusing to give it to young Jews.'

"The newspaper *Kievljanin* also wrote about this. 'Unfortunate Jews! What were these thousands of families guilty of?... To their own woe and misfortune the Jews have not been able to restrain their madmen... But, you know, there are madmen among us Russians, too, and we have not been able to restrain them.'

"The revolutionary youth went mad – and it was the elderly and peaceful Jews who had to pay for it..."<sup>268</sup>

Indeed, the older generation of Jewry did not in general support their young people. "[Jewish] orthodoxy was in a struggle, not always open, but hidden, against the Jewish intelligentsia. It was clear that orthodoxy, in condemning the liberation movement in Jewry, was striving to win the goodwill of the government.' But it was already late. By 1905 the autocracy had generally lost control in the country. While traditional Jewry by that year had completely lost a whole, and already not the first, *generation*, which had departed into Zionism, into secular liberalism, rarely into enlightened conservatism, and – the most significant in its consequences – into the revolutionary movement."<sup>269</sup>

The older generation, continues Solzhenitsyn, "helped the police to catch Jewish revolutionaries, and to break up demonstrations, strikes, etc.' Not that it was nice for them to be on the side of the government. But... they not want to accept the revolutionary law, for they honoured *their own*. While for many young revolutionaries the religious 'Union of the Jews' in Bialystok and other places was 'Blackhundredist'."<sup>270</sup>

It must also be emphasized that the main motivation for this flood of young Jews into the revolutionary movement was not the restrictions placed by the government on the civil rights of Jewry, but infection with the same liberal and revolutionary ideas as infected so many contemporary Russians. "The

---

<sup>268</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 379-380, 383-384.

<sup>269</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 358.

<sup>270</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 367-368.

participation of Jews in the general Russian revolutionary movement can only to a very small degree be explained by their inequality... The Jews only shared the general mood' of the struggle against the autocracy. Is that to be wondered at? The young members of *intelligenty* families, both Russian and Jewish, had for years heard at home [such phrases as]: 'the crimes of the authorities', 'a government of murderers'. They then rushed into revolutionary action with all their energy and ardour."271

In Odessa, the Manifesto was published on the 17th. The next day, "General Kauldbars, the commander of the Odessa military district, in order to 'give the population the unhindered opportunity to use the freedom given by the Manifesto in all its forms', ordered all the soldiers not to appear on the streets, 'so as not to spoil the joyful mood in the population'. However, 'this mood did not last for long. From all sides individual groups, mainly of Jews and young students, streamed towards the centre of the city' with red flags of shouts of "Down with the autocracy!" and "Down with the police!" And orators summoned them to the revolution. From a metallic image on the Duma of the words 'God save the Tsar!', the first two words were broken off. They rushed into the Duma hall, 'a huge portrait of his Majesty the Emperor was torn to pieces, while in the Duma the national flag was replaced with the red flag. They removed the hats from a protopriest, deacon and reader who were passing by in a cab to a pannikhida, and then later at the burial they stopped the procession 'and interrupted the singing of "Holy God" with shouts of "Hurrah!"'. 'They dragged along a dead cat and a scarecrow without its head and with the inscription "This is the autocracy", and collected money on the spot "for killing the Tsar" or "for the death of Nicholas"'. 'The young people, and especially the Jews, with an evident consciousness of their superiority began to point out to the Russians that freedom had not been given voluntarily, but had been snatched away from the government by the Jews... They openly said to the Russians: "Now we will rule you"', and also: 'We gave you God, we will also give you a tsar'."272 Prophetic words...

Soon the students were forcing workers to take off their hats in front of the red flag. When the workers refused, they were shot at. But though unarmed, they succeeded in dispersing the crowd. Then, however, another thousand-strong crowd of Jews began to fire at the workers, killing four. Thus "in various places there began fights and armed confrontations between Russians and Jews: Russian workers and people without fixed occupations, the so-called hooligans, began to catch and beat up Jews. They went on to break into and destroy Jewish houses, flats and stalls."273

The next day the "counter-pogrom" of the Russians against the Jews began in earnest. Crowds of Russians of all classes carrying icons and portraits of the tsar, and singing "Save, O Lord, Thy people" marched into the centre of the

---

271 Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 361.

272 Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 390-391.

273 Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 393.

town. There the revolutionaries shot at them, a boy carrying an icon was killed, bombs were thrown...

Open warfare between Jews and Russians now began. "On October 31 [21?] a crowd of Jews destroyed state emblems and seized the Duma, proclaiming a 'Danubian-Black Sea Republic' headed by the Jew Pergament. It was suggested that the Don and Kuban lands should be 'cleansed' of Cossacks and handed over to Jewish settlers. Moreover, Jewish organizations *armed* from four to five thousand warriors, and not a little blood was shed in conflicts with soldiers. All this was described by the correspondent of the [London] *Times*, who was a witness of the events, in an article entitled 'A Regime of Terror' (Jewish terror was meant). Then in London the chief rabbi of the Spanish communities Gasper came out in print denying *everything* ('Not one Jew insulted the Majesty' of the Tsar) and affirming that that Tsarist troops and police had killed four thousand completely innocent Jews! The *Times* correspondent from Odessa refuted this fabrication: in general there had not been thousands of Jews killed. During the Odessa disorders only 293 Jews had been buried, of whom many died a natural death. 274 The Englishman also pointed out that the provocation had been arranged by the 'central Jewish organization in Switzerland which sent its emissaries from Poland to Odessa'. He quoted L.Ya. Rabinovich on how the transfer of arms had taken place. But such witnesses from objective foreign observers were extremely rare! On the other hand, the whole of the world's press was filled with descriptions of the horrors of the Jewish pogroms, which rolled in an especially powerful wave from October 18 to 21 in the cities of Orel, Kursk, Simferopol, Rostov-on-Don, Ryazan, Velikie Luki, Ivanovo-Voznesensk, Kaluga, Kazan, Novgorod, Smolensk, Tula, Ufa, Tomsk, Warsaw, many others and in all the cities of the 'Pale of Settlement'. Of course, nothing was said about how these pogroms had been *provoked by the Jews themselves* (especially often by firing at Russians from the windows of *well-known Jewish houses*). In our days it has become clearer that at that time *social-democratic* organizations led by Jews deliberately spread leaflets among the people calling on them to [start] *Jewish pogroms*." 275

The wrath of the people was directed not only against the Jews but against leftists generally. Thus in Tver a crowd set fire to the theatre in which the leftists were sitting - 200 perished. Another crowd threatened to do the same thing in Balashov, but thanks to the courageous actions of the governor, Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin, there were no victims.

And yet, considering the scale of the disturbances, there were far fewer victims than might have been expected - 1000 dead and several thousand wounded, according to one Jewish source. Again, the Jew G. Sliozberg, a contemporary witness who was in possession of all the information, wrote: "Fortunately, all these hundreds of pogroms did not bring in their wake

---

274 "According to information provided by the police, those killed numbered more than 500, of whom 400 were Jews, while the wounded registered by the police numbered 289... of whom 237 were Jews" (Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 397). (V.M.).

275 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 428-429.



significant violence against the persons of Jews, and in the vast majority of places the pogroms were not accompanied by murders.”<sup>276</sup> For in 1905 faith and morality still held the great majority of the Orthodox people back from taking revenge against their persecutors. It would be a different story during the Civil War...

On October 27 the Tsar wrote to his mother “that the *pogromshchiki* represented ‘a whole mass of loyal people’, reacting angrily to ‘the impertinence of the Socialists and revolutionaries... and, because nine-tenths of the trouble-makers are Jews, the People’s whole anger turned against them.’ This analysis was accepted by many foreign observers, notably British diplomats like the ambassador at St. Petersburg, Sir Charles Hardinge, his councillor, Cecil Spring Rice, and the Consul-General in Moscow, Alexander Murray.”<sup>277</sup> This analysis was also supported by Senator Kuzminsky, who concluded that “the October disturbances and disorders were caused by factors of an undeniably revolutionary character and were crowned by a pogrom of Jews exclusively as a result of the fact that it was the representatives of this nationality who took the dominant part in the revolutionary movement”.<sup>278</sup>

Alexander Solzhenitsyn has shown by extensive quotations from Jewish sources that the Jews were well aware of the true state of affairs. Even the more honest Jews had to admit that 1905 was in essence “a Jewish revolution”. “Thus in November, 1905 a certain Jacob de Haas in an article entitled ‘The Jewish Revolution’ in the London Zionist journal *Maccabee* wrote directly: ‘The revolution in Russia is a Jewish revolution, for it is the turning point in Jewish history. This situation stems from the fact that *Russia is the fatherland of about half of the overall number of Jews inhabiting the world...*’”<sup>279</sup>

“There is no question,” writes Niall Ferguson, “that Jews were over-represented in the various left-wing parties and revolutionary organizations that spearheaded the 1905 Revolution, against which the pogroms of that year were directed. For example, Jews accounted for 11 per cent of the Bolshevik delegates, and 23 per cent of the Menshevik delegates at the 5th Congress of the Russian Social Democratic Party in 1907. A further fifty-nine delegates, out of a total of 338, were from the socialist Jewish Workers’ League, the *Bund*. In all, 29 per cent of the delegates at the Congress were Jewish – as against 4 per cent of the Russian population. The *Bund’s* rhetoric in the wake of the Kishinev pogrom did nothing to allay the suspicion that the revolutionary movement had a Jewish character. One Yiddish fliersheet explicitly linked the struggle against capitalism and Tsarism with the struggle against anti-Semitism. ‘With hatred, with a threefold curse, we must weave the shroud for the Russian autocratic government, for the entire anti-Semitic criminal gang, for the entire capitalist world.’”<sup>280</sup>

---

<sup>276</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 401.

<sup>277</sup> Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin Books, 2006, p. 68.

<sup>278</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 398-399.

<sup>279</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 421.

<sup>280</sup> Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2006, p. 63.



## 21. THE CHURCH IN THE 1905 REVOLUTION

What part did the Church play in the revolution? There were some lower clergy (Gapon is the best-known example) who expressed themselves against the Tsar.<sup>281</sup> But the great majority of the clergy were patriots. A great champion of Tsarism who emerged into the spotlight at this time was the missionary, future hieromartyr and great friend of St. John of Kronstadt, Fr. John Vostorgov. On Great Friday, March 31, 1906 he said the following in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour:

"Our homeland has entered upon a new path of life, before and ahead of us is - a new Russia.

"Forgive us, forgive us, old, thousand-year-old Russia! Before our eyes they have judged you, condemned you and sentenced you to death... Threatening and merciless judges have spat in your face and have found nothing good in you. The judgement was strict, implacable and merciless. Everything has merged into the cry: 'Take her, crucify her!'

"We also know that nothing human was alien to you; we know that you had many faults. But we also know and see that you made Russia holy, and her people - a God-bearing people, if not in actuality, at any rate in the eternal, undying ideal of the people's soul; you gave birth to and raised a mighty people, preserving it in its bitter fate, in the crucible of its historical trials through a whole series of centuries; you gave birth to and raised an array of saints and righteous ones; you did not perish under the blows, the heavy blows of destiny, but became stronger under them, strong in faith; with this faith, this great power of spirit, you endured all the burdens, and yet you created, and entrusted to us and left behind, a great kingdom. For all this we bow down to the earth in gratitude..."

The bishops conducted themselves in general with great distinction.

Thus, as we have seen, Metropolitan Flavian tried to restrain the patriotic crowds in Kiev. Other Kievan clergy were similarly brave. Thus Protopriest Michael Yedlinsky, the future catacomb hieromartyr, in full vestments, together with his clerics, choir and banners, headed a procession in the direction of the Kontaktovi Square and Gostini Place, where some Jewish shops were located. The procession moved along the boulevard, cutting off the rioters from Gostini Place. People in the crowd removed their hats out of respect. When Batyushka turned to the rioters admonishing them, many of them calmed down and began to disperse, even more so because a squadron of cavalrymen began to move onto the square from Alexander Street.<sup>282</sup>

---

<sup>281</sup> D.E. Leonov, "Antimonarkhicheskie vystuplenia pravoslavnogo dukhovenstva v period Pervoj russkoj revoliutsii" (Antimonarchist speeches of the Orthodox clergy in the period of the first Russian revolution), <http://www.portal-credo.ru/site/?act=lib&id=2389>.

<sup>282</sup> "New Martyr Archpriest Michael Edlinsky", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 39, N 2, March-April, 1989.

Another hero was Archbishop Platon, the future Metropolitan of North America. Charles Johnston writes: "On October 22, 1905... a huge throng of wildly excited townsmen assembled, inflamed by stories and rumors of misdoings, determined to raid the Jewish quarter [of Kiev]. Their pretext was that a Jew had cursed the Emperor and spat upon his portrait.

"When the multitude assembled Archbishop Platon was in his own church in full canonicals, with his miter upon his head. He heard the angry storming of the crowd without and realized its meaning and purpose. Instantly he came to a decision, and in robes and miter went forth to meet the multitude. Of the church attendants only two accompanied him. So the tumultuous throng came on, crying for vengeance upon the Jews, and Archbishop Platon went to meet them. It had rained heavily all night and was raining still. Paying no heed to the pools of water and mud that covered the street, the Archbishop, seeing that there was but one way to check the hysterically excited mob, knelt down in the street immediately in the path of the turbulently advancing throng and began to pray.

"The profound love and veneration for the Church which is at the center of every Russian heart was touched, and the multitude wavered, halted, grew suddenly silent. Those who were in front checked those who were behind, and a whisper ran through the crowd carrying word that the Archbishop was kneeling in the street praying, in spite of the mud and rain.

"After he had prayed Archbishop Platon rose and confronted the huge throng.

"He spoke, and his fiery words so dominated the multitude that he led the turbulent thousands to the church and made them promise, calling God to witness, that they would leave the Jews unharmed and return quietly to their homes. Thus the multitude was checked and the work of destruction was prevented by the great churchman's fearless devotion.

"The impression which this exhibition of devoted valor made on the public of Kieff was immediate and profound. The Jews especially were full of gratitude..."<sup>283</sup>

In Moscow an important role was played by the future hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir, who powerfully raised his archpastoral voice, rebuking the rebels and exposing the essence of the revolution: "The heart bleeds when you see what is happening around us... It is no longer the Poles, or external enemies, but our own Russian people, who, having lost the fear of God, have trusted the rebels and are holding our first capital as it were in a siege. Even without this we have been having a hard time because of our sins: first harvest failures [in 1891, 1897, 1898 and 1901], then illnesses, then an unsuccessful war [the Russo-Japanese war of 1904-05], and now something

---

<sup>283</sup> Johnston, "Archbishop Platon Discourses", *Harper's Weekly*, July 27, 1912, p. 10.

unheard of is taking place in Rus': it is as if God has deprived Russian people of their minds. By order of underground revolutionaries, strikes have begun everywhere, in the factories, in the schools, on the railways... Oh if only our unfortunate workers knew who is ruling them, who is sending them trouble-maker-agitators, then they would have turned from them in horror as from poisonous snakes! You know these are the so-called social-democrats, these are the revolutionaries, who have long ago renounced God in their works. They have renounced Him, and yet it may be that they have never known the Christian faith. They denounce her servants, her rites, they mock her holy things. Their main nest is abroad: they are dreaming of subduing the whole world to themselves; in their secret protocols they call us, the Christians, animals, to whom God, they say, has given a human face only in order that it should not be repulsive to them, His chosen ones, to use our services... With satanic cunning they catch light-minded people in their nets, promising them paradise on earth, but they carefully hide from them their secret aims, their criminal dreams. Having deceived the unfortunate, they drag him to the most terrible crimes, as if for the sake of the common good, and, in fact they make him into an obedient slave. They try in every way to cast out of his soul, or at any rate to distort, the teaching of Christ. Thus the commandments of Christ say: do not steal, do not covet what belongs to another, but they say: everything is common, take from the rich man everything you like. The commandments of Christ say: share your last morsel, your last kopeck with your neighbour, but they teach: take from others everything that you need. The commandments of Christ say: give to Caesar what is Caesar's, fear God, venerate the Tsar, but they say: we don't need any Tsar, the Tsar is a tyrant... The commandments of God say: in patience possess your souls, but they say: in struggle acquire your rights. The commandment of Christ orders us to lay down our souls for our friends, but they teach to destroy people who are completely innocent, to kill them only for the fact they do not agree with them, and do not embark on robbery, but just want to work honourably and are ready to stand for the law, for the Tsar, for the Church of God..."

"The sermon of Metropolitan Vladimir elicited the annoyance of the liberal-democratic press, and also of the liberal clergy. The latter either read the sermon in a shortened version, or did not read it at all. In the leftist newspaper *Russkoe Slovo* 76 priests published a declaration regarding their 'complete non-solidarity' with 'the "Word" of Metropolitan Vladimir...'

"As a result of the actions of the priests quarrels also arose amidst their flock. The Synod, in response to this, unfortunately saw in the epistle of Metropolitan Vladimir, not a call to defend the Faith and the Fatherland, but 'a call to the local population to defend themselves in the sphere of political convictions', and in their 'Resolution of October 22, 1905 N 150' instructed the diocesan bishops and the clergy subject to them to make efforts 'to remove quarrels in the population', which, to a large extent, were continuing because of the opposition of the liberal priests to their metropolitan.

“But nothing could devalue or undermine the influence of the epistle of Metropolitan Vladimir on the Muscovites, and the truly Russian people responded to it. The day after the publication of the ‘Word’, the workers began to serve *molebens* and return to work; the city water-supply began to work, the trams began to run, etc. Metropolitan Vladimir himself went to the factories and, after prayer, conducted archpastoral discussions with the workers.

“Later, in evaluating the labours of the holy hierarch Vladimir in overcoming the disturbances of 1905, Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky) said the following notable words about him: ‘Meek and humble, never seeking anything for himself, honourable and a lover of righteousness, Vladyka Vladimir gradually and quietly ascended the hierarchical ladder and was immediately exalted by his authority, drawing the hearts of ecclesiastical and patriotic Russia to himself during the days of general instability and treachery, when there were few who remained faithful to their duty and their oath, firm in the defence of the Orthodox Church, the Tsar-Autocrat and the Homeland... when everything began to shake in our Rus’, and many pillars began to waver...’ (speech of Archbishop Anthony of Zhitomir and Volhynia at the triumphal dinner given by Metropolitan Vladimir in honour of Patriarch Gregory of Antioch who was visiting Russia, 22 February, 1913).

“By ‘pillars’ Vladyka Anthony probably had in mind the liberal members of the Most Holy Synod, who did not support their brother, Metropolitan Vladimir...”<sup>284</sup>

Among these, many suspected the most senior member of the Synod, Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg, who was said to be an enemy of St. John of Kronstadt and even a Mason...<sup>285</sup>

Another under suspicion was Bishop Sergei (Stragorodsky), whose political sympathies were clearly leftist. Thus “when in 1905 the revolutionary professors began to demand reforms in the spiritual schools, then, in the words of Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), ‘his Grace Sergei... wavered in faith.’”<sup>286</sup>

---

<sup>284</sup> Riasophor-Monk Anempodist, “Sviaschennomuchenik mitropolit Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskij) i bor’ba s revoliutsii” (Hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlensky) and the struggle against the revolution), *Pravoslavnaiia Zhizn’* (Orthodox Life), 53, N 1 (636), January, 2003, pp. 2-10. Metropolitan Vladimir’s strong monarchist convictions were apparent already at his ordination, when he said: “A priest who is not a monarchist is unworthy to stand at the Holy Altar. A priest who is republican is always of little faith. A monarch is consecrated to his power by God, a president receives power from the pride of the people; a monarch is powerful through his carrying out of the commandments of God, a president holds on to power by pleasing the mob; a monarch leads his faithful subjects to God, a president leads them away from God.” (Valentina Sologub, *Kto Gospoden – Ko Mne!* (He who is the Lord’s – Come to me!), Moscow, 2007, p. 45)

<sup>285</sup> See Fomin & Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestvoiem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1998, pp. 391-392; M.B. Danilushkin (ed.), *Istoria Russkoj Tserkvi ot Vosstanovleniia Patriarshestva do nashikh dnei* (A History of the Russian Church from the Restoration of the Patriarchate to our Days), vol. I, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 78-80, 771-783; Nadieszda Kizenko, *A Prodigal Saint: Father John of Kronstadt and the Russian People*, Pennsylvania State University Press, 2000, chapter 7. For a positive assessment of Metropolitan Anthony, see Firsov, *op. cit.*, chapter 3.

<sup>286</sup> “Preemstvennost’ Grekha”, *Tsaritsyn*, p. 7.

Again, when the revolutionary Peter Schmidt was shot in 1906, Archbishop Sergei, who was at that time rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, served a pannikhida at his grave; and he also gave refuge in his hierarchical house in Vyborg to the revolutionaries Michael Novorussky and Nicholas Morozov (a participant in the attempt on the life of Tsar Alexander II).

Having such sympathies, it is not surprising that he was not liked by the Royal Family... Thus in 1915 the Empress wrote to the Emperor that Sergei "must leave the Synod" 287

Bishop Sergei was to betray the Church to the Bolsheviks after the revolution and become the first Soviet patriarch...

---

287 A. Paryaeu, "Mitropolit Sergij Stragorodskij: Neizvestnaia Biographia", *Suzdal'skie Eparkhial'nie Vedomosti*, N 1, September, 1997, pp. 12-15).

## 22. THE CRUSHING OF THE 1905 REVOLUTION

As the disturbances spread through the country and the regions, the government under Witte, to the Tsar's disgust, showed itself completely devoid of courage and ideas, and of necessity it was the Tsar himself who reassumed power and gradually reintroduced order. He decided to make concessions in Finland, restoring the old constitution there. But in Poland and the Baltic region he imposed martial law, and he sent loyal troops to quell disturbances in many other parts of the country, such as Georgia. He was helped by a new Interior Minister, Peter Durnovo, who was appointed on October 23, and quickly restored order in the capital and beyond.

In fact, Durnovo turned out to be the strong man that the Tsar was looking for. On October 26, the Baltic sailors mutinied. "By October 28, Durnovo had crushed their chaotic mutiny, ordering hundreds of executions. He contemplated an empirewide crackdown, but Witte (initially) insisted that Durnovo act within the parameters of the October Manifesto - after all, it had been signed by the Tsar. Soon, however, Durnovo began to implement harsher measures, which of course greatly pleased the signatory of the October Manifesto, as well as much of state officialdom, once the measures appeared to be successful. 'Everyone started to work, the machinery went into high gear' recalled one top *okhranka* official. 'Arrests began.' Indeed, between the tsar's promise of a constitution (October 1905) and the promulgation six months later of the Fundamental Laws - Nicholas II refused to allow it to be called a constitution - Durnovo's police arrested many tens of thousands (by some estimates, up to 70,000). Durnovo also sacked numerous governors and, more important, goaded the rest to seize back all public spaces.

"Durnovo showed *initiative*. In mid-November 1905, when a new strike shut down the postal and telegraph system, he broke it by organizing citizen replacements..."<sup>288</sup>

Then in Petersburg a situation of dual power came into being: a Soviet of Workers' Deputies, led by Leon Trotsky, was formed alongside the legitimate authorities and began organizing the revolution. This was a major threat to the autocracy because, as Pipes writes, with the radical left "there was no room for compromises, for the socialists would be satisfied with nothing less than a political and social revolution.

"The authorities tolerated the St. Petersburg Soviet, which continued to sit in session although it no longer had a clear purpose. On November 26, they ordered the arrest of Nosar, its chairman. A three-man Presidium (one of whose members was Leon Trotsky) which replaced Nosar resolved to respond with an armed uprising. The first act, which it was hoped would bring about a financial collapse, was an appeal to the people (the so-called Financial Manifesto), issued on December 2, urging them to withhold payments to the

---

<sup>288</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin*, pp. 85-86.



Treasury, to withdraw money from savings accounts, and to accept only bullion or foreign currency. The next day, Durnovo arrested the Soviet, putting some 260 deputies (about one-half of its membership) behind bars. Following these arrests a surrogate Soviet assembled under the chairmanship of Alexander Helphand (Parvus), the theoretician of 'permanent revolution'. On December 6, the St. Petersburg Soviet issued a call for a general strike to begin two days later. The call went unheeded, even though the Union of Unions gave it its blessing.

"The socialists were more successful in Moscow. The Moscow Soviet, formed only on November 21 by intellectuals of the three principal socialist parties, decided to press the revolution beyond its 'bourgeois' phase. Their followers consisted of semi-skilled workers, many of them employed in the textile industry<sup>289</sup>, professionally and culturally less mature than their counterparts in the capital. The principal force behind this effort was the Moscow Bolshevik Committee. The Moscow rising was the first occasion in the 1905 Revolution when the socialists took the lead. On December 6, the Moscow Soviet voted to begin the following day an armed insurrection for the purpose of overthrowing the tsarist government, convoking a Constituent Assembly, and proclaiming a democratic republic.

"On December 7, Moscow was paralyzed: the strike was enforced by Soviet agents who threatened with violence anyone who refused to cooperate. Two days later, government forces launched an attack on the insurgents; the latter responded with urban guerilla tactics. The arrival of the Semeonovskii Regiment, which used artillery to disperse the rioters, settled the issue. On December 18 the Executive Committee of the Moscow Soviet capitulated. Over 1,000 people lost their lives in the uprising and whole areas of the ancient capital were gutted..."<sup>290</sup>

Durnovo was able to use such decisive force because he had gone directly to the tsar "at Tsarskoye Selo to report and receive instructions - without Prime

---

<sup>289</sup> The textile industry was virtually founded by the freed serf Savva Morozov in the Orekhovo-Zuevo district near Moscow during the Napoleonic Wars. The Morozov family soon became rich, and in the 1850s Savva employed more than 1000 workers. His son Timothy took over the business, but was very cruel to the workers, which led in 1885 to the first organized workers' strike in Russian history. Savva junior took over after his father's death, and, as Valentine Tschebotariev Bill writes, "decided to build new, light, and airy living quarters for the workmen and their families. Savva improved medical care with remarkable efficiency and reduced the accident rate. And most important of all, he did away with the system of fines." However, Savva admired Maxim Gorky, and gave large sums to the Social Democratic Party. Early in 1905, his mother heard of this and promptly removed him from the management of the firm. A few weeks later, on May 13, Savva Morozov shot himself. As Bill writes, the history of the Morozovs "is typical of the times and the development of the Russian bourgeoisie: the painful efforts of the first generation to extricate themselves from the burden of servitude, the coldblooded, uncompromising tyranny displayed by the second generation, and the rising tide of revolution which confronted the third." It is thought that Gorky's novel *The Artamanov Business* is based on the history of the Morozov family. A comparison between the fortunes of the Morozovs and the Artamanovs discloses a number of interesting parallels ("The Morozovs", *The Russian Review*). For more on the Morozovs, see Natalia Dumova, *Moskovskie Metsenaty* (Muscovite Maecenases), Moscow, 1992, pp. 132-150, and Natalya Semenova, *Morozov*, Yale University Press, 2020 (V.M.)

<sup>290</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50. According to Kotkin, 454 people were killed and 2000 wounded.

Minister Witte, his (nominal) superior, whom Durnovo no longer bothered to consult even though by now Witte had come round to a hard-line approach. Durnovo did not even appear at the meetings of the government (Council of Ministers), or explain his absence therefrom.”<sup>291</sup> The tsar backed Durnovo to the hilt – “Durnovo acts splendidly”, he wrote to his mother, the dowager-empress – and soon the Moscow uprising had been crushed.

Already before that, by the late autumn, although soviets formed in some fifty cities<sup>292</sup>, the mood was turning against the radicals. Thus “Paul Benckendorff said at the end of 1905 that people who had previously howled with indignation at the mistreatment of a single student were now screaming that no prisoners must be taken and all radicals must be shot. On 1 December Nicholas was able to write to his mother that ‘more and more voices are heard protesting that the time has come for the Government to take matters firmly in hand – which is a very good sign indeed.’”<sup>293</sup>

Durnovo also ordered crackdowns in other parts of the empire, notably in Kiev and Georgia, where Stalin’s Bolshevik “Red Hundredists” at the mining town of Chiatura were routed, and the Menshevik Gurian peasant republic was destroyed.

\*

The Gurian peasant republic was a sign that 1905 was by no means an exclusively worker’s revolution. For “the peasantry,” writes Pipes, “completely misunderstood the October Manifesto, interpreting it in its own manner as giving the communes license to take over the countryside. Some rural disorders occurred in the spring of 1905, more in the summer, but they exploded only after October 17. Hearing of strikes and pogroms [both anti-Christian and anti-Jewish] in the cities going unpunished, the peasants drew their own conclusions. Beginning on October 23, when large-scale disorders broke out in Chernigov province, the wave of rural disorders kept on swelling until the onset of winter, re-emerging in the spring of 1906 on an even vaster scale. It would fully subside only in 1908 following the adoption of repressive measures by Prime Minister Stolypin.

“... The principal aim of the *jacquerie* was neither inflicting physical harm nor even appropriating land, but depriving landlords and other non-peasant landowners of the opportunity to earn a livelihood in the countryside – ‘smoking them out’, as the saying went. In the words of one observer: ‘The [peasant] movement was directed almost exclusively against landed properties and not against the landlord: the peasants had no use whatever for landlords but they did need the land.’ The notion was simple: force the landlords to abandon the countryside and to sell their land at bargain prices. To this end,

---

<sup>291</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin*, p. 86.

<sup>292</sup> S.A. Smith, *op. cit.*, p. 52.

<sup>293</sup> Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 151.

the peasants cut down the landlord's forests, sent cattle to graze on his pasture, smashed his machinery, and refused to pay rent. In some places, manors were set on fire...

"In an effort to stem the agrarian unrest, the government in early November reduced the due instalments of the redemption payments (payments for the land given the emancipated serfs in 1861) and promised to abolish them altogether in January 1907, but these measures did little to calm the rural districts.

"In 1905 and 1906 peasants by and large refrained from seizing the land they coveted from fear that they would not be allowed to keep it. They still expected a grand national repartition of all the non-communal land, but whereas previously they had looked to the Tsar to order it, they now pinned their hopes on the Duma. The quicker they drove the landlords out, they reasoned, the sooner the repartition would take place..."<sup>294</sup>

\*

Durnovo's success demonstrated the importance of firm and decisive leadership in a crisis situation... "An even more interesting example," writes E.E. Alferov, 'of how a group of people with a decisive commander can be stronger than an anarchist mob is illustrated by the pacification of Siberia. By the end of the war a one-million-strong army including up to one hundred thousand demobilized soldiers and reservists trying to return to Russia had gathered in Manchuria. Fed on obscure rumours about the events that had taken place in Russia, the whole of this mass of men was subjected to a revolutionary working-over. Discipline weakened. By the end of December, 1905, a situation had developed in such a way that the whole of the Great Siberian way, a distance of 8000 versts was occupied by detachments of disorderly soldiers. The authorities lost their heads. A direct telegraph communication to General Kuropatkin was cut off and communications were maintained only through Shanghai. Practically the whole of Siberia had fallen into anarchy. At many stations strike committees and local centres of revolutionary power were formed. Then his Majesty entrusted to General Meller-Zakomelsky the task of getting rid of the revolutionaries. This energetic man immediately sprang into action. On the night of the New Year he and a unit of only about two hundred lads chosen from the Warsaw Guards units, left Moscow on a special train. Meller-Zakomelsky acted decisively. When two agitators were found in a train, they were thrown out of the carriage while it was at full speed. Strike committees in two stations were immediately shot. In another station a revolutionary mob was locked up in a railway building. They tried to offer armed resistance, but were swiftly subdued by the shots of a punishment squad. Just a few more such facts, swiftly communicated by telegraph along the whole route, were enough to ensure that by January 20 the whole Siberian route was liberated, and on February 9 General Meller-

---

<sup>294</sup> Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 48-50.

Zakomelsky presented his unit to the Tsar in Tsarskoye Selo. This expedition showed how strictness employed in time can prevent great bloodshed.”<sup>295</sup>

\*

The 1905 revolution failed because the majority of Russians still remained loyal to the Autocracy, as expressed in this speech pronounced at a reception for the Tsar on December 31, 1905 by Professor B.V. Nikolsky (who was shot in June, 1919): “We have appeared before the face of Your Imperial Majesty at an agonizing time, when the whole people is beginning with horror to understand that Russia is threatened by danger not only from foreign invasions and enslavement to foreign evil, but also from internal civil collapse, while Your Ruling House is threatened not only by open rebellion with its bloody banners, but also by a great schism from the people. At such a time our duty before the Fatherland orders us to witness before the whole people that we have sworn an oath of allegiance and that it is impossible to order us to change this oath or replace it by another oath to any other earthly authority, and least of all to that authority which itself has betrayed the authority to which we have sworn allegiance. The time has come for us, before the face of the whole world and in the name of the people’s oath, to say directly to the Tsar that the universe must know that we, who have so far been voiceless and weaponless, are no less firm in our confession than the enemies of Your Majesty, of the Russian people and of us, who have long been shaming our homeland by their mutinous betrayal, by their hysterical cries and by their treacherous shedding of blood.

“God’s punishing hand is hanging over us. War has not given us victory, and peace has not brought us pacification. The intrigues of the international enemies of law and order, who have united into a global Judaeo-Masonic conspiracy, are waging a desperate struggle in our homeland with Christianity, enlightenment and culture... Rebellion is tearing away the borderlands, and treachery is corrupting the age-old Russian lands. Russian people are being driven out of the borderlands by violence and threats, while panic has seized the native population. Mutual distrust and outright hatred are tearing apart the provinces, the tribes, the cities and the villages, the institutions and the unions, the Church and the family, the school and the army. Neither the authorities, nor freedom, nor personal security, nor lawful possessions are recognized. Mindless preachers of violence are conducting propaganda in the army by word, in print and by their very acts; they are calling society to general destruction and armed rebellion. Murder, theft and robbery rule throughout our Fatherland. Russia has become hell, and its existence – torment. God Himself is calling on us to respond on the eve of the 1000th anniversary of our past. Events have powerfully put a threatening question before us: is our history about to be broken?

“However, Your Majesty, our history will not be broken in two if the whole people itself does not want it... That is why we, your faithful subjects, Russian

---

<sup>295</sup> Alferov, *Imperator Nikolai II kak chelovek sil'noj voli* (Emperor Nicholas II as a Man of Strong Will), Jordanville, 1983.

people, in the name of the Tsar and the people and their unbreakable unity, proclaim that we do not recognize and never will recognize any other supreme power than the Tsarist Autocracy, and we dedicate all our spiritual powers and all our resources to its regeneration... For our fidelity there is not, and with God's blessing never will be, any reconciliation with a government acting not in agreement with the oath we have given, and we will be reconciled only on the basis of the complete victory of the traditions, waging an unbending struggle to the end for the Orthodox Faith, for the Russian people and for Your Royal Autocracy."296

In 1905 the Jewish revolutionaries in Kiev said: "We gave you God, and we will give you a Tsar!"297 By a "tsar" they evidently meant Lenin and the Bolshevik party. And so after the revolutionaries came to power in 1917 we see an ever-quickenning descent from autocracy to democracy to despotism in the form of Lenin and Stalin. Democracy cannot be more than a transitional phase because the rule of the people by the people is a contradiction in terms; for "rule" means the imposition of one will on the will of the people, which, at least in its fallen state, is always multiple. It is possible for one man to rule with the consent of the people and for the benefit of the people; but it is impossible for the State to be ruled by the people itself; real democracy is a myth.

That is why the great saints of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries insisted on the necessity – the *religious* necessity – of faithfulness to the Orthodox Tsar. Thus St. Seraphim of Sarov said that after Orthodoxy, faithfulness to the Tsar was "our first Russian duty and the chief foundation of true Christian piety". Again, St. John of Kronstadt said: "The autocracy is the sole condition of the piety of Russia; if there is no autocracy, there will be no Russia; power will be taken by the Jews, who greatly hate us..." And Metropolitan Makary (Nevsky) of Moscow, the apostle to the Altai, said: "You don't want your own Russian authority, so you will have a foreign power over you..." 298

---

296 *Russkoe Slovo*, May 14, 2016.

297 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 428.

298 St. John, in Sergei Fomin, *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1993, p. 100.

## 23. THE PRECONCILIAR CONVENTION AND GEORGIAN AUTOCEPHALY

As the political situation began to stabilize towards the end of 1905, writes E.E. Alferev, the Tsar “addressed a rescript to Metropolitan Anthony of St. Petersburg in which he wrote: ‘I now recognize that the time is right to carry out certain transformations in the structure of our native Church... I suggest that you determine the time for the convening of this Council.’

“On the basis of this rescript a Pre-Conciliar Convention was formed for the preparation of the convening of a Council, which soon set about its work. The convention carried out exceptionally important and valuable work demanding much time and labour, but the world war that broke out hindered the convening of the Council during the reign of Emperor Nicholas II. Instead of the peaceful situation which the Sovereign considered necessary for the introduction of such important reforms, it was convened in very unfavourable circumstances, during a terrible war, after the overthrow of the historical state structure of Russia, when the country was seized by revolutionary madness, and its most important decisions were taken to the sound of cannons during the beginning of the civil war.”<sup>299</sup>

The Pre-Conciliar Convention gathered detailed responses from the bishops and leading theologians on the main issues that were to dominate the history of the Orthodox Church in the coming century. The debates during the Convention brought to the fore several of those churchmen who would play such important roles, both for good and for ill, in the coming struggle with the revolution: on the one side, men such as Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoyavlensky), Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky), Archbishop Theophan (Bystrov) of Poltava, Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) and Bishop Arsenius (Stadnitsky) of Pskov, and on the other, Bishop Antoninus (Granovsky), Archbishop Sergei (Stragorodsky) and Bishop Evlogy (Georgievsky). Thus among the suggestions made to the Convention we find the following one from Archbishop Sergei on January 18, which clearly looks forward to the renovationist movement of the 1920s: “On the reform of the liturgical language: the future Council must debate the question of the simplification of the language of the Church, Slavonic, and the right accorded to the parish that wants it to serve the Divine offices in that language.

- (i) It must think of abbreviating and simplifying the Typicon, and suppressing certain ritual actions, such as the breathing and spitting during the sacrament of baptism.
- (ii) It must think of abolishing the multiple repetitions of the same litanies during the same service, and replacing them by reading aloud the secret prayers during the Liturgy.

---

<sup>299</sup> Alferev, *op. cit.*, pp. 92-92.

- (iii) It must think of giving priests [who have been widowed before the age of 45] the right to remarry.”<sup>300</sup>

The first section of the Convention studied the questions of the composition of the future Council and the transformation of the central administration of the Church. The second section studied the question of the division of Russia into metropolitan districts and the transformation of the local Church administration. In June, the question of Georgian autocephaly also began to be discussed by this section. The third section studied Church courts and reviewed the laws of marriage, divorce and mixed marriages. The fourth section studied the questions of the parish, church schools, church property, diocesan congresses and the participation of clergy in public institutions. The fifth section studied the question of the transformation of spiritual-academic institutions. The sixth section studied the questions of the *yedinoverie*, the Old Ritualists and some other issues. The seventh section analyzed measures necessary “for the protection of the Orthodox Faith and Christian piety from wrong teachings and interpretations in view of the strengthening of the principles of religious toleration in the empire”.<sup>301</sup>

In May, 1906 a general assembly of the Convention decided that the future Council should be composed of clergy and laity, with a bishop, a priest and a layman being elected from each diocese. But while the clergy and laity were given the right to discuss all questions discussed in Council, the right to compose and confirm conciliar decisions was reserved for the bishops alone. This became the basis of the composition of the Council in 1917-18. However, few other recommendations of the sections - which included making parishes self-governing, able to influence the choice of their own priest and manage their own funds - were put into practice, and the Convention itself came to an end in December amidst a general waning of interest in it. In fact, according to F.D. Samarin, the results of the colossal amount of work put into the Convention amounted to nothing.

The root of the Church’s problems lay in the fact that “all power belonged to the hierarchs, who, in their turn, were completely under the control of the secular, ‘symphonic’ power.”<sup>302</sup> It followed that none of the smaller problems could be resolved unless and until the tsar took the initiative in resolving the the major, root problem. But the Tsar, backed by Stolypin, decided not to convene a Council, fearful that it would become the arena of the same kind of anti-government agitation as the Duma had become... It should be remembered that since 1690 there had been no Church Council in Russia in order to discuss Church problems, including dogmatic questions. Moreover, since the time of Peter “every attempt to bring the hierarchs together that had not been sanctioned by the government had been cut off... That meant that there had been no canonical possibility of calling the hierarchs to order or for the hierarchs

---

<sup>300</sup> *Suggestions of the Diocesan Hierarchs on the Reform of the Church*, St. Petersburg, 1906, vol. 3, p. 443.

<sup>301</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 222-223.

<sup>302</sup> Firstov, *op. cit.*, pp. 95-96.

of the Russian Church to make any common (conciliar) decision. In pre-revolutionary Russia there simply did not exist any mechanism by which the hierarchs could express their common opinion. Instead, there existed a Synod which (in spite of its ecclesiastical name) in reality had the status of a state ministry..."<sup>303</sup>

This did not mean that the Church ceased to be a true Church, but it did mean that it had (temporarily) lost its capacity to govern itself in accordance with its own laws but was subject to the will of the Tsar. In other words, "Caesaropapism" prevailed. Fortunately, in 1906 the head of the State was a true Christian who did not use his power over the Church to force it into heresy... However, while removing the phrase "head of the Church" from the description of the Autocrat in the Basic Laws, he continued to follow the practice of his predecessors in treating the bishops as in some sense below him, his servants, ordering the removal or transfer of bishops, or canonization of saints, without even asking the hierarchy... For psychologically the Tsar - like most of the bishops also - was not ready for the radical change in Church-State relations that a return to the holy canons required...

"So the pre-revolutionary Church was perishing from disorder... but also was being saved by disorder"<sup>304</sup> because, while heretical opinions (especially on relations with other confessions) were commonplace, they could not become the official teaching of the Church because of the lack of conciliarity (*sobornost*). There followed a decade in which the wounds of the Church continued to fester, and the authority of both Church and State continued to decline. In the end the much-needed Local Council was convened only when the Tsar himself had been swept away...

\*

One of the problems raised by the Pre-Conciliar Convention was that of the restoration of the autocephaly of the Georgian Church. As we have seen, a movement to preserve the nation's heritage and promote the cause of Georgian state independence and ecclesiastical autocephaly came into being under the leadership of the poet, historian and philosopher Ilia Chavchavadze, who was assassinated by revolutionaries in 1907. Georgian *State* independence could not be considered then, since at a time of increasing nationalist and tension, it would only undermine the whole empire. However, *Church* autocephaly was a different matter in view of the undisputed fact that the Georgian Church had once been autocephalous. And on June 2, 1906 this question was reviewed in the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in St. Petersburg during the sessions of the second section of the Preconciliar Convention.

---

<sup>303</sup> G. Lurye, "Istinno-Pravoslavnaia Tserkov' i World Orthodoxy: istoria i prichiny razdelenia" (The True Orthodox Church and World Orthodoxy: history of, and reasons for, the division").

<sup>304</sup> Lurye, *op. cit.*



Eugene Pavlenko writes: "The majority of those who spoke supported the state principle of Church division [that is, in one state there should be only one Church administration], but the minority insisted on a national or ethnic point of view. In winding up the second section of the Preconciliar Convention, participants accepted one of the two projects of Protopriest I. Vostorgov on giving the Georgian Church greater independence in the sphere of the use of the Georgian liturgical language, of the appointment of national Georgian clergy, etc., but the project for Georgian autocephaly was rejected."

This argument between is important and its conclusions applicable in other Churches striving for autocephaly or autonomy. So we shall follow it in Pavlenko's exposition: "The most completely phyletistic [nationalistic] argumentation of the supporters of the idea of Georgian autocephaly at the Preconciliar Consistory was sounded in the report of Bishop Kirion [Sadzagelov, of Sukhumi], 'The National Principle in the Church'.<sup>305</sup>

This report began by proclaiming the principle of nationality in the Church and by affirming its antiquity. In the opinion of the Bishop, Georgia 'has the right to the independent existence of her national Church on the basis of the principle of nationality in the Church proclaimed at the beginning of the Christian faith.' What does principle consist of, and when was it proclaimed? 'It is sufficient to remember,' writes Bishop Kirion, 'the descent of the Holy Spirit on the apostles, who immediately began to glorify God in various languages and then preached the Gospel to the pagans, each in their native language.' But in our [Pavlenko's] view, references to the preaching of the apostles in connection with the affirmation of the national principle in the Church have no firm foundation. The preaching of the apostles in various languages was necessary in order to unite the peoples in the Truth of Christ, and not in order to disunite them in accordance with the national principle. That is, the principle of nationality is precisely that which Christianity has to overcome, and not that on which the Church must be founded. Since the Bulgarian schism phyletist argumentation has characteristically sought support in references to the 34th Apostolic canon. 'The basic canonical rule,' writes Bishop Kirion, 'by which the significance of nationality in relation to Church administration is recognized, is the 34th Apostolic canon which is so well known to canonists... According to the direct meaning of this canon in the Orthodox Church, every nationality must have its first hierarch.' But the 34th Apostolic canon... has in view 'bishops of every territory' and not 'bishops of every people'. The word *ethnos*, which is employed in this canon in the ancient language and in the language of Christian antiquity, is translated in the dictionary of Liddell and Scott first of all as 'a number of people accustomed to live together', and only then as 'a nation'. It is precisely the first sense indicated here that points to the territorial meaning of the Apostolic canon. So references to its national meaning are groundless.

---

<sup>305</sup> *Journals and Protocols of the sessions of the Preconciliar Convention Established by His Majesty*, volume 3. On the second section on Georgia. St. Petersburg, 1907, pp. 55-58.

“An incorrect understanding and use of the principle of conciliarity – which phyletism has in common with ecumenism – sometimes brings them closer... to the point of being completely indistinguishable. For the supporters of the division of the Church along tribal lines the principle of conciliarity is only a convenient federal form for the development by each people of its nationality idiosyncrasy. ‘... The federal system,’ in the opinion of Bishop Kirion, ‘gave our Eastern Church significant advantages from a national point of view.’ And the preservation of this idiosyncrasy – in his opinion – is prescribed by conciliar decisions (cf. the 39th canon of the Council in Trullo), and acquires a very important significance from the point of view of Church freedom.’ But in the 39th canon of the Council in Trullo not a word is said about ‘national religious-everyday and individual particularities’ and the like, but there is mention of the rights of first-hierarchs over bishops and their appointment. ‘Let the customs of each [autocephalous] Church be observed,’ it says in this canon, ‘so that the bishop of each district should be subject to his president, and that he, in his turn, should be appointed from his bishops, according to the ancient custom.’ The émigré Church of Cyprus, of which mention is made in this canon, did not become the national Church of the Cypriots, but took into herself all the peoples of the Hellespont district where they emigrated. Where is mention made here of a conciliar sanction for the preservation of ‘local ecclesiastical traditions’ with the aid of administrative isolation?

“‘Ecclesiastically speaking,’ thinks Bishop Kirion, ‘each people must make use of the freedom of self-determination’ and ‘possesses the right to develop according to the laws of its own national spirit.’ The extent to which the Bishop sees the development of each Church possible ‘according to the laws of its own national spirit’ becomes clear from the following quotation cited by him: ‘The Bulgarian Church, after a period of difficult trials and struggle, is near to the realisation of its age-old strivings without disrupting Christian peace and love. The enslaved Syro-Arabic Church is declaring its rights to national idiosyncrasy more and more persistently. The Armenian, Syro-Jacobite and Perso-Chaldean Churches, which have, because of regrettable circumstances, been separated from ecumenical unity for a long time, are also seeking reunion, but without the disruption of their national rights which have come into being historically.’<sup>306</sup> By ‘regrettable circumstances’ Professor Kavalnitsky and Bishop Kirion who quotes him apparently have in mind the Council of Chalcedon, which condemned the monophysite heretics. While by ‘reunion’ they have in mind, as becomes clear from the following sentence, the following: ‘Unity between the Churches must take place on the principle of equality, and not of absorption.’<sup>307</sup> Thus both in the schism of the Bulgarians, and in the heresy of monophysitism, there is nothing to prevent union with them, but only, in the opinion of Bishop Kirion, ‘the religious variety of the Christian peoples’! Before our eyes, Bishop Kirion, a defender of Georgian autocephaly at the beginning of the century, is making a path from phyletism to ecumenism, the union of

---

<sup>306</sup> Professor M.G. Kovalnitsky. *On the Significance of the National Element in the Historical Development of Christianity*, Kiev, 1880, pp. 3-4.

<sup>307</sup> *Journals and Protocols*, p. 56.

which we have already distinctly observed at the end of the century. This is the classical 'branch theory' in action. 'The peoples who accepted Christianity did not all assimilate its lofty teaching in the same way; each took from it only those elements of Christian life which it was able to in accordance with its intellectual and moral character. The Latin nations (the Catholics) developed a strict ecclesiastical organization and created architecture of high artistic value. The Greeks, who were experienced in dialectical subtleties, worked out a complex and firmly based dogmatic system. The Russians, on accepting Christianity, mainly developed discipline and church rubrics, bringing external beauty to a high level of development. But the Georgians, having christianised their age-old national beliefs [giving their paganism a Christian form? – the author] and being completely penetrated with the spirit of Christianity, attached to it the sympathetic traits of their own character: meekness, simplicity, warmth, self-sacrifice, freedom from malice and persistence. Although all the nations did not receive Christianity, in the sense of assimilate the height and fullness of its heavenly teaching, in the same way, nevertheless, enlightened by Christianity, as members of the one Body of Christ [one must suppose that Latins and Monophysites are included in this number – the author], strive for the one aim that is common to Christian humanity – the realization of the kingdom of God on earth (!)'. The idea of chiliasm – 'the kingdom of God on earth' – is a worthy crown of this union of phyletism and ecumenism. Fitting for a report at the assembly of the World Council of Churches, whose members are expecting the coming of 'the new era of the Holy Spirit'?

“From Bishop Kirion’s report it is clearly evident that the idea of the national Church, beginning with the division of the Church on national lines, leads to her ‘union’, not on the basis of the patristic faith, but on the basis of the idea of abstract ‘equality’ of separate, including heretical, churches, and through this to the idea of the coming earthly kingdom of the antichrist...”<sup>308</sup>

There are stronger arguments to be made for Georgian autocephaly than those put forward by Bishop Kirion. However, Pavlenko is right to reject his essentially phyletist argument: one (ethnic) nation – one Church. From the earliest times, the Orthodox Church has been organized on a *territorial* basis, following the demarcation of *states* rather than ethnic groups. In more recent centuries state boundaries have tended to correspond more and more closely to ethnic boundaries, so that we now talk of the Greek Church, the Russian Church, the Serbian Church, etc., as if we are talking about the Churches of the ethnic Greeks, Russians and Serbs exclusively. But this is a misleading way of speaking, and does not alter the essential principle, confirmed both in Holy Scripture and in Canon Law, that a local Church is the Church of all the people, *of all nationalities*, gathered together on one territory.

The attempt to substitute the ethnic principle for the territorial principle had already led to a schism between the Greek and the Bulgarian Churches in 1872.

---

<sup>308</sup> Eugene Pavlenko, "The Heresy of Phyletism: History and the Present", *Vertograd-Inform*, September, 1999.

It would lead to a schism between the Russian and the Georgian Churches in 1917, when Bishop Kirion and a Council of the Georgian Church re-established Georgian Church autocephaly on the basis of the ethnic principle. It would thereby divide the two Churches at precisely the moment when unity between Orthodox Christians of all races was vital in the face of the international communist revolution...

Not even all the Georgian bishops were in favour of autocephaly. In March, 1917 Archbishop Demetrius of Tauris (formerly Prince David Abashidze), who later became organiser of the Georgian Catacomb Church until his death in Kiev in 1942, protested against the election and enthronement of Bishop Kirion as Georgian Catholicos. Vladyka Demetrius was "more Russian than the Russians" and did not sympathize with the nationalist designs of the leaders of the Georgian Church. During the Moscow Council of 1917-18, he was appointed president of the section on the Orthodox Church in Transcaucasia, and after the Georgians' declaration of the autocephaly of their Church was elected a deputy member of the Holy Synod.

## 24. RUSSIA RECUPERATES

“The First Revolution [of 1905] brought the elites to their senses. There began feverish and successful work for the salvation of Russia from the Pugachevshchina. A huge movement to reorganize and reinvigorate Russia was linked with the name of Stolypin. A grandiose plan for the construction of Russia on the principles of private property was realized. And it seemed as if this saving renewal of Russia was already becoming a reality when War broke out, putting an end to the reform, and then the Revolution. In the heat of the revolution it was revealed how fragile was what had been achieved. Under the cover of the cottage-owner’s fair... was revealed the same peasant greedy for land, and ready to take an active part in the redistribution by robbery of the surviving ‘nests of the nobility’. In the dawn-light of a terrible fire the Great Reform turned into ugly redistributive anarchy, which opened up the opportunity for Russia to be turned into the USSR. And there no longer existed either Holy Rus’ or Great Russia...”<sup>309</sup>

The freedoms bestowed by the October Manifesto soon led to an explosion of activity in civil society. Thus, as S.A. Smith writes, “professional associations of doctors, lawyers, and others grew more active, universities expanded, political parties were established. Most of these professionals rejected old-style family life, female subordination, and police rule, and sought to enlist education and social reform in the battle against communal control and the tyranny of custom. Yet though these professionals adopted the liberal ideal of the autonomous individual, they generally rejected western bourgeois regard for self-interest and self-fulfilment. By 1900 Russia already had some 10,000 voluntary associations and these now mushroomed, in areas as diverse as science and education, agriculture, charity, sports, or local history. This represented a strengthening of civil society and may, correspondingly, have represented a diminution of the power of the state, although most of these societies existed legally and thus were ratified by the state. Moreover, their initiatives in such areas as improving public health, popularizing science, expanding education, or promoting patriotism coincided with the government’s own projects...”<sup>310</sup>

However, although the 1905 revolution had been crushed, and recovery was well under way, the revolutionary spirit remained alive, and the country remained divided. The Empire had struck back; but the bell was tolling for the Empire... The disturbances, particularly in the countryside, continued well into 1906, and only gradually died down thereafter. Thus in January the Tsar was forced to emphasize to a peasant delegation from Kursk province that the private property of the landlords, no less than that of the peasants themselves, was inviolable.<sup>311</sup>

---

<sup>309</sup> Archimandrite Cyril (Zaitsev), “Imperia Rossijskaia i Sviataia Rus’” (Imperial Russia and Holy Rus’), *Pravoslavnij Put’*, 1958, p. 17.

<sup>310</sup> Smith, *Russia and the Revolution*, p. 67.

<sup>311</sup> S.S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaja II*, Belgrade, 1939, vol. I, p. 337.

“Between January 1908 and May 1910, 19,957 terrorist attacks and revolutionary robberies were recorded; 732 government officials and 3,052 private citizens were killed, and nearly another 4,000 wounded.”<sup>312</sup> Kotkin writes: “Between 1905 and 1910 more than 16,000 tsarist officials, from village policemen up to ministers, would be killed or wounded by terrorist revolutionaries (including in many cases by Menshevik assassins). Countless carriage drivers and railway personnel – proletarians – perished as well. One top police official complained that the details of bombmaking ‘became so widespread that practically any child could produce one and blow up his nanny.’”<sup>313</sup>

Fr. Raphael Johnston gives some historical perspective to this red terror: “Alexander III came to the throne over the corpse of his father. The revolutionaries, emboldened, as they always are, by liberal pacification, the communist and other far left groups were becoming increasingly violent. From the reign of Alexander II to 1905, the total number of people – both innocent civilians and government officials (including lowly bureaucratic clerks) – murdered by the Herzenian “New Men” came roughly to 12,000. From 1906-1908, it rose by 4,742 additional, with 9,424 attempts to murder. On the other hand, the Russian government’s attitude towards the “New Men” was mixed. Generally, the monarchy was lenient. Exile to Siberia was often not a punishment. Siberia is not entirely a massive, frozen wasteland, but is possessed of great natural beauty, mountains and rivers. It is cold, but it is not the locale of the popular imagination. Local people, not knowing who the deportees were, received them with hospitality; they became part of town life, and the deportees were given much personal freedom. This sort of ‘imprisonment’ was far superior to the American penal system, which can be – at its maximum security level – considered merely a gang war between various minority groups.”<sup>314</sup>

These astonishing numbers explain why ordinary Russians were so strongly opposed to the Jewish-led revolutionary parties, which now disappeared temporarily into the underground.

They also explain why Stolypin’s strong reaction to them, executing thousands of revolutionaries after summary field-tribunals, was far from disproportionate – although, needless to say, it was fiercely condemned by the liberals.

Now the liberals formed a new political party, the Constitutional Democrats, or Cadets, and in the elections to the first Duma in March, they triumphed convincingly over their more rightist opponents. The first Duma did not condemn the political assassinations, and even applauded them. “In 1902, after the murder of the Minister of the Interior Sipagin, when Lenin and his group

---

<sup>312</sup> Douglas Smith, *Former People: The Last Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, London: Macmillan, 2012, p. 58.

<sup>313</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin*, p. 104.

<sup>314</sup> Johnston, “The Third Rome”.

spoke against individual terror, Miliukov [the Cadet leader] went to London to persuade Lenin to enter on the path of political murders. 'You are making a fatal mistake in opposing terror,' said the Cadet leader. 'Think only that a pair of murders would be sufficient to force the Government to give a Constitution.'<sup>315</sup>

The Duma was simply continuing the revolution by other, "constitutional" means. After the Tsar had opened its first session on April 27, the deputies – about 37 per cent of whom were left-leaning Cadets, most of the rest were peasants – began fiercely attacking him and his ministers, and voted to give an amnesty to all political prisoners, "punishing them by forgiveness" in the words of F.I. Rodichev.<sup>316</sup> The deputies also made political demands: the formation of a ministry responsible to themselves and not to the Tsar and the abrogation of the State Senate. They voted for the forcible appropriation of the estates of the landowners – a measure that only incited the peasants to further violence. But at the same time they voted to reduce credit for the starving from 50 million rubles to 15 million!<sup>317</sup>

In June, the First Battalion of the elite Preobrazhensky Guards mutinied. General Alexander Kireev noted in his diary: "This is it..."<sup>318</sup> For if even the army rebelled, and the regime's other pillar, the peasantry was also revolting (on the land issue), then the regime itself, it would seem, was doomed...

\_\_ However, the Tsar now acted with admirable decisiveness which belied his reputation for weakness of will. On July 8 he dissolved the Duma on the grounds of its open call to disobey the authorities.<sup>319</sup>

The deputies were caught by surprise, and many of them travelled to Vyborg in Finland, where they issued an openly revolutionary declaration, calling on the people not to pay taxes, to refuse military service and not to recognize loans concluded with the government during the conflict. However, the governor of Vyborg asked them to cut short their session, fearing that it would lead to restrictions on Finland's autonomy. The deputies returned to Petersburg having achieved nothing; nobody paid any attention to them... So great was the change in mood that a conference of the Cadets in Helsingfors at the end of September even decided to abandon the Vyborg manifesto. The students returned to their studies. The revolutionaries ceased to be lionized... The Tsar's firmness had won the day...

---

<sup>315</sup> I.P. Yakobi, *Imperator Nikolaj II i revoliutsia* (Emperor Nicholas II and the Revolution), Moscow, 2009 (first published in 1931), pp. 76-77.

<sup>316</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 349.

<sup>317</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

<sup>318</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 190.

<sup>319</sup> In his proclamation of July 21, the Tsar complained that "the representatives have strayed into spheres beyond their competence and have been making comments on the imperfections of the Fundamental Laws which can only be modified by Our imperial will. In short, the representatives of the nation have undertaken really illegal acts, such as the appeal by the Duma to the nation."

Although the revolution had been crushed, monarchist thinkers felt that the concessions that the Tsar had given in his October Manifesto should be rescinded. True, in his new version of the Basic Laws published on April 23, 1906, just before the opening of the First Duma, the Tsar appeared to claw back some power: "4. The All-Russian Emperor possesses the supreme autocratic power. Not only fear and conscience, but God himself, commands obedience to his authority... 8. The sovereign emperor possesses the initiative in all legislative matters. The Fundamental Laws may be subject to revision in the State Council and State Duma only on His initiative. The sovereign emperor ratifies the laws. No law can come into force without his approval. . . 9. The Sovereign Emperor approves laws; and without his approval no legislative measure can become law."

However, there were other parts of the law that suggested that the Duma still had considerable power: "7. The sovereign emperor exercises power in conjunction with the State Council and the State Duma... 86. No new law can come into force without the approval of the State Council and State Duma and the ratification of the sovereign emperor."<sup>320</sup>

In any case, even if it was conceded that the Tsar had surrendered some of his autocratic powers to the Duma, he was clearly not going to take them back again.

---

<sup>320</sup> *Svod Zakonov Rossiiskoi Imperii* (The Collection of the Laws of the Russian Empire), 3rd series, vol. 1, pt. 1. St Petersburg, 1912, pp. 5-26.



## 25. THE BLACK HUNDREDISTS

In order to shore up the monarchy a grass-roots monarchist party, “The Union of the Russian People”, was founded on November 8, 1905. It soon became very large: during the successful counter-revolution of 1906-07, it had about 11,000 local sections, and their members comprised several hundreds of thousands of people from all walks of life.<sup>321</sup> “In the Pale of Settlement and western borderlands (Volhynia, Bessarabia, Minsk), the rightists nearly took the entire peasant vote, and in the central agricultural heartland (Tula, Kursk, Oryol), site of major agrarian disturbances, rightists won around half the peasant vote. In fact, across the expanse of imperial Russia, sympathy for the political right was there to be galvanized.”<sup>322</sup>

The Union was called “the Black Hundreds” by its opponents, who reviled it as being the mainstay, not only of monarchism, but also of “anti-semitism” in the Russian people. However, the Union was not so much anti-semitic as anti-Judaist and anti-revolutionary, a distinction that liberals have never accepted but which is nevertheless fundamental.

Serhii Plokyh writes: “The first rally the Union organized in Moscow attracted close to 20,000 people. In December 1905, Nicholas received a delegation of leaders of the Union and gave his blessing to its activities. Backed by the authorities, the Union played a key role in mobilizing support for the monarchy under the banner of modern nationalism. According to the Union’s statute, ‘the good of the motherland lies in the firm preservation of Orthodoxy, unlimited Russian autocracy, and the national way of life.’ Count Sergei Uvarov’s formula of the 1830s – autocracy, Orthodoxy and nationality – had been revived, now inspiring not only imperial bureaucrats but also rank-and-file subjects.

“The Russia represented by the Union was not limited to Great Russians. ‘The Union makes no distinction between Great Russians, White Russians, and Little Russians,’ read the statute. In fact, the western provinces, and Ukraine in particular, became the Union’s main base of operations. Its largest branch, located in the Ukrainian province of Volhynia, was centered on the Pochaev Monastery. According to a report of 1907, the Union counted more than 1,000 chapters in Volhynia, with a membership of more than 100,000. If one trusts the report, compiled by the governor of Volhynia, that province alone accounted for one-quarter of the Union’s membership throughout the empire. Not far behind were other Right-Bank Ukrainian provinces, especially the Kyiv gubernia.

“What accounted for the truly impressive number of Union members in the western provinces was that, as in Volhynia, individual chapters were

---

<sup>321</sup> S. Anikin, “Budushchee prinadlezhit trezvym natsiam” (The Future Belongs to Sober Nations), *Vernost’*, 142, March, 2010, <http://metanthonymemorial.org/VernostNo142.html> (V.M.)

<sup>322</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin*, p. 100.

organized and led by priests, who enlisted their parishioners into the Union..."<sup>323</sup>

The bishops were also enthusiastic. The most prominent exception was Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovsky) of St. Petersburg, who refused to bless the Black Hundredists.<sup>324</sup> But Metropolitan Vladimir of Moscow<sup>325</sup>, Archbishop Tikhon (Bellavin) of Yaroslavl, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia, Bishop Hermogen of Saratov, St. John of Kronstadt, Elder Theodosius of Minvody and many others joined it without doubting.

St. John of Kronstadt became member no. 200787, and blessed its standards, saying: "As a body without a soul is dead, so Russia without her all-enlightening Autocratic Power is dead". In his telegram to the Congress of monarchist Black Hundredists, he wrote: "I follow with rapture the speeches and actions of the Congress and with all my heart thank the Lord Who has had mercy on Russia and assembled around the cradle of Russian Christianity His faithful children for the unanimous defence of Faith, Tsar and Fatherland."

Again, St. John said: "O Russia, hold firmly onto your faith and Church and Orthodox Tsar, if you want to be unshaken by the people of unbelief and anarchy and do not want to be deprived of the kingdom and the Orthodox Tsar. But if you do fall away from your faith, as many *intelligenty* have already fallen away, then you will no longer be Russia or Holy Rus', but a mix of all kinds of heterodox striving to exterminate each other. And if there will be no repentance in the Russian people, the end of the world is near. God will take away from them their pious Tsar and will send them a whip in the persons of impious, cruel, self-appointed rulers who will drown the whole earth in blood and tears."

A great organizer of the Union was the missionary, future hieromartyr and great friend of St. John of Kronstadt, Fr. John Vostorgov. On Great Friday, March 31, 1906 he said in the cathedral of Christ the Saviour: "Our homeland has entered upon a new path of life, before and ahead of us is - a new Russia.

---

<sup>323</sup> Plokhly, *Lost Kingdom*, London: Allen Lane, 2017, p. 169.

<sup>324</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, chapter 3. Fomin and Fomina argue that Vadkovsky was a renovationist, an enemy of St. John of Kronstadt, and possibly a Mason (*op. cit.*, pp. 391-392)

<sup>325</sup> Monk Anempodist writes: "Metropolitan Vladimir went on to take part in the movement of the right conservative forces of Russia that was being formed. Thus in 1907 he took part in the work of the All-Russian congress of 'The Union of the Russian People'. In 1909, while taking part in the work of the First Monarchist congress of Russian People, Metropolitan Vladimir was counted worthy of the honour of passing on a greeting to the congress from his Majesty the Emperor Nicholas II in the following telegram: "To his Eminence Vladimir, Metropolitan of Moscow. I entrust to you, Vladyko, to pass on to all those assembled in the first capital at the congress of Russian people and members of the Moscow Patriotic Union My gratitude for their loyal feelings. I know their readiness faithfully and honourably to serve Me and the homeland, in strict observance of lawfulness and order. St. Petersburg. 30 September. Nicholas." Riasophor-Monk Anempodist, "Sviaschennomuchenik mitropolit Vladimir (Bogoiavlenskij) i bor'ba s revolutsii" (Hieromartyr Metropolitan Vladimir (Bogoiavlensky) and the struggle against the revolution), *Pravoslavnaia Zhizn'* (Orthodox Life), 53, N 1 (636), January, 2003, pp. 2-10.

"Forgive us, forgive us, old, thousand-year-old Russia! Before our eyes they have judged you, condemned you and sentenced you to death... Threatening and merciless judges have spat in your face and have found nothing good in you. The judgement was strict, implacable and merciless. Everything has merged into the cry: 'Take her, crucify her!'"

"We also know that nothing human was alien to you; we know that you had many faults. But we also know and see that you made Russia holy, and her people - a God-bearing people, if not in actuality, at any rate in the eternal, undying ideal of the people's soul; you gave birth to and raised a mighty people, preserving it in its bitter fate, in the crucible of its historical trials through a whole series of centuries; you gave birth to and raised an array of saints and righteous ones; you did not perish under the blows, the heavy blows of destiny, but became stronger under them, strong in faith; with this faith, this great power of spirit, you endured all the burdens, and yet you created, and entrusted to us and left behind, a great kingdom. For all this we bow down to the earth in gratitude..."

Archbishop Makary (Parvitsky-Nevsky) of Tomsk explained the inscription on the banner of the Union of the Russian People, "For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland! As calling "evidently, for Russian people to be united, so as to stand up for the foundations of the Russian Land. But the banner of unification has at the same time become a banner of altercation. Against the band standing with the banner 'For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland!' there stands a horde of people with the red banner, on which is written: 'Freedom, Equality, Brotherhood'. On this latter banner there remain traces of blood, blood that has already darkened with time. This is not our Russian banner, but has been brought from another country, where it was once steeped in blood. It appeared amongst us only recently. With its inscription, which speaks of freedom, equality and brotherhood, it has drawn the attention of many, not only foreigners who live in the Russian Land, but also Russians, who have not suspected that under this visible inscription there is hidden another meaning, that by this freedom we must understand violence, by equality - slavery, and by pan-brotherhood - fratricide. Between the horde of freedom, equality and brotherhood and the band for Faith, Tsar and Fatherland a struggle for dominance is taking place."<sup>326</sup>

However, the Union was plagued by schisms and poor leadership that gave it a bad name. Thus the "Union of the Archangel Michael", led by the deputy V.M. Purishkevich, separated from the "Union of the Russian People" led by A. Dubronin. Dubronin's views were contradictory: pro-tsarist, but also anti-hierarchical. And he wanted to rid the empire of "the Germans", that is, that highly efficient top layer of the administration which proved itself as loyal to the empire as any other section of the population. When interviewed years later by the Cheka, Dubronin declared: "By conviction I am a *communist monarchist*, that is, [I want] there to be monarchist government under which those forms of

---

<sup>326</sup> Tatiana Groyan, *Tsariu Nebesnomu i Zemnomu Vernij* (Faithful to the Heavenly and Earthly Kings), Moscow, 1996, p. CXI.

government [will flourish] which could bring the people an increase in prosperity. For me all kinds of cooperatives, associations, etc. are sacred.”

Fr. John Vostorgov considered Dubronin an enemy of the truth – a death-sentence for any movement that purports to support the autocracy on the basis of truth alone...

Another major problem was that the monarchist parties turned out to be “more royal than the king”. In the provinces they often criticized the governors for being liberal, while in the Duma they remained in opposition to the government of Stolypin – who, of course, had the confidence of the Tsar.<sup>327</sup> The essential problem was that the Black Hundredists conducted party politics in favour of the idea that the tsar should rule – although the essence of the tsardom was that it should be above all party interests... For how can the tsar, who is above parties and politics, need the support of a party? In a sense, the idea of a monarchist party supporting the tsar was as absurd as that of a liberal or socialist party attacking him. For does not the idea of the autocracy, for an Orthodox Christian, consist in the fact that the autocratic tsar, the Anointed of the Lord, is *the only* politician, the only person entrusted by God with making decisions in the political sphere? One can, of course, agree or disagree with the tsar’s policies, – freedom of thought is not forbidden, but one cannot *contest* them. The rule of an Orthodox state is the affair of the tsar and those whom he appoints to help him – and not of his subjects. Otherwise, they are no longer his subjects, but his self-appointed judges.

For these reasons government ministers became lukewarm towards the Union. According to Kotkin, they “wanted politics to return from the street to the corridors of power. This rebuff of the street held even though the supportive conservative movements pushed not for a right-wing revolution but, mostly, for a restoration of the archaic autocracy that had existed prior to the advent of the Duma.”<sup>328</sup>

Kotkin sees as a critical failure of the “archaic” autocracy its failure, by contrast with every other contemporary Great Power government, to generate a mass movement to support it. The Black Hundredists were the nearest to such a movement, but Kotkin blackens it as “proto-fascist” – and we have seen how difficult its leaders found it both to preserve its unity and to keep it from deviations from Orthodoxy such as Dubronin’s “communist monarchism”. And so, since the only mass movement that is vital to the survival of the autocracy is *the Orthodox Church* seen as encompassing all the estates of the nation, the Black Hundredists withered on the vine... For, as Fr. John Vostorgov said, true patriotism and monarchism can only be founded on true faith and morality: “Where the faith has fallen, and where morality has fallen, there can

---

<sup>327</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 60.

<sup>328</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin*, p. 101.

be no place for patriotism, there is nothing for it to hold on to, for everything that is the most precious in the homeland then ceases to be precious.”<sup>329</sup>

Having said that, the Black Hundredists were, as we have seen, joined by some of the holiest men of Russia, whose Orthodoxy and true patriotism were unquestioned. Therefore, whatever their faults, they played an essential role in shoring up support for the Tsar and Tsarism at a critical time. They stood for the truth, the truth of Orthodoxy and Autocracy against the lie of liberalism and socialism.

\*

For there could be no real unity between those who ascribed ultimate power to the Tsar and those who ascribed it to the Duma or the mob. Moreover, the struggle between the “reds” and the “blacks” was not simply a struggle between different interpretations of the October manifesto, or between monarchists and constitutionalists, but between two fundamentally incompatible world-views - the Orthodox Christian and the Masonic-Liberal-Ecumenist. It was a struggle between two fundamentally opposed views of where true authority comes from - God or the people.

Fr. John Vostorgov, in spite of his criticisms of the leadership of the Union of the Russian People, had this to say in praise of them: “The monarchist Unions ... foresaw the terrible dangers that threatened the Russian religious and popular-state structure and way of life. Others arose in their hundreds after the danger had already appeared, so as to protect the religious and state ideals of Russia and defend the integrity and indivisibility of Russia. Their essence consists in the fact that they are a storehouse of the religiosity and patriotism of the Russian people. At a fateful moment of history, when the ship of the Russian State was listing so far to the left that disaster seemed inevitable, the monarchist patriotic Unions leaned with all their strength to the right side of the ship and saved it from capsizing. The distinguished activists of the right-wing Unions came out onto the field of public work at a time when they could expect nothing except bullets and bombs, killings from round the corner, persecutions from the newspapers, mockery and disdain from the disoriented intelligentsia and even the government itself - that of Witte of sorrowful memory and his comrades and helpers...”<sup>330</sup>

As Bishop Andronicus, the future hieromartyr, wrote: “It is not a question of the struggle between two administrative regimes, but of a struggle between faith and unbelief, between Christianity and antichristianity. The ancient antichristian plot, which was begun by those who shouted furiously to Pilate about Jesus Christ: ‘Crucify Him, crucify Him: His blood be on us and on our children’ - continued in various branches and secret societies. In the 16<sup>th</sup> century

---

<sup>329</sup> Vostorgov, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 400. My italics (V.M.)

<sup>330</sup> Vostorgov, in Valentina Sologub (ed.), *Kto Gospoden' - ko mne!* (He who is of the Lord - to me!), Moscow, 2007, p. 115.

it poured into the special secret antichristian order of the Templars, and in the 18<sup>th</sup> century it became more definite in the Illuminati, the Rosecrucians and, finally, in Freemasonry it merged into a universal Jewish organization. And now, having gathered strength to the point where France is completely in the hands of the Masons, it – Masonry – already openly persecutes Christianity out of existence there. In the end Masonry will be poured out into one man of iniquity, the son of destruction – the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2). In this resides the solution of the riddle of our most recent freedoms: their aim is the destruction of Christianity in Rus'. That is why what used to be the French word 'liberal', which meant among the Masons a 'generous' contributor to the Masonic aims, and then received the meaning of 'freedom-loving' with regard to questions of faith, has now already passed openly over to antichristianity. In this resides the solution of the riddle of that stubborn battle for control of the school, which is being waged in the *zemstvos* and the State Duma: if the liberal tendency gains control of the school, the success of antichristianity is guaranteed. In this resides the solution of the riddle of the sympathy of liberals for all kinds of sects in Christianity and non-Christian religions. And the sectarians have not been slumbering – they have now set about attacking the little children... And when your children grow up and enter university – there Milyukov and co. will juggle with the facts and deceive them, teaching them that science has proved man's origin from the apes. And they will really make our children into beasts, with just this difference, that the ape is a humble and obedient animal whereas these men-beasts will be proud, bold, cruel and unclean...."<sup>331</sup>

Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) put the monarchist case in February, 1907: "Perhaps there are countries which are best ruled not by tsars, but by many leaders. But our kingdom, which consists of a multitude of races, various faiths and customs that are hostile to each other, can stand only when at its head there stands one Anointed of God, who gives account to nobody except God and His commandments. Otherwise all the races that inhabit the Russian land would go against each other with knives, and would not be pacified until they had themselves destroyed each other, or had submitted to the power of the enemies of Russia. Only the White Tsar is venerated by all the peoples of Russia; for his sake they obey the civil laws, go into the army and pay their taxes. Our tsars are the friends of the people and preservers of the holy faith, and the present Sovereign Nicholas Alexandrovich is the meekest and quietest of all the kings of the whole world. He is the crown of our devotion to our native land and you must stand for him to your last drop of blood, not allowing anybody to diminish his sacred power, for with the fall of this power, Russia also will fall..."

"Russian man, lend your ear to your native land: what does it tell you? 'From the righteous Princess Olga, from the equal-to-the-apostles Vladimir until the days of Seraphim of Sarov and to the present day and to future ages all the wise

---

<sup>331</sup> Bishop Andronicus, "Russkij grazhdanskij stroj zhizni pered sudom khristianina" (The Russian civil order before the judgement of the Christian), Fryazino, 1995, pp. 24-25.

leaders of my people think and say the same,' that is what the land will reply to you... 'They taught their contemporaries and their descendants one and the same thing: both the princes, and the tsars, and the hierarchs who sat on the Church sees, and the hermits who hid amidst the forest and on the islands of the sea, and the military commanders, and the warriors, and the boyars, and the simple people: they all taught to look on this life as the entrance courtyard into the future life, they all taught to use it in such a way as not to console the flesh, but to raise the soul to evangelical virtue, to preserve the apostolic faith unharmed, to keep the purity of morals and truthfulness of speech, to honour the tsars and those placed in authority by them, to listen to and venerate the sacred monastic order, not to envy the rich, but to compete with the righteous ones, to love to work the land as indicated by God to our race through Adam and Noah, and to turn to other crafts only out of necessity or because of a special talent; not to borrow the corrupt habits of foreigners, their proud, lying and adulterous morals, but to preserve the order of the fatherland, which is fulfilled through chastity, simplicity and evangelical love; to stand fearlessly for your native land on the field of battle and to study the law of God in the sacred books.' That is what our land teaches us, that is what the wise men and righteous ones of all epochs of our history entrusted to us, in which there was no disagreement between them, but complete unanimity. The whole of Rus' thinks in the same way. But she knows that only the Anointed of God must preserve this spirit and defend it from enemies visible and invisible by his mighty right hand. And look he hardly stepped back from life when his popular privileges were snatched from him by deception and violence by his enemies and the enemies of the people. Yes, the Russian people thinks and feels one thing: in its eyes public life is a general exploit of virtue, and not the realm of secular pleasures, it is the laborious increase of the Kingdom of God amongst us ourselves and its implanting in the unenlightened tribes, and not the equalisation of all faiths and superstitions. The Orthodox people knows and feels this. It feels that without one ruling royal right hand it is impossible for our land of many tribes to exist. In it are 102 different faiths, 102 tribes that will now nourish malicious enmity against each other immediately they cease to feel the ruling right hand of the White Tsar above them. Let him hear out the reports of the people's delegates, let him allow them to express their opinions on various matters of the kingdom. But the final decision will be made by him himself, and he will give an account for this only through his conscience before the Lord God. One only submission, one only limitation of his power is necessary to the people: that openly on the day of his crowning he should confess his Orthodox faith to God and the people in accordance with the Symbol of the Fatherland - so that he should not have human arbitrariness, but the evangelical law of God as his unfailing guide in his sovereign decisions and undertakings. That is the kingdom we need, and this is understood not only by Russian people, but also by people of other faiths who live in our land with a healthy people's reasoning, and not through lies and deceit: both Tatars and Kirgiz and the old Jews who believe in their own way, and the distant Tunguz.

All of them know that shaking the Tsar's Autocracy means beginning the destruction of the whole of Russia..."<sup>332</sup>

---

<sup>332</sup> Bishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhenneishago Antonia, Mitropolita Kievskago i Galitskago*, vol. 2, pp. 173, 175-177.



## 26. RUSSIA AND THE GREAT POWERS

The relations between the Great Powers began to change at the beginning of the century. And it was the British that took the lead...

The international furore over the Boer War led the British gradually to abandon their policy of "splendid isolation" and seek allies on the continent – including states such as France and Russia, which hitherto had been their traditional enemies.

This need not have excluded a good relationship with Germany, but the naval arms race and Britain's need, after the Entente Cordiale with France of 1904, to keep the French on side and unalarmed, kept relations cool between the two nations. An unfortunate diplomatic incident in 1902 also increased tension. British and German naval forces had undertaken a joint action against Venezuela in order to punish the Venezuelans for reneging on their debts. But the methods used, against an almost defenceless people, caused revulsion – and it was the actions of the German vessels that seemed especially repellent. Thus in New York the *Evening Post* sneered: "As a method of maintaining German prestige the attack upon a mud fort and a collection of naked fishermen must be regarded as a failure." Chancellor Bernhardt von Bülow claimed that "no American or British admiral would have done otherwise." But the damage to German prestige was done; and resentment against the Anglo-Saxons was aroused. As Anthony Delano writes, "after the Venezuela adventure, the Kaiser was later to say, relations between Britain and Germany were never the same."<sup>333</sup>

Britain's rivalry with Russia had traditionally centred on Central Asia and India, but now shifted to East Asia and China as a result of the emergence of a new power in the East – Japan. For "in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-5," writes Clark, "Britain and Japan shared a common interest in opposing further Russian expansion. Japan was Britain's 'natural ally' in the Far East, as Foreign Secretary Kimberley put it in a letter of May 1895 to the British minister in Tokyo. The threat posed to Russia's Chinese frontier by Japan's formidable land forces – 100,000 – 200,000 Japanese troops had entered Manchuria by the end of 1895 – would offset the vulnerability of the British imperial periphery in northern India. The swiftly growing Japanese fleet would provide a further 'counterpoise to the Russians' and thereby relieve the strain on Britain's overstretched fleet. In 1901, after a long period of rapprochement, discussions began with a view to a formal alliance – first a naval defence pact, later the more encompassing agreement signed in London on 30 January 1902. Renewed (with expanded terms) in 1905 and in 1911, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance became a fixture in the international system of the pre-war world.

"The same logic underlay the British decision to seek an understanding with France. Already in 1896, Lord Salisbury had found that concessions to France

---

<sup>333</sup> Delano, "Crisis in Caracas", BBC History Magazine, vol. 7, N 1, January, 2006, p. 31.

along the Mekong valley in the borderlands between British Burma and French Indonesia produced the welcome side effect of drawing the French in and temporarily loosening the cohesion of the Franco-Russian Alliance. The Entente Cordiale of 1904 was, by the same token, not primarily an anti-German agreement (at least not from Whitehall's perspective) but one that was intended to mute colonial tensions with France, while at the same time generating some measure of indirect leverage on Russia. [Foreign Minister] Déclasse had encouraged the speculation by suggesting that if an Entente were to come into being, France would exercise a restraining influence on Russia and even make it clear to St. Petersburg that French support would not be forthcoming if Russia were to pick a fight with Britain. There was thus good reason to hope, as Lord Lansdowne put it, that 'a good understanding with France would not improbably be the precursor of a better understanding with Russia.'"334

The Entente had been facilitated above all by King Edward VII, whose "great gifts as a sociable king", writes Barbara Tuchman, "had proved invaluable to his country. In the nine short years of his reign England's splendid isolation had given way, under pressure, to a series of 'understandings' or attachments, but not quite alliances - for England dislikes the definitive - with two old enemies, France and Russia, and one promising new power, Japan. The resulting shift in balance registered itself around the world, and affected every state's relationship with every other. Though Edward neither initiated nor influenced his country's policy, his personal diplomacy helped to make the change possible."335

In accordance with the Entente, Britain retained her predominance in Egypt, while France was allowed to expand westwards from Algeria to Morocco. Germany, however, as part of her new *Weltpolitik*, decided to challenge this deal. As Hew Strachan writes: "The independence of Morocco was guaranteed by an international convention of 1880. On 31 March 1905 the Kaiser landed in Tangiers and declared his support for the Sultan of Morocco. He had little interest in Morocco but he was anxious to disrupt the Anglo-French Entente. Germany's heavy-handedness had precisely the opposite effect. The Entente hardened, and Britain as well as France began to see Germany as a potential enemy...."

In 1906, at a Great Power conference in Algeiras, Germany suffered another major diplomatic defeat as Britain and Russia backed France's claim for domination over Morocco. (Britain informally accorded France hegemony in Morocco in exchange for France giving Britain hegemony in Egypt.) The Russians supported France as against Germany in the Moroccan dispute not least because the French offered the Russians a vitally important loan.

---

334 Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 138-139.

335 Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, New York: Ballantine, 1962, p. 5.

The Anglo-French Entente was now stronger than ever; and the “encirclement” by France and Russia that German diplomats feared appeared closer to reality.

\*

The British were not as anti-German as the French<sup>336</sup>, but, according to Tombs, “British politicians, diplomats, service chiefs and public came to see Germany as a potential threat... and France as a potential ally although plans were still being considered for the possibility of war against France and Russia. Tentative military ‘conversations’ took place between British and French generals. The Foreign Secretary, Sir Edward Grey, tried to explain it all in 1911 to the Prime Minister, Herbert Asquith: ‘Early in 1906 the French said to us ‘will you help us if there is a war with Germany?’ We said ‘we can’t promise, our hands must be free’. The French then urged that the Military Authorities should be allowed to exchange views – ours to say what they should do – the French to say how they would like it done, if we did side with the French. Otherwise, as the French urged, even if we decided to support France, on the outbreak of war we shouldn’t be able to do it effectively. We agreed to this.”<sup>337</sup>

Russia was in an alliance with France that formed the core of her foreign policy. And the French now had an *Entente Cordiale* with Britain. So it made sense for the Russians to mend fences with the British... But the Tsar was still smarting from his defeat at the hands of Japan, whose ally was Britain. So he was not at first inclined to favour Britain over Germany. Thus in July, 1905 he met the Kaiser in secret at Björkö in the Gulf of Finland, and signed a treaty with him which stipulated that each country would come to the other’s aid in the event of an attack by a third country. However, when his advisers saw it, they persuaded the Tsar to make changes to it and therefore in effect abandon it on the not unreasonable grounds that, although the treaty was a defensive one, it would be bound to look different to the French – and the alliance with France was too important to endanger.

The Kaiser suffered a similar experience from his ministers, which showed how real one-man-rule was becoming rarer and more difficult in the early twentieth century. Neither the Kaiser nor the Tsar was able to impose his will on his government. And so “the Treaty of Björkö lived its brief shimmering day, and expired...”<sup>338</sup>

\*

---

336 There were considerable cultural links between Britain and Germany, especially in music. And “no fewer than 335 German students matriculated at Oxford between 1899 and 1914, including thirty-three Rhodes scholar. Among the German Oxonians were the sons of the Prussian minister Prince Hohenlohe, Vice-Admiral Moritz von Heeringen and Chancellor Bethmann Hollweg (Balliol, class of 1908).” (Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914-1918*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 24).

337 Tombs, op. cit., p. 605.

338 Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, p. 11.

After this failure, a *rapprochement* with Britain seemed more attractive to the Russians. From the British perspective, such a *rapprochement* was made more palatable by Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japanese War, and the Tsar's concession of some elements of a parliamentary system after the abortive revolution of 1905, which combined to soften the image of Russia in British minds: the bear no longer looked quite so powerful or threatening. Moreover, there were powerful geopolitical reasons why the two empires, both overstretched in their different ways, should seek some kind of accommodation with each other. Both countries feared German expansion: Britain feared Germany's new dreadnoughts in the North Sea and her new colonies in Eastern and Southern Africa, while Russia feared German interference in her Baltic provinces on behalf of the German minority there. As for the "Great Game", the rivalry of the two powers in Asia, this was no longer dangerous: talks on Tibet and Afghanistan had started already in 1903, and resumed with much greater hope of success after the crisis years of 1904-05.

And so in 1907, in spite of many misgivings on both sides, but eagerly supported by France, Britain and Russia signed a convention delineating their respective "spheres of influence" in Tibet, Afghanistan and Persia. From the British point of view, the key advantage gained was unhindered access to the recently discovered oil reserves in Southern Persia. This would prove very important in the world war, because the decision had been taken to run the British fleet, not on coal, but on oil...

But from the Russian point of view, "the core of the Convention", as Foreign Minister Izvolsky put it, was the prospect of British support for improved Russian access to the Straits.<sup>339</sup> For Russian foreign policy, having suffered a major defeat in the Far East, was now reorienting itself back towards the Balkans...

The Convention was sealed by a meeting in 1908 between King Edward VII and Tsar Nicholas in Revel<sup>340</sup> and by visits to England by a parliamentary delegation and then the Tsar himself in 1909. This latter visit was accompanied by huge security. Frances Welch explains why: "During the preceding months, there had been outcries in the Commons, where the visit of the Tsar was described as 'repulsive to multitudes of our people'. The Tsar was repeatedly lambasted for his poor record on civil liberties and for state censorship. Radicals called for his assassination. On the day of his arrival, seventy MPs and two bishops made formal complaints.

"The *Standart* arrived at Cowes [on the Isle of Wight] on schedule, on 2nd August. The *Isle of Wight County Press* reported a fond greeting. 'The two

---

<sup>339</sup> Christopher Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 158.

<sup>340</sup> This Anglo-Russian *rapprochement* at the highest level was aided by the fact that Tsar Nicholas' mother and King Edward's wife were Danish sister-queens who both hated Germany (the Germans had conquered the Danish provinces of Schleswig and Holstein in 1864), and consequently worked hard to unite their adopted countries against Germany.

monarchs embraced with great affection.’ But in private Edward VII had been complaining that the Tsar was ‘deplorably unsophisticated, immature and reactionary’. Meanwhile, the Tsar was visiting under duress, his ministers having warned him that it might antagonize other European leaders. One minister had even insisted that Britain would never be a loyal ally.

“At their last meeting Edward VII had been rather critical of the young Romanovs, tut-tutting that they spoke English with a ‘déclassé accent’. The mortified Tsarina had sacked their tutor, the unfortunate Mr. Epps, forthwith. But the *Isle of Wight County Press* preferred to take a sunnier view: ‘The five beautiful Romanov children formed an interesting portion of a happy domestic picture.’

“Of the royal party the future George V entered best into the spirit of the occasion, writing in his diary. ‘Dear Nicky, Alicky [the Tsarina] and their children received us. Dear Nicky looking so well and Alicky too. I had not seen him for twelve years...’ George’s famously acquisitive wife, the future Queen Mary, was equally enthusiastic, the Tsarina had given her a trinket, ‘which for years I had wanted to have!!!!’.

“The Tsar’s review of the British fleet was hailed as a triumph, the King paid tribute to the biggest gathering of warships he had ever seen, and George wrote in his diary that ‘each ship cheered as we passed her’. In fact, the review had suffered a narrow squeak. At the end of the inspection of the first row of ships, the leading Russian cruiser had almost smashed into a British dreadnought. Lord Suffield, who was on board the King’s ship, wrote of ‘unprecedented turmoil’.”<sup>341</sup>

In fact, the whole visit, while deemed a success, served to underline the fact that the new agreement was still felt to be unnatural by many people on both sides, and a permanent Franco-Russo-British alliance was still not certain. Tsar Nicholas was still trying to patch up relations with Germany and “Cousin Willie”, which some important industrialists and politicians favoured. But he could not afford to go too far for fear of disrupting the important alliances Russia now had with France and Britain.

“For Russia to move towards Germany,” writes Margaret Macmillan, “would mean abandoning the French alliance and, almost certainly, access to French financial markets. It was also certain to be opposed by the liberals who saw the alliance with France, and perhaps in the longer run with Britain, as encouraging progressive forces for change within Russia. And not all conservatives were pro-German; landowners were hurt by Germany’s protective tariffs on agricultural produces and foodstuffs...”

“As soon as the Anglo-Russian Convention had been signed, Izvolsky reached out to the Triple Alliance, signing an agreement with Germany on the

---

<sup>341</sup> Welch, “A Last Fraught Encounter”, *The Oldie*, N 325, August, 2015, pp. 24-25.

Baltic and proposing to Austria-Hungary that they work together in the Balkans. Britain, likewise, continued to hope for a winding down of the naval race with Germany. In the end, however, it proved to be beyond the capacity of Russia's leaders to bridge the growing chasm between Britain and France on the one hand and Germany and Austria-Hungary on the other, or to keep Russia out of the mounting arms race. By 1914, in spite of periodic struggles to escape, Russia was firmly on one side. Bismarck had warned of this many years earlier: in 1885 he had written to Wilhelm's grandfather that an alliance of Russia, Britain and France would provide the basis for a coalition against us more dangerous for Germany than any other she might have to face' ..."<sup>342</sup>

Meanwhile, writes Carter, "British attitudes to Russia had shifted. By 1912 the country had become fascinated by its would-be ally. In January 1912 *The Times* published a 'Russian number', and a group of liberal MPs visited Russia, a trip which Sir Charles Hardinge described as 'the pilgrimage of love'. Russian literature was everywhere – not just Tolstoy but Dostoevsky, Chekhov and Turgenev had all been recently translated into English. Beef Stroganov had insinuated itself on to fashionable British menus. The Ballets Russes had brought a fantasy of Russian exoticism, wildness and modernity to London; [King] George went to see them on the eve of his coronation in 1911. But cultural fascination was not matched by political sympathy..."<sup>343</sup>

"Russian high life," writes Max Hastings, "exercised a fascination for Western Europeans. That genteel British magazine *The Lady* portrayed Nicholas II's empire in romantic and even gushing terms: 'this vast country with its great cities and arid steppes and extremes of riches and poverty, captures the imagination. Not a few Englishmen and Englishwomen have succumbed to the fascinations and made it their home, and English people, generally speaking, are liked and welcomed by the Russians. One learns that the girls of the richer classes are brought up very carefully. They are kept under strict control in the nursery and the schoolroom, live a simple, healthy life, are well taught several languages including English and French... with the result that they are well-educated, interesting, graceful, and have a pleasing, reposeful manner.'"<sup>344</sup>

Personal sympathies at the highest level helped: the Tsar and Tsarina got on much better with their English relatives than with their German ones. "Nicky" and "Georgie" not only looked alike: they seemed genuinely to like each other. And they both detested "Cousin Willie", the German Kaiser.

Moreover, the English ambassador in St. Petersburg, Sir George Buchanan, was "wonderfully devoted" to the tsar, declaring that "His Majesty had such a wonderful charm of manner that when he received me in audience he almost made me feel that it was as a friend, and not the Emperor, with whom I was

---

<sup>342</sup> Macmillan, op. cit., pp. 185, 196.

<sup>343</sup> Carter, *The Three Emperors*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 401.

<sup>344</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to War 1914*, London: William Collins, 2014, p. 13.

talking. There was, if I may say so without presumption, what amounted to a feeling of mutual sympathy between us.”<sup>345</sup>

And yet it was precisely Sir George’s embassy that would turn out to be the nest of the February revolution; for cultural fascination and personal sympathies were swept away by the most powerful and enduring force in world politics – differences in faith, the fundamental collision between Orthodox Christianity and the democratic-socialist revolution.

The reason for the lack of political, as opposed to cultural sympathy was twofold: first, the increasing democratization of British society, as witnessed by the huge struggle for Lords reform, and secondly, the wildly inaccurate reporting of Russian affairs by the Jewish press inside Russia and their western followers. The fact was – which very few recognized – that Russia was far from being a despotic country.

Moreover, while some restrictions on the Jews remained, it was by no means true that they were being foully and unjustly persecuted in Russia. The vast wave of *anti-Russian* pogroms, with thousands of Jewish political murders, was not reported objectively. All this defamation and slander would bear evil fruit in the future, in 1917...

---

<sup>345</sup> Carter, op. cit., p. 402.

## 27. THE STOLYPIN REFORMS

The restoration of order in Russia after the 1905 revolution was to a large extent the work of one of the great servants of the tsarist regime, the Interior Minister and later Prime Minister Peter Arkadyevich Stolypin, a landowner from an old Russian family in Kovno, Lithuania. He introduced military field tribunals, which decreed – with the full support of the Tsar – capital punishment for convicted revolutionaries. “In the aftermath of the 1905 Revolution,” writes Sir Richard Evans, “the average rose from around fifteen death sentences a year in the 1880s and 1890s to 637 in 1907 and 1,342 in 1908, almost all of which were actually carried out.”<sup>346</sup>

This rate was often criticized by liberals such as Tolstoy and even by former Prime Minister Witte. But the number of those executed by “Stolypin’s neckties” (the hangman’s noose) was far less than the numbers of officials and others killed by the terrorists. Stolypin himself, who suffered several attempts on his and his family’s lives and was eventually killed by a terrorist, replied to one of his critics: “Learn to distinguish the blood on the hands of a doctor from the blood on the hands of an executioner...”<sup>347</sup> And to the Duma he said on May 10, 1907: “The opponents of statehood would like to take the path of radicalism, the path of liberation from the historical path of Russia, of liberation from cultural traditions. They need great upheavals, we need a great Russia!”<sup>348</sup>

“‘I can’t tell you,’ Nicky told his mother on 11 October 1906, ‘how much I’ve come to like and respect Stolypin.’ On 20 February 1907, when the second Duma assembled, it was much more radical than the first, containing 118<sup>349</sup> socialists, in the wake of the decision by Lenin and Martov to allow their parties to participate. Stolypin and Nicholas immediately started to consider its dissolution, ‘but it’s too early for that’, the tsar told his mother; ‘one must let them do something manifestly stupid... Then slap! And they are gone!’ The radicals demanded the confiscation of land, a measure which neither tsar nor premier would consider. On 6 March, Stolypin defied them in a virtuoso performance. ‘Such attacks to the authorities – “Hands up!”’ he proclaimed. ‘To these two words, gentlemen: “Not Afraid!”’ Nicholas was impressed.

“Once they had decided to dissolve the Duma, Stolypin planned a political *coup d’état* to change the electoral law. ‘I waited all day long with impatience for notification from you,’ Nicholas wrote to Stolypin. ‘Things are being dragged out. The Duma must be dissolved tomorrow. No delay. Not one moment of hesitation.’

“On 1 June, Stolypin told the Duma to expel its extremists. When the Duma refused, he went into action. On the 3<sup>rd</sup>, police surrounded the Taurida Palace,

---

<sup>346</sup> Evans, *op. cit.*, p. 433.

<sup>347</sup> Ariadna Tyrkova-Wiliams, “Na Putiakh k Svobode”, in *Petr Stolypin*, Moscow, 1998, p. 221.

<sup>348</sup> Bokhanov, *Imperator Nicholaj II*, Moscow, 1998, p. 272. See the film on Stolypin and his wife <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=l3cV5tG9X9s>

<sup>349</sup> 222 according to Orlando Figes (*Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, London: Pelican, 2014, p. 56). (V.M.)



arresting many of the Bolsheviks and Mensheviks... The third Duma was dominated by noblemen and businessmen in which the party of 17 October known as 'Octobrists', who supported the semi-constitutional autocracy, held a majority. Yet the old convergence between Romanovs and the nobility was long since ruptured: the third Duma lasted for five years, but much of its opposition now came from the gentry. Even this 'king's parliament' defied Stolypin...

"The revolutionary parties were broken. While there had been 150,000 Social-Democrats in 1907, there would soon be fewer than 10,000. Many Bolsheviks quietly retired into normal life and got jobs or went into exile to fulminate and feud, like Lenin in Switzerland and Austria..."<sup>350</sup> Only the boldest, like Joseph Stalin, remained in Russia, actively working against the regime.

Nevertheless, the election of the Third Duma was the signal for a significant shift to the right in society as a whole: terrorist acts did not cease around the country, but for the time being the wind had been taken out of the sails of the revolutionaries...

Stolypin was a great reformer as well as a stern disciplinarian and a great parliamentarian. He succeeded, writes S.S. Oldenburg, "in squaring the circle. Until then, the carrying out of reforms had unfailingly been accompanied by a weakening of the authorities, while the application of severe measures meant a refusal to carry out transformations. Now a government had been found that combined the two tasks; and broad sections of society were found that understood the necessity of this..."<sup>351</sup>

Using the 87<sup>th</sup> Article of the Basic Laws, which allowed the government to carry out urgent measures in the intervals between sessions of the Duma, Stolypin introduced a whole series of liberal measures that put into effect the promises made by the Tsar in his October manifesto, including compulsory insurance for workers against sickness, injury and old age. But his most important achievement was the land reforms designed to relieve poverty in the countryside, break the power of the commune over the individual peasant and create a strong, independent peasant class.

Zelnik writes: "The question, in the new post-1905 context, was whether the solution to land hunger, so vehemently expressed by peasant insurgency in 1905 (and there was much more to come in 1906), should be attained by the compulsory redistribution of gentry land, and if so, whether with compensation (the liberal or Kadet position) or without (the radical position)... [Stolypin's] central idea was to reallocate not the gentry lands but *communal* lands..."<sup>352</sup>

Stolypin had three closely related aims: to raise living standards in the countryside, to remove the roots of peasant revolutionism, and to break the

---

<sup>350</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, pp. 542-543.

<sup>351</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 365-366.

<sup>352</sup> Zelnik, *op. cit.*, p. 259.

communal system. For he noted, as Stephen Kotkin writes, “that much of peasant unrest in 1905-06 had been communally organized. On the basis of his experience in the communeless western borderlands, moreover, he concluded that a prosperous individualist village was a peaceful village. Thus, his agrarian reforms, enabled by a November 9, 1906 decree, aimed to drive agricultural productivity and remove the basis for peasant unrest by creating an independent property-owning class among the peasants; who, once furnished with state credits and access to technology, would strike out on their own. In other words, Stolypin sought to transform both the physical rural landscape, overcoming the separated communal strips of land with consolidated farms, and the psychology of the rural inhabitant.”<sup>353</sup>

Besides strengthening the economy of the rural country, Stolypin was also attempting to achieve the maturing of the peasant to the point where he could take a considered, independent part in civil and political life. “First of all it is necessary to create the citizen,” he said in a newspaper interview, “the peasant-house-owner, the petty landowner, and when this task has been accomplished – citizenship itself will reign in Russia. First the citizen, and then citizenship...”<sup>354</sup>

As Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, the land reforms were essentially the brain-child of the Tsar himself: “Immersing himself in a study of the matter, his Majesty departed more and more both from his teachers and from the politics of his father, and even from ‘society’. They were all unanimous in striving to preserve the commune, although for various reasons (some of the liberals and democrats considered it [following Herzen] to be ‘embryonic socialism’). Finally, having thought it all through, his Majesty came to the thought of the necessity of abolishing the village commune altogether. The more so, in that the majority of provincial committees created to discuss the land question had expressed themselves in one way or another against the preservation of the commune. He entrusted the carrying out of this idea to a man exceptionally well chosen – P.A. Stolypin, who was appointed President of the Council of Ministers. Stolypin carried out the reforms in constant consultation with his Majesty, from which they received their name, ‘The Stolypin Reforms’. They began with the law of November 9, 1906, which allowed the peasants *freely to leave the commune...* and to have their own private agriculture. Immediately two-and-a-half million petitions to leave were submitted. In order to carry out the exit, 483 special commissions and seven thousand land-surveyors were mobilized. Redemption payments were rescinded. At the same time a new impulse was given to *the resettlement movement* of peasants in the East. Those who wanted were given plots in Siberia, in the Altai and in the Far East at fifteen hectares per person (45 per family), with each family being offered a mortgage at 200 roubles with the opportunity of moving with all their possessions to the new lands *at state expense*. In Siberia previously prepared warehouses of agricultural instruments awaited the re-settlers. They were sold at extremely

---

<sup>353</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin. Paradoxes of Power. 1878-1928*, London: Penguin, 2004, p. 95.

<sup>354</sup> Bokhanov, *op. cit.*, pp. 273-273.

low prices. For a long time the re-settlers *were freed from all taxes*. His Majesty personally owned forty million desyatins of land in Siberia. All these lands Nicholas II handed into the land fund for free, he simply *gave them away* to the Russian peasantry! Especially valuable gifts were the very extensive fertile lands of the Altai, which had formerly been exclusively the property of the Emperor. In these former possessions of his given away to the peasants his Majesty *at his own expense* constructed new roads, schools, hospitals and churches... Finally, the third component of the reforms were *the enterprises of the State Peasant Bank*, which began to snap up landowners' lands and sell them to the peasants on extremely advantageous conditions for the peasants. The bank offered them up to 90% of the value of the bought land in credit at a rate of 4.5% at huge instalments. In sum, by 1917 100% of the arable land in the Asiatic part of Russia, and about 90% of it in the European part was either owned or rented by peasants. By 1914 almost all the commune lands had passed into private peasant ownership. The results of the reforms exceeded all expectations. The harvest sharply increased, so that Russia exported up to a quarter of its bread abroad and became the main supplier of bread to Europe. The wheat harvest rose from about two billion poods in 1894 to four billion in 1913 and 1914. In 1913 the wheat harvest in Russia was about one third higher than those in Argentina, Canada and the USA put together! In 1908 a little more than 858 million poods of wheat and flour were exported to England alone, and in 1910 – about three billion. The production of rye rose from two billion poods in 1894 to four billion in 1913. Also *doubled* in this period was the production of cotton, the consumption of sugar and tea per head of population, and other products. *Half* the world's trade in eggs belonged to Russia. She possessed 80% of the world's output of flax. Russia had not known such a rapid rise in agriculture as took place from 1907 to 1911 in connection with the reforms, throughout the whole period of her history. 'Give us twenty more years of internal and external peace,' said P.A. Stolypin, 'and you will not know the present Russia!' By 1914 the country was already unrecognizable in many things..."<sup>355</sup>

Indeed, in 1914 the French economist Edmond Thierry published a detailed report that concluded: "If the affairs of the European nations continue in the same way from 1912 to 1950 as they have done from 1900 to 1912, then Russia by the middle of the present century will dominate Europe, both in the political and in the economic and financial spheres."<sup>356</sup>

\*

In 1911 an interesting debate took place between the revolutionary-turned-monarchist Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov and Stolypin. Tikhomirov considered the new order in Russia after 1906 to be "unprincipled" and "neither monarchy nor democracy" "Being ambiguous in concept and deviating from a clear attitude to any Supreme Power, it was formed in such a way that in it everyone can get in everyone else's way but there is no one who could force the

---

<sup>355</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 403-405.

<sup>356</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 406.

institutions of state to collaborate. His Majesty the Emperor himself can independently only not allow a law to be enforced, but he cannot independently create a law that is necessary for the country. But... the state, on the contrary, has the task of working, and especially in a country that has been so disturbed during the preceding years of woes and troubles.

“This order, which is extremely bad from the point of view of its apparatus, is, in addition to that, complete antinational, that is, it does not correspond either to the character of the nation or to the conditions of the general situation of the Empire. As a result of this, disorganization in the country is being engendered on all sides. Unifying elements are weakening. A friable, bored, discontented mood has appeared. The Russians are losing their spirit, their faith in themselves, they are not inspired by patriotism. Moreover, class and inter-racial quarrels are necessarily becoming sharper.

“Russia constitutes a nation and a state that are great in instincts and means, but also surrounded by great dangers. It was created by Russians and is preserved only by Russians. Only Russian power brings the remaining elements to some solidarity amongst themselves and with the Empire. ... We have a huge non-Russian population... The strongest of the other races are foreign to our patriotism. They are eternally quarrelling amongst themselves, but are inclined to rebel against the dominion of the Russians. The unifying element, the general bond is we, the Russians. Without us the Empire will disintegrate, and these other races will perish. Therefore we must remember our mission and support the conditions of our strength. We must remember that our state is a matter not simply of national egoism, but a global duty. We occupy a post that is necessary for all. But in order to keep this post we need a one-person Supreme Power, that is, the Tsar, not as the adornment of a pediment, but as a real state power.

“No combinations of popular representation or elective laws can guarantee the supremacy of the Russians. We must understand ourselves. As a people that is essentially statist, the Russians are not suited to petty political struggles, they can do politics only wholesale, not retail, by contrast with the Poles, the Jews, etc. The aims of the supremacy of such a people (as with the Romans) are attainable only by a one-person Supreme Power that realizes its ideals. With such a power we become stronger and more skilful than all, for no Poles can compare with the Russians in the capacity for discipline and solidarity around a one-person power endowed with a moral character.

“But if it has no centre of unity, the Russian people loses its head and particularist peoples begin to obstruct it. Historical practice has created a Supreme Power in accordance with the Russian character. The Russian people has grown for itself a Tsar in union with the Church. [But] since 1906 that which was proper to the people has been undermined, and it is being forced to live in a way that it is not able to and does not want. This was undoubtedly a huge constitutional mistake, for whatever theoretical preferences there may be, practically speaking state reason requires institutions that conform to the character of the people and the general conditions of its supremacy. In

destroying that, 1906 deprived us of that without which the Empire cannot exist – the possibility of creating a dictatorship immediately. Such a possibility was given first of all by the presence of a Tsar having the right to engage in the situation with all his unlimited Supreme Power.

“The consciousness alone of the possibility of an immediate concentration [of power] filled the Russians with confidence in their strength, while inspiring our rivals with fear and dread. Now that has been taken away. And without our watchfulness there is nobody to keep the remaining races in unity...”<sup>357</sup>

Stolypin replied on July 9: “All these fine theoretical considerations would in practice have turned out to be a malicious provocation and the beginning of a new revolution...”<sup>358</sup>

Both men were right. Tikhomirov was right that the post-1906 order in Russia was no longer an autocracy in the full sense, and that it contained within itself the seeds of its own destruction. But Stolypin was right that there was no real practical alternative, and that through him and his government the Tsar could at any rate carry out part of his autocratic will.

\*

For a vital five years after the 1905 revolution Stolypin had been the indispensable servant of the Tsar in restoring internal order in the country and in pushing through much-needed reforms. However, he continued to face a difficult dilemma. Although he saw himself as a servant of the Tsar and as deriving his authority exclusively from him, he inevitably had to play party politics to some extent in order to ensure that his bills passed the Duma. His very success in accomplishing this made him distrusted by some on the right, who believed that a servant of the Tsar should obey him alone and not resort to seeking political support elsewhere. But this was an inescapable dilemma for all those, including Black Hundredists, who supported the monarchy and yet sought to work in and through the mixed system that now prevailed in Russia. Only the revolutionaries could act with complete integrity insofar as they openly despised the system and tried to destroy it...

And so by 1909-10, as Lieven writes, Stolypin’s “stock among the elite was falling. Arguments were growing between the Duma, the government and the State Council [which had a veto on all legislation as well as the Tsar] as to whether it was yet safe to rescind the ‘states of emergency’ by which much of Russia was governed. This would allow the civil rights promised in the constitution to come into effect and would thereby reduce the anger of much of Russian educated society against bureaucratic arbitrariness. Some of Stolypin’s proposed reforms were threatening the position of powerful groups and interests. The Orthodox hierarchy denounced efforts to widen and

---

<sup>357</sup> Tikhomirov, “Poslednee pis’mo Stolypinu”, in *Petr Stolypin*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 235-237.

<sup>358</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 76.

guarantee the rights of other religions and of non-believers. Industrialists complained about new welfare legislation for workers. Above all, the landowning aristocracy attacked Stolypin's plans to democratize in part local government while at the same time increasing the control over it of the central administration. The landowning class disliked bureaucracy only a little less than democracy. Both were seen as threats to the aristocracy's power, whose shakiness had just been rudely illustrated in the 1905 revolution. Landowners struggling to make big estates profitable were terrified at the prospect of the increased tax burdens a more democratic local government might impose. The aristocracy's intransigence was a measure of its weakness. Unlike in nineteenth-century England, the upper class felt itself too poor and too weak to be able to make concessions, buy off opposition and survive. Under the new constitutional system, the aristocracy was far better able to defend its interests than had ever previously been the case. For the first time, the landowners were allowed to organize on a national scale and their pressure group, the United Nobility, became the single most powerful lobby in Russia. Moreover, landowning nobles were now the biggest group in the Duma and were well entrenched in the State Council. They could and did block legislation that offended their interests. The Russian situation was very similar to that of Prussia in the decades after the 1848 revolution. When absolute monarchy gave way to a conservative and very restricted constitutionalism the aristocracy gained greatly in political power in both countries. As the class most trusted by the monarchy, the landowners acquired the predominant weight in parliament in both Petersburg and Berlin. The agrarian lobby was a thorn in the flesh of Wilhelm II's government. The Russian agrarians helped to wreck Stolypin..."<sup>359</sup>

Now Stolypin, being a landowner from the western provinces, took a particular interest in the difficult situation of the Russian peasantry in that region. For in Belorussia especially, although there was a governor appointed from St. Petersburg, political and cultural power belonged to the Poles, and economic power – to the Jews. One of the reasons for the great popularity of the monarchist Unions in these western regions was that the peasantry looked to the Tsar and the monarchist parties as their only protection against these foreign oppressors.<sup>360</sup>

"The political balance of forces in pre-war Belorussia," wrote the émigré Belorussian writer Ivan Solonevich, "was as follows. The region had been comparatively recently joined to the Empire and was populated by Russian peasants. Besides the peasants, there were almost no Russians. Our Belorussian nobles very easily betrayed both the faith of their fathers and the language of their people and the interests of Russia. The Tyshkeviches, the Mitskeviches and the Senkeviches were all approximately as Belorussian as I. But they were traitors. The people remained without a governing class. Without intelligentsia, without bourgeoisie, without aristocracy, even without a

---

<sup>359</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 172-173.

<sup>360</sup> Plokhy, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

proletariat and without craftsmen. The path to economic advancement was simply blocked by the Jews of the cities and hamlets. Count Muraviev... opened for the Belorussian peasant the path at any rate into the lower levels of the intelligentsia. Our newspaper [financed by Stolypin] depended on these *intelligenty*, so to speak, on the Belorussian staff-captains of the time: popular teachers, volost scribes, village priests, doctors, low-ranking officials. Then, as now, we had to fight on two fronts. This mass of people was inclined towards revolution. We had to prove to them that it could defend its political, economic and every other form of life only in a struggle against the Jews and Polonization. The struggle was very difficult. It was very difficult to prove to the readers of Chernyshevsky, Dobroliubov, and the venerated of Aladin, Rodichev and Miliukov the completely obvious fact that if the monarchy retreated, they, these readers, would be eaten up by the Jews and Poles. And that it was only within the bounds of the empire and the monarchy that these people could defend their national being...."361

In the autumn Stolypin moved to strengthen this movement by introducing a bill for the introduction of self-governing *zemstva* in the provinces of Vitebsk, Minsk, Mogilev, Kiev, Volhynia and Podolsk, where the Russian element was stronger than the Polish or Jewish, but not yet in Kovno, Vilna and Grodno, where the Russian element was weaker. However, the bill was fiercely criticized in both the State Council and the State Duma on the grounds that it would violate racial equality in the region. This was doubly ironical, in that Stolypin *both* wanted to bring the position of the Russian peasant to a position of equality with his Jewish and Polish neighbours, *and* was in favour of removing many of the restrictions on the Jews in the region of the Pale. For, on the one hand, these restrictions were extremely complex, sometimes contradictory and difficult to enforce. And on the other hand, the lack of full equality of rights for the Jews gave them and their supporters in the Duma and the press a powerful weapon with which to beat the government...

However, the bill to broaden the rights of the Jews was attacked in the rightist press and vetoed by the Tsar. As for the bill to introduce *zemstva* in the western regions, in May, 1910 the Duma accepted it, but only with significant corrections that modified its anti-Polish character. But in February the State Council rejected it by 92 votes to 68. Moreover, among those who voted against were P.N. Durnovo and V.F. Trepov, rightists of impeccably monarchical principles who were close to the Tsar.

Stolypin immediately left the session of the State Council, suspecting a plot against himself. On March 5, he saw the Tsar and offered his resignation. The Tsar, stunned, asked him to reconsider. Stolypin then suggested suspending both the State Council and the Duma for several days while the law on the western *zemstva* was passed in accordance with Article 87 of the Basic Laws. He also asked that the Tsar order Durnovo and Trepov to leave St. Petersburg

---

361 Solonevich, "Puti, Oshibki i Itogi" (Ways, Mistakes and Conclusions), in *Rossia i Revoliutsia* (Russia and the Revolution), Moscow, 2007, p. 98.

and their work in the State Council for a time. The Tsar was doubtful about these measures, and thought about them for several days. Finally, on March 12, he accepted Stolypin's conditions. The fact that he had agreed to measures of dubious legality for the sake of keeping him was a vivid witness to how much he valued him.

But Stolypin had misjudged the situation, and almost everybody, including the State Council and Duma, condemned him. The law on the western *zemstva* went through, but it did not give the expected results in the summer elections – the majority of those elected did not belong to any Russian bloc, but were non-party figures. Stolypin now felt himself to be in a position of “semi-retirement”, and went to his daughter's estate for most of the summer...

At the end of August he travelled to Kiev on the occasion of the opening of a monument to Tsar Alexander II in the presence of the Tsar and leading government officials. On September 1 he was with the Tsar at a performance of Glinka's opera, “A Life for the Tsar”. That evening, between the acts of the opera, Stolypin gave his life for the Tsar, being shot by the Jew Bogrov. As he fell, he slowly made the sign of the Cross in the direction of the Tsar (his right hand had been shot through), and as he was being carried out of the theatre, he said: “Tell his Majesty that I am glad to die for him and for the Homeland”. He died a few days later.

For five critical years, Stolypin had steered his country out of the storm of revolution and into the relatively calmer water of the Duma Monarchy, at the same time significantly increasing the prosperity and stability of the country. His greatness was generally recognized. The Tsar would never again find a minister like him, and after his death the country again began to turn towards the left and the revolutionary activity of the liberal Masons increased...

“Another ten or fifteen years,” Stolypin would tell his close collaborators, “and the revolutionaries won't have a chance.”

But the root causes of the revolution were spiritual, not political, economic or social; and Stolypin's reforms, while admirable, hardly scratched the surface of the deeper problems of Russia...



## 28. SIBERIA, RUSSIA'S FUTURE

Stolypin's reforms envisaged millions of European peasants migrating to Siberia... This vast, mysterious land was becoming an object of greater attention ever since the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway in the 1890s had begun to open up its almost limitless potential.

Siberia first attracted the attention of Russian intellectuals when the Decembrists were exiled there after the rebellion of 1825, engendering the myth of the righteous, freedom-loving exiles suffering terribly at the hands of hard-hearted tyrannical tsars.

Now, as Anne Applebaum writes, "the first mention of exile in Russian law was in 1679. At the time, exile was considered to be a new, more humane form of criminal punishment - far preferable to the death penalty, or to branding and mutilation - and it was applied to a huge range of minor and major offences, from snuff-taking and fortune-telling to murder. A wide range of Russian intellectuals and writers, Pushkin among them, suffered some form of exile..."

"In retrospect, it is easy to find, in the history of the tsarist prison system, many pre-echoes of practices later applied in the Soviet Gulag. Like the Gulag, for example, Siberian exile was never intended exclusively for criminals. A law of 1736 declared that if a village decided someone in its midst was a bad influence on others, the village elder could divide up the unfortunate's property and order him to move elsewhere. If he failed to find another abode, the state could then send him into exile. Indeed, this law was cited by Khrushchev in 1948, as part of his (successful) argument for exiling collective farmers who were deemed insufficiently enthusiastic and hard-working.

"The practice of exiling people who simply didn't fit in continued throughout the nineteenth century. In his book *Siberia and the Exile System*, George Kennan - uncle of the American statesman - described the system of 'administrative process' that he observed in Russia in 1891: 'The obnoxious person may not be guilty of any crime... but if, in the opinion of the local authorities, his presence in a particular place is 'prejudicial to public order' or 'incompatible with public tranquility', he may be arrested without warrant, may be held from two weeks to two years in prison, and may then be removed by force to any other place within the limits of the empire and there be put under police surveillance for a period of from one to ten years.'

"Administrative exile - which required no trial and no sentencing procedure - was an ideal punishment not only for trouble-makers as such, but also for political opponents of the regime. In the early days, many of these were Polish noblemen who objected to the Russian occupation of their territory and property. Later, exiles included religious objectors, as well as members of 'revolutionary' groups and secret societies, including the Bolsheviks. Although they were not administrative exiles - they were tried and sentenced - the most

notorious of Siberia's nineteenth-century 'forced settlers' were also political prisoners: these were the Decembrists... Fyodor Dostoyevsky, sentenced in 1849 to a four-year term of penal servitude, was another well-known political prisoner. After returning from his Siberian exile, he wrote *The House of the Dead*, still the most widely read account of life in the tsarist prison system."<sup>362</sup>

However, it should be noted that Dostoyevsky looked back with some gratitude on his period of Siberian exile. It was there that his world-view began to change from socialist to Orthodox monarchist. However, it goes without saying that such an ideal outcome of the experience was only rarely found among the revolutionary exiles...

Another "pre-echo" of the Soviet Gulag, continues Applebaum, was the fact that "Like the Gulag, the tsarist exile system was not created solely as a form of punishment. Russia's rulers also wanted their exiles, both criminal and political, to solve an economic problem that had rankled for many centuries; the underpopulation of the far east and the far north of the Russian land mass, and the Russian Empire's consequent failure to exploit Russia's natural resources. With that in mind, the Russian state began, as early as the eighteenth century, to sentence some of its prisoners to forced labour – a form of punishment which became known as *katorga*, from the Greek word *kateirgo*, 'to force'. *Katorga* had a long Russian prehistory. In the early eighteenth century, Peter the Great had used convicts and serfs to build roads, fortresses, factories, ships and the city of St. Petersburg itself. In 1722, he passed a more specific directive ordering criminals, with their wives and children, into exile near the silver mines of Dauriya, in eastern Siberia.

"In its time, Peter's use of forced labour was considered a great economic and political success. Indeed, the story of the hundreds of thousands of serfs who spent their lives building St. Petersburg had an enormous impact on future generations. Many had died during the construction – and yet the city became a symbol of progress and Europeanization. The methods were cruel – and yet the nation had profited. Peter's example probably helps explain the ready adoption of *katorga* by his tsarist successors. Without a doubt, Stalin was a great admirer of Peter's building methods too."<sup>363</sup>

Of course Peter, though formally an Orthodox autocrat, should really be categorized as a Western despot in the mould of Henry VIII or Louis XIV, in that he subdued the Church to his power and therefore would not permit its Grace-filled influence to moderate his own behaviour. St. Petersburg was indeed a symbol of Europeanization – not only of its arts and crafts, especially evident in its architecture, that of "the Venice of the North", but also of its despotic forms of government. However, as the tsars in the nineteenth century returned to Orthodoxy in a more than formal sense, so these despotic and cruel methods of government became weaker, especially in the reign of Nicholas II.

---

<sup>362</sup> Applebaum, *Gulag: A History*, London: Penguin, 2004, pp. 13-14.

<sup>363</sup> Applebaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 16-17.

Applebaum recognizes this: "In the nineteenth century, *katorga* remained a relatively rare form of punishment. In 1900, only about 6,000 *katorga* convicts were serving sentences; in 1916, on the eve of the Revolution, there were only 28,600. Of far greater economic importance was another category of prisoner: the forced settlers, who were sentenced to live in exile, but not in prison, in underpopulated regions of the country, chosen for their economic potential. Between 1824 and 1889 alone, some 720,000 forced settlers were sent to Siberia. Many were accompanied by their families. They, not the convicts labouring in chains, gradually populated Russia's empty, mineral-rich wastelands.

"Their sentences were not necessarily easy ones, and some of the settlers thought their fate worse than that of the *katorga* prisoners. Assigned to remote districts, with poor land and few neighbours, many starved to death over the long winters, or drank themselves to death from boredom. There were very few women – fewer books, no entertainment.

"On his journey across Siberia to Sakhalin, Anton Chekhov met, and described, some of these exiled settlers. 'The majority of them are financially poor, have little strength, little practical training, and possess nothing except their ability to write, which is frequently of absolutely no use to anybody. Some of them commence by selling, piece by piece, their shirts of Holland linen, their sheets, their scarves and handkerchief, and finish up after two or three years dying in fearful penury...'

"But not all of the exiles were miserable and degenerate. Siberia was far away from European Russia, and in the East officialdom was more forgiving, aristocracy much thinner on the ground. The wealthier exiles and ex-prisoners sometimes built up large estates. The wealthier exiles became doctors and lawyers, or ran schools. Princess Maria Volkonskaya, wife of the Decembrist Sergei Volkonsky, sponsored the building of a theatre and concert hall in Irkutsk: although she had, like her husband, technically been deprived of her rank, invitations to her soirées and private dinners were eagerly sought after, and discussed as far away as Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>364</sup>

"By the early twentieth century, the system had shed some of its previous harshness. The fashion for prison reform which spread through Europe in the nineteenth century finally caught up with Russia too. Regimes grew lighter, and policing grew laxer. Indeed, in contrast to what came later, the route to Siberia now seems, if not exactly pleasurable, then hardly an onerous punishment for the small group of men who would lead the Russian Revolution. When in prison, the Bolsheviks received a certain amount of favourable treatment as 'political' rather than criminal prisoners, and were allowed to have books, paper and writing instruments. Ordzhonikidze, one of the Bolshevik leaders, later recalled reading Adam Smith, Ricardo, Plekhanov,

---

364 For more on Volkonskaya, see Christine Sutherland, *The Princess of Siberia*, London: Quartet Books, 2001. (V.M.)

William James, Frederick W. Taylor, Dostoyevsky and Ibsen, among others, while resident in St. Petersburg's Schlüsselberg Fortress. By later standards, the Bolsheviks were also well fed, well dressed, even beautifully coiffed. A photograph taken of Trotsky imprisoned in the Peter and Paul Fortress in 1906 shows him wearing spectacles, a suit, a tie and a shirt with an impressively white collar. The peephole in the door behind him offers the only clue to his whereabouts. Another taken of him in exile in eastern Siberia, in 1900, shows him in a fur hat and heavy coat, surrounded by other men and women, also in boots and furs. All of these items would be rare luxuries in the Gulag half a century later.

"If life in tsarist exile did become intolerably unpleasant, there was always escape. Stalin himself was arrested and exiled four times. Three times he escaped, once from Irkutsk province and twice from Vologda province, a region which later became pockmarked with camps. As a result, his scorn for the tsarist regime's 'toothlessness' knew no bounds. His Russian biographer Dmitri Volkogonov characterized his opinion like this: 'You didn't have to work, you could read to your heart's content and you could even escape, which required only the will to do so.'"<sup>365</sup>

In the last analysis, in spite of some similarities in form, we must characterize the tsarist and Soviet systems of Siberian exile as being at opposing poles from each other. The tsarist system, especially in its later incarnations, was designed for real criminals and murderers (because that is what the revolutionaries were), and, while not pleasant, was a relatively lenient form of punishment, whereas the Soviet system was unequalled in its cruelty and injustice to millions and millions of innocent people.

\*

Returning to the pre-revolutionary empire, Dominic Lieven notes that Siberia was seen as a land of vast opportunity. "Beyond the Urals and all the way to the Pacific coast, a vast Siberian realm of riches and possibilities was opening up for Russia. Modern technology, and above all the railway, were at last making possible the colonization and exploitation of this treasure trove. The railway offered more to landlocked Russia than to any other country on earth, as intelligent Russians well understood. A railway network linking Europe to the Pacific, stretching out its tentacles into resource-rich Siberia and enabling the mass migration into Asia of European Russia's overflowing population had the potential to transform Russian society. No one understood or preached this reality more passionately than Dmitri Mendeleev. A Siberian himself and the son of a teacher, Mendeleev was an academic and a chemist of international renown. But he was also a polymath and a public intellectual, intent on converting both government and public opinion to his strategy for modernizing the Russian economy and society. Mendeleev was a great ally of Serge Witte, Russia's exceptionally able finance minister from 1892 to 1903,

---

<sup>365</sup> Applebaum, *op. cit.*, pp. 17-18.

who devised and implemented an ambitious policy of rapid industrial development.

“Although deeply aware of Siberia’s huge natural resources, Mendeleev considered Russia’s greatest strength to be its population, which was growing more quickly than in any other European country. Russian Asia could employ these people. In 1906, Mendeleev predicted that the empire’s population would grow from 155 million in 1910 to 282 million in 1950 and almost 600 million by 2000. This prediction was excessive, but no one doubted either that the population would grow enormously or that Siberia could absorb it. By contrast, the German or Italian population surplus would end up in another country, namely the United States. Even the British both exported people to the United States and found it hard to turn white Dominions scattered across the globe into a viable polity.

“Migration to Siberia also had internal political advantages. By 1900, massive population growth meant that in some of Russia’s core agricultural provinces land was becoming scarce and rents were growing quickly. As a result, tensions between the peasantry and the landowning class were high. Mass migration to Siberia could be an answer. Much of the area worst affected by overpopulation was in what we would now call eastern Ukraine. It was here – in the provinces of Chernigov, Kharkov, Poltava and Ekaterinoslav – that the peasant revolt of 1905 was often most serious. Immigration to Siberia of Ukrainians (and Belorussians) might reduce not just the social crisis but also the national one. English, Scots, Welsh, and even sometime Irish immigrants to the white Dominions to some extent forged a new and unique British identity. Russian, Ukrainian and Belorussian immigrants to Siberia might even more easily become ‘New Russians’. By 1900, there was a minimal chance of separatism developing in Siberia, but a specific ‘frontier’ variant of Russian identity did exist. Even in western Siberia, there were no noble landowners, but by 1914 there were many wealthy peasant farmers. Their dairy exports were, for instance, competing strongly with the Danes’ in the British market. Siberia was very much more than the land of ice, convicts, and Rasputin so dear to the Western imagination. It was in fact a new Russia, and amid the many crises they faced, Russia’s rulers were buoyed up when they contemplated its future...”<sup>366</sup>

---

<sup>366</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, pp. 58-59.

## 29. THE NATIONALITIES POLICY: (1) THE SLAVIC MINORITIES

In a multi-national empire such as Russia the spread of nationalism in the nineteenth century could not fail to be a major concern to the authorities and to Russian nationalists such as Mikhail Menshikov, editor of the conservative *Novoe Vremia*. "In the years before 1914, Menshikov participated in an interesting ongoing debate in Russia about empire and nations. For him, the idea that an empire might in any sense be a supranational entity was anathema. A multinational, let alone federal empire was, in Menshikov's view, an artificial construct doomed to weakness and dissolution. He cited examples from ancient to contemporary empires to prove his point: in his opinion, for instance, the granting of citizenship to all the Roman Empire's [free] subjects in A.D. 212 had led to its inner weakening and final collapse. Menshikov also pointed to similar weaknesses in the Habsburg and Ottoman polities, where internal struggles between nationalities had frequently been exploited by foreign enemies. He wrote in March 1914 that the Ottoman Empire was disintegrating under his generation's eyes and 'the same fate undoubtedly threatens Austria'. Similar processes were also at work in 'the greatest empire that ever existed - Great Britain,' which was 'becoming ever more of a mere spectre with each passing decade.' Menshikov argued that even without Ukrainian nationalism the Russian Empire was threatened by disloyalty among its minorities and added, 'How long would Russia last... if to the other centrifugal tendencies were added tens of millions of people - the Little and White Russians - previously considered to belong to the core Russian people?'"<sup>367</sup>

Tsar Alexander III's answer to this problem, which was followed by his son, Nicholas II, was to introduce the policy known to historians as "Russification", a well-meaning but unsuccessful attempt to unite the empire around the language and culture of the dominant imperial nation. The success or failure of the nationalities policy became especially important in times of international tension, such as 1905-06 and the years just before the First World War.

Perhaps the clearest failure of Russian nationalities policy, besides the Jews, was Poland. Alexander I's grant to the Poles of a very liberal constitution was brought to an end by the revolution of 1831. Then the second revolution of 1863 necessitated a harsher reaction, which included Russification. Thus Hosking writes: "Most Polish officials were replaced by Russian ones, and the Russian language was imposed for official business. The University of Warsaw was converted into a wholly Russian institution, whilst it was stipulated that Polish schools, even at primary level, should teach all subjects in Russian, save the Polish language itself."<sup>368</sup> In practice, the government had no means to impose

---

<sup>367</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 56.

<sup>368</sup> This "produced absurd situations, such as Polish students being forced to read their own literature in Russian translation". (Margaret Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 475.) (V.M.)

these provisions, and Polish-language schooling continued, albeit clandestinely.

“Poland did derive economic benefits from being included within the empire’s tariff enclosure: it was able to sell its industrial products in a huge market that needed them. With some 8% of the population, Poland produced about a quarter of the empire’s industrial output, notably in textiles, metallurgy and machine tools...”<sup>369</sup>

In spite of these benefits, the Poles remained hostile to Russia, especially during the 1905 revolution. In Krakow, which was in the part of Poland controlled by Austria-Hungary, the Left Socialist Party was training troops. (Lenin lived in Krakow in 1912-13). Their leader, Josef Pilsudski, the post-war President of Poland, was sent to Siberia, but remained a thorn in the side of the Russian authorities.

Russia’s failure in Poland cannot be blamed entirely on the policy of russification. The root problem was the implacable opposition of Polish Catholicism to Russian Orthodoxy. As long as the combination of Catholicism and fervent nationalism prevailed, there was no hope, not only of assimilation, but even of peaceful relations between the two peoples. Catherine II’s conquest of Poland, while it had certain geopolitical advantages, proved in the long run to have created the Achilles heel of the Russian empire, in that it included into the empire two peoples – the Poles and the Jews – whose opposition to Russia remained implacable to the end.

A critical western border province was that of Kholm, in the former kingdom of Poland, where the April manifesto on religious freedom elicited disturbances during the 1905 revolution. It was feared that many nominal Orthodox would be tempted to become uniates, and the Bishop of Kholm, Evlogy (Georgievsky), wrote to Pobedonostsev: “The very credit of our priests has been undermined. For thirty years they repeated to the people that the Kholm-Podliaschie country will always be Orthodox and Russian, and now the people see, on the contrary, the complete, willful takeover of the enemies of the Orthodox Russian cause in that country.”

“Soon after he sent the letter,” writes Serhii Plokyh, “Evlogii and his supporters went to St. Petersburg to meet with Pobedonostsev and discuss how to deal with the threat to Russian interests in the region. They wanted to redraw the borders of the imperial provinces, dividing the Kholm region from the lands of the former Kingdom of Poland. The new Kholm province was to have a ‘Russian’ core consisting of more than 300,000 ethnic Ukrainians – those who had said Little Russian was their native language in the 1897 census. Officials in the Ministry of the Interior got busy planning for the administrative change. The bill was sent to the Duma. Debates on the measure continued until 1912,

---

<sup>369</sup> Hosking, *Russia: People & Empire*, London: HarperCollins, 1997, p. 377.

leading eventually to the creation of a new province and mobilizing Russian nationalist forces in parliament and beyond.

“The Kholm debate brought together Ukrainophiles and proponents of Russia, one and indivisible, in common cause against Polish influence, but their alliance was situational and limited to a single goal. In almost every other case, Ukrainophiles and Russian nationalists found themselves engaged in a life-or-death struggle for the future of a land that both considered their own. The language issue had traditionally been central to the Ukrainophile agenda. In December 1904, with the war against Japan going badly and social discontent rising precipitously, the imperial government had agreed to revisit the question of the prohibitions imposed on Ukrainian-language publications by the Edict of Ems [in 1876]. Once again, discussion focused on translation of the Gospels, but this time the atmosphere was different. The president of the Imperial Academy of Sciences himself, Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich, advocated the abolition of the ban on publishing the Scriptures in Ukrainian.

“In March 1905, a commission of the Academy of Sciences also discussed the issue of ending the ban on Ukrainian-language publications generally. The discussion was held at the behest of the government, which also solicited the opinions of the universities of Kyiv, Kharkiv, and Odesa. All four institutions advised lifting the restrictions, with the Academy of Sciences making the strongest statement. Its memorandum, prepared by the philologists Aleksei Shakhmatov and Fedor Korsh and signed by many other liberal academicians in April 1905, not only recommended doing away with the ban but also opened the door to the recognition of Ukrainian as a separate language.

“The authors of the Academy of Sciences memorandum did not say explicitly that Ukrainian was a separate language, but their reasoning left little doubt that it was on a par with Russian. They achieved that effect by discarding the notion of an ‘all-Russian language’. The academics claimed that the efforts of Russian authors to bring their literary language closer to the vernacular ‘had already made the all-Russian literary language fully Great Russian by the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, and our literary speech, the speech of the educated classes and written language of every kind, should be considered fully Great Russian.’ The authors of the memorandum used not only historical and linguistic but also political arguments to make their case. ‘A state that does not know how to guarantee one of the most elementary civil rights – the right to speak and publish in one’s mother tongue – arouses neither respect nor love in the citizen but a nameless fear for his existence,’ wrote Shakhmatov and Korsh before delivering their ultimate warning: ‘That fear gives rise to dissatisfaction and revolutionary aspirations.’ Their timing was perfect: shocked by the revolutionary upheaval of the previous few months, the government was prepared to listen.

“The memorandum was published in a limited number of copies (exclusively for government use) in April 1905 and immediately had a major impact on political debates within the Russian Empire and beyond its borders. The lifting



of restrictions on Ukrainian-language publications began in February 1905, with permission to publish religious texts in Ukrainian, for which Grand Duke Konstantin Konstantinovich had lobbied. All prohibitions were abolished with the introduction of new censorship regulations in the spring of 1906. By that time the abolition was a mere formality, given that the prohibitions on Ukrainian-language newspapers had been done away with in October 1905, the month that also saw the publication of the tsar's manifesto granting his subjects basic civil rights, including 'freedom of the word'. By the end of the year, three Ukrainian-language newspapers were being published in the empire, one in Kyiv and two in Poltava province.

"Among the beneficiaries of the changes in official language policy were Belarussian activists. In September 1906, the first Belarussian daily, *Nasha dolia* (Our Destiny), began publication in Vilnius. After being closed for its radical leftist content, it was replaced in November 1906 by the more centrist newspaper *Nasha niva* (Our Field), which would continue publication until 1915. It formed a new Belarussian literary canon and helped popularize Belarussian-language literature. Between 1906 and 1915, the number of books published in Belarussian increased from almost zero to 80 titles, attaining a cumulative print run of 220,000 copies.

"Although these figures represented a breakthrough for the Belarussian language and literature, they were very modest in comparison to publications in other languages of the empire. In 1911 alone there were 25,526 titles published in Russian, 1,664 in Polish, and 965 in Yiddish and Hebrew. The Ukrainians trailed those front-runners with 242 items. The Belarussians, who had never waged a prolonged struggle against the discrimination of their language or mobilized around that issue, were even further behind..."<sup>370</sup>

\*

From the strategic military point of view, Poland was vital to Russia because it was on the road to Germany. But Ukraine was, if possible, still more important, not only from a military, but also from an economic (as being Russia's bread-basket) and from a cultural and religious point of view. For the Ukrainians were not only Slavs, but *Orthodox* Slavs – more precisely, *Orthodox Eastern* Slavs, which meant that they were as close as it was possible to be to the Russians themselves – no less than "Little Russians", as the Great Russians rather condescendingly called them.

There was also an important difference in the way in which Ukraine and Poland became parts of the Russian empire. Ukraine was not "on the periphery" (as its name suggests) of the original Russian state, but at its very core; for St. Vladimir, the Baptizer of Russia and the real founder of the state, ruled from Kiev, simultaneously "the mother of Russian cities" and the capital

---

<sup>370</sup> Plokhyy, *Lost Kingdom*, London: Allen Lane, 2017, pp. 161-163.

of Ukraine. Kievan Rus' at its greatest extent in the twelfth century included the whole of what is now Ukraine, including the whole of Galicia in the West.

Poland, on the other hand, was a conquered land – and definitely a foreign one, however Pan-Slavists might wish to emphasize the Poles' kinship with the Russians. As Lieven writes, "historically the tsars ruled non-Russians largely by co-opting aristocracies into the imperial ruling elite. The one major failure of this strategy was the Poles. Members of the Polish Catholic nobility were the ancestral enemies of Russia and Orthodoxy. They bore proud memories of their nation's former power and independence, which only disappeared finally in 1815. In 1830 and 1863, they attempted to regain this independence through widespread rebellions against Russian rule. The revolts were crushed, but right down to 1914 most Russian statesmen were convinced the Poles would seize any moment of Russian weakness to rebel again. Poland's geographic position across the main invasion routes from the west into the Russian heartland made that fear particularly acute, especially after German unification in 1871 and the Austro-German dual alliance of 1879.

"In 1914, the Poles were still seen in Petersburg as the most disloyal and dangerous of the empire's nationalities, apart from the Jews. Because most Jews lived in former Polish territory annexed by Russia, the Polish and Jewish danger overlapped in Petersburg's eyes. But in the Russian empire as elsewhere, new nationalisms were emerging among peoples who had in many cases never previously shown any sign of disloyalty. This was happening in Finland, the Baltic Provinces, Ukraine, the Caucasus region, and among many of the tsar's Muslim subjects. To be sure, even in 1914 most of these new nationalisms were not yet as developed as in the Habsburg monarchy or western Europe. Russia was less modern, so most of the tsar's subjects were still semiliterate peasants immune to nationalism's call. Constraints on civil society and political propaganda also slowed the spread of nationalism. Nevertheless, in Russia as elsewhere, rulers of empire faced the reality that subject populations could no longer be ruled just by co-opting their aristocracies. As societies modernized, the landowning class was losing power to businessmen, professional groups, and intellectuals. The new nationalism often attracted these groups' support. Concessions to nationalist currents might well take the empire down the road to federalism. Most Russian statesmen believed that this would be an instant recipe for weakening the empire and in time probably dooming it to destruction. They saw Austria's travails as an example of what happened when the growing weakness of government allowed national conflicts free rein: rulers were paralyzed, an empire's military power declined, and its many enemies and potential predators began to circle in increasing hope of a kill.

"From the Russian perspective, among the new nationalisms the Ukrainian movement was potentially much the most dangerous. This was partly because of the region's immense economic importance. In 1914, the eight Ukrainian provinces (a smaller area than today's Ukrainian republic) produced one-third of the empire's wheat, most of its exported grains, and 80 percent of its sugar.

Without this, it would be hard to support the empire's positive balance of trade on which the government's strategy of economic development depended. Supplying Russian cities in the much less fertile northern zone would also become a problem. Even more crucial was Ukraine's role in heavy industry and mining in 1914. 70 percent of the empire's coal, 68 percent of its cast iron, and 58 percent of its steel came from the region, as did a large share of its engineering products. Until the 1930s, when Stalin developed the Urals and West Siberian industrial region, if Russia had lost Ukraine, it would have ceased to be a great power.

"The idea of a separate Ukrainian national identity also undermined all the calculations on which tsarist nationalities policy was based as well as the way in which educated Russians understood the country they lived in. In 1897, although only 44 percent of the empire's population was Russian, a further 22.5 percent was at least east Slav – in other words, Ukrainian or Belorussian (White Russian). The great majority of these Ukrainians or Belorussians were Orthodox in religion, which had historically been a much more important marker of identity and political loyalty than questions of language. Ukrainians outnumbered Belorussians by more than four to one, and their region was richer and more developed. There was therefore every chance that if Ukrainian nationalism failed to develop, the same would be true in Belorussia. If Ukrainians and Belorussians could be counted as Russians in political terms, then two-thirds of the empire's population was 'Russian'. In this era of high imperialism, it was widely assumed that numerically small peoples could neither defend themselves nor sustain a high culture on their own. Their only choice therefore was between rival empires. The Russian government correctly believed that Georgians, Armenians, and the 'small peoples' of the Baltic region would prefer the tsar's rule to that of the German Kaiser or the Ottoman sultan. Much of the Muslim population, on the other hand, was deemed too backward to be vulnerable to nationalist ideas...

"Given such calculations, Russians could take comfort from the idea that theirs was a national empire with a secure future. In the eyes of Russian elites, their empire was strong and glorious precisely because – like its British and German counterparts – it both combined the national spirit of its core people and gave the Russian nation great global and historical significance. If Ukrainians were indeed a separate people, however, the calculations became far more alarming. The Russian Empire then began to look rather like its ever weaker, polyglot, and despised Habsburg rival. For most educated Russians and all Russian nationalists, this was unthinkable. As the leading pro-government newspaper stressed in 1911, 'The... Russian state was created by the great efforts and sacrifices of the Russian people and now in Russia two-thirds of the population is Russian... In this we see the greatness and the winning advantage of Russia over the Habsburg Empire, where the ruling nation, the Germans, constitute less than one-quarter of the entire population of the state.'..."<sup>371</sup>

---

<sup>371</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, pp. 51-53.

Russia, Ukraine and Belorussia were three nations with slightly differing cultures in the sense of idiosyncracies of speech, folklore, dress and everyday life, but considerable identity of *civilization* in the sense of those “ideas and traditions... inherited from” the Orthodox Christianity that they had in common.<sup>372</sup> The Russian authorities emphasized the civilizational identity, pointing to the fact that Kiev was “the mother of all *Russian* cities”, the capital of a pan-Russian State which in the eleventh century had covered the territories of all three peoples. Moreover (although here the commonality was cultural rather than civilizational), all three peoples were Eastern Slavic, and their languages could be said to be different dialects of a single original language. So, the Russians argued, they were all really *one* nation... Thus, as Lieven writes, “Virtually all publications in Ukrainian were banned until the period 1905-14, when revolution, the semi-constitution of 1906 and the partial liberalization of politics allowed the language greater leeway. Even in the so-called Constitutional Era, however, not only the government but also the imperial parliament refused to contemplate any teaching of or in Ukrainian in schools, once again taking a much tougher line over Ukrainian than other languages.”<sup>373</sup>

And yet here was the rub: that the ruling civilization (and culture) of most of Russia’s ruling elites was no longer the Orthodox Christianity that had united all the Eastern Slavic peoples in the past: since Peter the Great its core civilization had been that of Western Europe. So “Russification” in practice often meant Westernization with a Russian tinge and in the Russian language. The paradox was that while the Great Russians in the nineteenth century suppressed Ukrainian language publications so as to prevent “Polonization”, in the early twentieth the Russian language became, at least for the intelligentsia in the western regions, the vehicle for another kind of Westernization... A better policy, surely, would have been for the government to emphasize the “*civilizational*”, - that is, in essence, *religious* - unity between the three peoples without trying to deny their *cultural* - especially linguistic - differences. For among the peasants, if not for the intelligentsia, civilizational, religious unity was still strong - and stronger than any nationalist passion.

History shows that multi-national empires, however difficult to hold together, have been ordained by Providence to be the earthly homes of very many millions of people. More particularly, the most important Orthodox Christian states have been the multinational empires of Byzantium and Russia, under whose tutelage Orthodoxy has been preached to millions of pagans and unbelievers, preserving the heritage of the true faith as far as the beginning of the twentieth century. The fall of these empires, as the history of the period 1917-45 showed conclusively, has not been beneficial to the peoples, but has rather permitted the coming to power of the most evil of tyrannies, both nationalist and internationalist. It remains therefore a matter of the greatest

---

<sup>372</sup> Davies, *Europe: A History*, London: Pimlico, 1997, p. 821.

<sup>373</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 279-280.

importance that the concept of the multinational empire should not be consigned to the dustbin of history as if only “pure-blooded” states can survive and thrive. But a multinational empire needs a common creed and civilization to hold it together; and in the case of Russia that could only be Orthodoxy and Orthodox Christian civilization...

## 30. THE NATIONALITIES POLICY: (2) THE NON-SLAVIC MINORITIES

**1. Finland.** Lieven writes: "Conquered in 1809, the Grand Duchy of Finland enjoyed a high degree of autonomy throughout the nineteenth century. In Russian terms its status was anomalous, not only because it was uniquely free of Petersburg's control but also because it possessed representative institutions and a secure rule of law.<sup>374</sup> In the last two decades of the nineteenth century pressure increased from Petersburg to bring parts of Finnish law and administration into line with Russian norms. It stuck in Russian gullets, for instance, that Russians resident in Finland enjoyed fewer rights than ethnic Finns, something that was not true of Finns living in Russia. With Russo-German antagonism growing and Sweden a very possible ally of Germany in any future war, the extent to which Helsinki was almost completely free from Petersburg's supervision also caused worry. So long as Finland was governed by Count N.V. Adlerberg (1866-81) and then Count F.L. Heiden (1881-98) the very sensible rule prevailed that infringements on Finnish autonomy must be kept to the strictly necessary minimum. When General N.I. Bobrikov was appointed Governor-General in 1898, however, not only did he arrive with sweeping plans to increase Petersburg's control, he also implemented this policy with a tactless, ham-fisted brutality which turned Finland into a hotbed of opposition.

"Real trouble with Finland began when Petersburg imposed its own military conscription system on the Finns and sought to unify the Russian and Finnish armies. Though this scheme had been in the making for a number of years, it was pushed hard by the new Minister of War, Aleksei Kuropatkin, who was appointed in 1898. The majority of Russian senior officials opposed Kuropatkin's conscription law in the belief that it would needlessly antagonize the Finns and it was actually voted down in the State Council, the body of senior statesmen who advised the Tsar on legislation. As was his right, however, Nicholas overrode the council and Kuropatkin's conscription law went into effect. In the Emperor's defence it could be argued that had he failed to back up his new Minister of War the latter's authority would have been fatally damaged. Moreover, the government's case vis-à-vis Finland was not entirely unjustified, its fears for the security of Petersburg, very close to the Finnish border, causing it particular alarm. In terms of political wisdom and tact, however, Kuropatkin's law, not to mention Bobrikov's antics, were a disaster. The government, which had hoped to play off the ethnic Finnish majority against the country's Swedish elite, quickly united the whole country against itself. Among those who protested to Nicholas about Bobrikov's policy was his mother, herself a Scandinavian princess. In what was, coming from her, an extremely angry letter, she accused her son of going back on his promise to

---

<sup>374</sup> Hosking writes: "Its parliament, the Diet, began to meet regularly after 1863, and passed a number of measures which underlined Finland's distinctive status within the empire: the spread of education, consolidation of freedom of worship, the issue of a separate currency and the establishment of a Finnish army." (*op. cit.*, p. 380). (V.M.)

her that Bobrikov would be reined in and commented that 'all that has been and is being done in Finland is based on lies and deceit and leads straight to revolution'. Apart from asserting that the Finns would come round if the government showed itself resolute, Nicholas's reply to his mother skated around the main issue at stake. Seen from the Russian perspective this issue was, in Kireev's words, that 'thanks to Bobrikov and his system we have created a new Poland at the gates of Saint Petersburg! And it would have been easy to avoid this.'

"In its approach to the Finnish question Petersburg made mistakes which were typical of the Russian government at this time. Policy towards Finland was decided on its own, not in the wider context of an overall strategy for achieving the government's aims and avoiding danger across the whole range of the empire's affairs. It made no sense to challenge Finnish nationalism at a time when the regime already had its hands full with a host of other domestic enemies. Nor did the government clearly define its essential interests in Finland in the light of its overall commitments, and then devote the necessary means to achieve these limited goals. By the time Governor-General Bobrikov was assassinated in June 1904 Finland was moving towards open insurrection. By then, however, much of urban Russia was moving in the same direction..."<sup>375</sup>

However, it is important to recognize that there were always notable Finns who remained loyal to the Tsar. Among them was Carl Gustav Mannerheim, who was rapidly promoted up the ranks of the Tsarist army, fought with distinction in the First World War, crushed the Reds in the Finnish civil war in 1918, led his country in the Winter War against Stalin in 1940, and always kept a huge portrait of the Tsar in his room. When asked why, he replied simply: "Because he was my Emperor..."

**2. The Baltic.** "The Baltic region," writes Hosking, "resembled Finland in so far as the Russian authorities supported, up to a point, the claims of the subordinate nationalities, the Estonians and Latvians, against the dominant Germans. But they pursued this policy with much greater caution than in Finland, since the Baltic Germans were far more important to them than the Swedes. Indeed, it could be argued that, of all ethnic groups in the whole empire, the Baltic Germans were the most loyal. However, their loyalty was to the Tsar personally, and to the empire as a multi-national entity, not to Russia as a nation. As Alexander Graf Keyserling, former rector of Dorpat University, wrote in 1889, 'As long as the Emperor dominates the nation, we shall be able to survive and develop further.' It was not only the Russian nation he had in mind. The growth of German nationalism was equally ominous for the Baltic landowners, since it threatened to swamp the Ritterschaften (aristocratic corporations) with Germans from the towns and Estonians or Latvians from the countryside, both more numerous than themselves. In the long run they would all become the mere pawns of European great-power politics.

---

<sup>375</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 86-87.

“The first Russian statesman to attack the German domination in the Baltic was Iurii Samarin, who was sent to Riga as a senatorial inspector in 1849. He regarded the German urban guilds and the Ritterschaften as corrupt relics of an antiquated system which prevented the monarch from acting as the protector of ordinary people and obstructed Russians from exercising their legitimate authority in the Russian Empire. ‘We Russians claim the right to be in Russia what the French are in France and the English throughout the British dominions.’ At this stage, before the drive to national homogenization had gripped the authorities, such views were unwelcome to the Tsar: Nicholas ordered that Samarin be detained in the Peter-Paul Fortress for twelve days and personally rebuked him. ‘Your attack is aimed at the government: what you really meant was that since the reign of the Emperor Peter we have been surrounded by Germans and have ourselves become Germanised.’

“By the 1870s, however, different views prevailed in St. Petersburg. Reform had come to Russia, rendering Tsars more reluctant to acknowledge intermediate authorities between themselves and their subjects. Besides, the unification of Germany naturally reinforced the ethnic identification of Baltic Germans, especially those in the towns. Ivan Aksakov had warned of this danger in 1862, when he complained that the Baltic Germans, ‘though devoted to the Russian throne, preach war to the death against the Russian nationality; faithful servants of the Russian state, they care not a fig for the Russian Land’. Alexander III took a symbolically important decision when, on his accession to the throne in 1881, he declined to confirm the privileges of the Ritterschaften, as all his successors had done since Peter the Great.

“Administrative integration began with the introduction of the new municipal institutions in the Baltic in 1877, but the authorities shrank from undermining the Ritterschaften in the countryside by introducing Russian-style *zemstvos* there. To that extent, the old policy of accommodating local elites continued: the Ritterschaften remained as the ultimate repositories of local authority right through to 1917, though their practical power was gradually being chipped away both by social change and by governmental measures. In the 1880s they lost judicial powers with the introduction of the new Russian courts, along with the use of Russian in all administrative and judicial procedures. Their supervision of schools was weakened by the opening of numerous ‘ministerial schools’ run from St. Petersburg and offering instruction in Russian only: it was here that many Estonians and Latvians received their basic education and began to move into professional and administrative positions, becoming what St. Petersburg hoped would be the agents of future Russian domination. At the same time an attempt was made to make Russian compulsory in all but the lowest forms of primary schools. In 1893 Dorpat University was closed and reopened as Iur’ev University, a Russian institution: professors and lecturers (with the revealing exception of theology) who were not prepared to teach in Russian had to resign.



“In religious matters there was a return to the policy of forbidding Estonians and Latvians who had converted – usually under threat – to Orthodoxy to return to the Lutheran faith. Those who had done so now found that their marriages were declared invalid, while pastors who had celebrated them were suspended investigation. Some 120 suffered this fate before the policy was abandoned in 1894...”<sup>376</sup>

Here Hosking distorts the evidence. There was a genuine, unforced movement of Latvians towards Orthodoxy, of which the most famous product was the future hieromartyr Archbishop John (Pommer) of Riga, who was devoted to Russia and Orthodoxy. The Latvian peasants of his region had begun to show an interest in Orthodoxy in the middle of the nineteenth century, thanks to preaching of the faith in their native language; and Hieromartyr John's great-grandfather had been one of the first to accept Orthodoxy in the region, for which he was subjected to persecution by the local German landowners. If there was persecution, it was much more likely to be by Lutherans against the Orthodox. Thus when St. John's great-grandfather died he was buried outside the bounds of the local Lutheran cemetery (there were no Orthodox cemeteries at that time) as the leader of the "rebels". The native peasants raised a mound over the place of his burial and put an eight-pointed star on top of it, but both the mound and the cross were removed by the Lutheran authorities.<sup>377</sup>

Nevertheless, the russification policy in the Baltic region did not achieve its purpose. For, as Miranda Carter writes, “émigré German Balts had become... at the forefront of anti-Slavic Pan-Germanism”.<sup>378</sup>

**3. Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.** The Georgian State and Church are much older than the Russian – the Church was granted autocephaly in the fourth century at the Council of Antioch. The Bagration dynasty was founded in 886, and Georgia's golden age lasted from the eleventh to the thirteenth centuries. In 1220 the Mongols invaded, the first of many invasions in which the country was repeatedly devastated and many thousands martyred for the Orthodox faith.

Daniel Sargis writes: “In the late eighteenth century, King Irakly II of Georgia, an Orthodox Christian, was threatened by the Islamic rulers of Persia and Turkey. He turned to Russia, his Christian neighbour, for protection. In 1783, Empress Catherine the Great of Russia and King Irakly II signed the treaty of Georgievsk, in which Russia guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Georgian kingdom in return for control of Georgia's foreign policy. The treaty also guaranteed the royal status of the Bagratid dynasty...: ‘Henceforth Irakly II, as a believer in the same faith as Ours and as an ally of Russia, bears the title

---

<sup>376</sup> Hosking, *op. cit.*, pp. 382-384.

<sup>377</sup> Lyudmilla Koeller, Sv. Ioann (Pommer), *Archiepiskop Rizhskij i Latvijskij* (St. John (Pommer), Archbishop of Riga and Latvia), Holy Trinity Monastery, Jordanville, 1984. (V.M.)

<sup>378</sup> Carter, *The Three Emperors*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 226.

of King of Georgia, in which title and rights he and his issue are confirmed by Russia forever and for all time.'

"In 1795, the Persian shah, Aga Muhammad, demanded that King Irakly acknowledge Persian suzerainty over Georgia. King Irakly, declining to break his treaty with Russia, refused. The Persians then invaded. No Russian assistance was provided, but the old King, then more than 80 years old, managed to repulse the invaders three times before he was outnumbered and defeated. Finally, the Russians intervened and pushed out the Persians.

"In 1798, Irakly II died and was succeeded by his son, King George XII. Fearing the Persian threat, King George suggested to Empress Catherine's son and successor, Tsar Paul I, that he incorporate Georgia into the Russian Empire while allowing the Bagratians to continue to bear the title of King... At first, Emperor Paul agreed, but in the end he simply seized the country, putting an end to the long reign of the Bagratians."<sup>379</sup>

The annexation of Georgia was proclaimed by Paul I on December 18, 1800, and was reaffirmed by his successor, Alexander I, on September 12, 1801. On the whole Georgia benefited from being part of the Russian empire – she would not have survived against the Muslims on her own. And Georgian saints, such as Elder Ilarion of Mount Athos, could be sincerely, even fiercely pro-Russian.

However, the price was high. "Within ten years," writes Lado Mirianashvili, "the Russian authorities had abolished the Georgian monarchy, the Church's autocephaly, and the patriarchal throne – all of which had withstood the Turks, the Mongols, and the Persians. During the subsequent 106 years, nineteen exarchs of the Russian Synod ruled the Georgian Church. Church services in Georgian were terminated, frescoes were whitewashed, and ancient Georgian icons and manuscripts were either sold or destroyed.

"The wanton destruction of the Iberian culture resulted in the emergence of the Georgian independence movement in the last half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Under the leadership of poet, historian, and philosopher St. Ilia Chavchavadze, members of the Georgian intelligentsia sought to preserve their language and culture, while promoting state independence and Church autocephaly. Both the Russian government and the Communist revolutionaries opposed this national movement, the latter because the movement proclaimed Georgia to be a Christian state. In 1907 the militant social democrats killed the 'father of modern Georgia', St. Ilia, in an attempt to crush the national movement, whose Christian ideology undermined the Communist agenda."<sup>380</sup>

---

<sup>379</sup> Sargis, *The Romanoffs and the Bagratians*, 1996; quoted by Brien Horan, "The Russian Imperial Succession", <http://www.chivalricorders.org/royalty/gotha/russuclw.htm>. The smaller Georgian kingdoms of Samegrelo and Imereti (western Georgia) were annexed in 1803 and 1804, respectively.

<sup>380</sup> Mirianashvili, in Archpriest Zakaria Michitadze, *Lives of the Georgian Saints*, Platina: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 2006, pp. 25-27. Cf. Hieromonk Samson (Zateishvili), "Gruzinskaia Tserkov' i polnota pravoslavia" (The Georgian Church and the Fulness of Orthodoxy), in Bessmertny, A.R., Philatov, S.B., *Religia i Demokratia* (Religion and Democracy), Moscow, 1993, p. 420.

Although Georgian nationalism was essentially Christian and anti-Muslim in nature, harking back nostalgically to the medieval Christian kingdom, according to Hosking it also had “an anti-capitalist colouring, owing to the competition with the Armenians”, who dominated banking and commerce in the towns. “They also considered that, as a small nation, their interests were best protected by internationalism, or more specifically, by membership of a democratic multi-national federation formed on the framework of the Russian Empire. Two of the leading Georgian radicals, Noa Zhordania and Filip Makharadze, studied in Warsaw, where they became convinced that Poles and Georgians, for all their differences, were conducting a common struggle against the autocratic empire, and must work together. Marxism fulfilled both the internationalist and the anti-capitalist requirements. The Georgians became perhaps the most sophisticated Marxists in the empire, taking over from the Austrian Marxists the notion of individual cultural autonomy as the best way of making possible inter-ethnic cooperation in a multi-national state. They also adapted their original agrarian programme so that it met the demands of peasants, and in that way were able to make themselves the leading political force in the countryside as well as the towns.”<sup>381</sup>

In his mammoth biography of Stalin, Stephen Kotkin writes: “The local ‘Russian’ administration overflowed with Georgians, who were favoured as fellow [Orthodox] Christians. Thanks to Russian rule, Georgian elites obtained powerful new instruments for imposing their will over the lower orders, and over the many other peoples in the Caucasus...”

“... Of the 8.5 million inhabitants of the Caucasus enumerated in the late nineteenth century, about a third were Muslim, while one half were Eastern Orthodox, but of the latter only 1.35 million were ethnic Georgians (by language). This minority came to rule more than ever thanks to Russia. Of course, far from everything was to Georgian liking. In 1840, imperial authorities in St. Petersburg decreed Russian as the sole language for official business in the Caucasus. This followed Russia’s suppression (in 1832) of a conspiracy to restore the Georgian monarchy (some Georgian nobles had planned to invite local Russian officials to a ball and murder them). Most of the conspirators were exiled elsewhere within the Russian empire, but soon they were allowed to return and restore careers in Russian state service: the empire needed them. A majority of Georgian elites would become and remain largely Russophile. At the same time new infrastructure helped overcome barriers to tighter Russian incorporation. Between 1811 and 1864 the key military road was cut southward from the lowland settlement of Vladikavkaz (‘rule the Caucasus’) up through the high mountain pass – above seemingly bottomless chasms – on to Tiflis, the capital. Before the century was out, the Transcaucasian railway would link the Black and Caspian seas. Above all, the career opportunities induced many Georgians to master the Russian language, the greatest element of imperial infrastructure. Georgians memorized and

---

<sup>381</sup> Hosking, *op. cit.*, pp. 385-386.

retold stories about Georgia's heroic resistance to Russian conquest, but if they could, they also married into elite Russian families, indulged in Russian operas, and hankered after the peacock fan of imperial uniforms, titles and medals along with the commodious state apartments, travel allowances, and cash 'gifts'. What worked for elites became available on a lesser scale in the lower orders, who took advantage of the opportunities to go to the new Russian-language schools in the Caucasus sponsored by the Russian Orthodox Church. Here, then, was the imperial scaffolding – conquest via Georgian collusion, Russification via the Orthodox Church – on which the future Stalin would climb..."<sup>382</sup>

Armenia was as ancient a nation as Georgia; indeed, it is sometimes asserted that Armenia was the first Christian nation in world history, becoming so in the fourth century. However, its geographical position, "caught" between the Roman, Persian and Ottoman empires, meant that it rarely attained unity under a single state. Moreover, having rejected the Fourth Ecumenical Council of Chalcedon (451), it never became part of the Orthodox commonwealth of nations, becoming part of the heretical Monophysite family.

However, as Hosking writes, the Armenians' hopes "were roused by the Russian incursion into their territories, and especially by the victories the Persians in 1828 and the Ottomans in 1829. For a time Russia held the strategically vital areas of Kars and Erzerum, but returned them to Turkey by the Treaty of Adrianople (1829). However, Armenians living there were allowed to emigrate to Russia, and did so in large numbers, the contingent including many peasants, who mostly settled in the hill country of Nagorny Karabakh. Armenian traders, artisans and professional people became a significant element in all the Transcaucasian cities, in Tiflis and Baku as much as in Erivan. By a statute of 1836 the Armenian Gregorian Church was recognized as self-governing.

"These population movements certainly provided new hope for thousands of Armenians. Yet they also had the effect of arousing the suspicion and enmity of the Azeris who had previously dominated the territories where they settled. The new Armenians were thus potentially insecure: basically, they remained, as before, a people divided among different empires, with no land they could securely call their own...

"The Armenians' sense of nationhood sharpened markedly during the second half of the nineteenth century in mutual interaction with the Russian and Ottoman Empires. In both state the leading, ostensibly 'imperial' peoples, the Russians and the Turks, had for long been oppressed by their 'own' empires, but were now beginning to assert themselves. In the Ottoman Empire the Armenians were the direct victims of this process, in the massacres of the mid-1890s, and in the growth of anti-Armenian feeling among the Azeri

---

<sup>382</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin: Paradoxes of Power., 1878-1928*, London: Penguin, 2014, pp. 13-14.

people, most of whom considered themselves Turks. But in Russia, too, anti-Armenian feeling was growing during the 1880s.

“The Armenians were capable of enthusiastic support for Russia, as in 1878, when the triumph of Russian arms held out the prospect of Armenians gaining more territory from the Ottoman Empire – or at least of having Ottoman reforms in their favour guaranteed by the Russians. But after the diplomatic defeat of the Congress of Berlin, where she had to give up any exclusive right to speak for the Armenians, Russia became more inward-looking and defensive on the problem. Armenians reacted with disappointment and embitterment.

“Ani-Armenian stereotypes had always existed in the Russian official mind. According to an official report of 1836, ‘Armenians, like the people of Moses, have been dispersed about the face of the earth, gathering wealth under the weight of their rulers, unable to enjoy their own land. This is the cause of the Armenians’ lack of character; he has become a cosmopolitan. His fatherland became that land where he can with the greatest advantage and security and through the resourcefulness of his mind make a profit for himself...’ All the same, up to the 1880s, the view of the Armenians as a fellow Christian people, allies against Islam, predominated. In 1836, Nicholas I had issued a charter to the Armenian Church, guaranteeing it institutional autonomy, freedom of worship and the right to run its own schools. In 1885, however, this charter was suddenly abrogated by the closure of all parish schools and their replacement with Russian schools. Although the measure was rescinded a year later, it left a bitter deposit of resentment and suspicion among Armenians.

“This was the atmosphere in which the first Armenian revolutionary parties were created. The principal one, the *Dashnaktsiution* (The Federation, close to the Russian Populists in outlook) initially directed its hostility mainly against the Ottoman Empire, but all the same the Russian authorities were intensely aware of them. The suspicion that Armenian parish schools and seminaries were turning out terrorists was instrumental in the decision in 1896 to subordinate all of them to the Ministry of Education in St. Petersburg. In 1903 the Viceroy of the Caucasus, Prince Grigorii Golitsyn, took over direct administration of all the church’s properties, in the words of one observer, ‘placing the church under tutelage, like an infant or a lunatic’. To enforce this decree Russian police had to occupy the residence of the Catholicos at Echmiadzin, open his safe and seize the title deeds.

“This offensive procedure, coming on top of two decades of insensitive and overbearing administration, finally persuaded the terrorists to turn their weapons against Russia and converted nearly all Armenians into their allies. A number of Russian officials were assassinated, and in October 1903 Golitsyn was seriously wounded by a terrorist. Armenians boycotted official schools, law-courts and administrative offices, and set up their own underground equivalents to take over their functions. The Dashnaks were the main political inspiration behind this movement of peaceful protest, which they conducted parallel to their terror campaign. Gross and tactless measures of imperial

integration had provoked the Armenians into creating national institutions, directed against Russia, where none had existed before..."<sup>383</sup>

Meanwhile, in the third of the Transcaucasian territories, Azerbaidjan, "the emergence of a national consciousness was complicated by the domination of [Shiite] Islam, which tended towards supra-national forms and blocked the growth of a secular culture and a written language for the masses. To begin with, ironically, it was the Russians who encouraged the Azeris' secular culture to develop, promoting the plays of Akhundzada, the 'Tatar Molière', and commissioning histories of the Azeri folk culture and language, as a way of weakening the influence of the Muslim powers to the south."<sup>384</sup>

"With the development of the oil industry, many Azeris came down from the hills to seek employment as unskilled workers along the shore of the Caspian. Their national awareness was sharply intensified by the events of 1905-06. Armenians in Baku and Tiflis were a conspicuous and relatively successful middle class, easy targets for resentful Azeris, who formed the underclass in those cities. Now anti-Armenian pogroms took place inside the Russian Empire as well as the Ottoman, and again the Armenians, led by the Dashnaks, formed their own self-defence militias. At this point official Russian policy changed sharply. Realizing that the Armenians were potentially their staunchest allies in the Caucasus region, the government restored their church and schools to them and began to cooperate with the Dashnaks in restoring order."<sup>385</sup>

**4. Central Asia.** "In Central Asia," writes Hosking, "the thrust of imperial policy was economic rather than assimilationist. Uniquely in the Russian empire, one may consider this region a genuine colony. Its status differed from that of other parts of the empire in several ways. Its inhabitants were known as *inorodtsy*, a category common enough in other contemporary empires, but not applied elsewhere in the Russian one: it implied an alien and inferior political status. The whole territory was not even fully incorporated into the empire: the Khanate of Khiva and the Emirate of Bukhara remained nominally sovereign, as protectorates bound to Russia by one-sided treaties which included them in the Russian customs union.

"In the regions incorporated into the empire, the Russian authorities did not interfere in religion, education, local administration or law courts. These were Muslim and so far removed from Russian practice that any attempt to adapt them would have had scant chance of success and would have provoked intense resistance, which might have been exploited by the British to bolster their position in Central Asia. In this way a largely military supreme power in the region overlay a traditional and unchanged medium- and lower-level hierarchy."<sup>386</sup>

---

<sup>383</sup> Hosking, *Russia, People and Empire*, pp. 20-21, 386-387.

<sup>384</sup> Figes, *op. cit.*, p. 75.

<sup>385</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 341.

<sup>386</sup> Hosking, *op. cit.*, pp. 388-389.

However, "tighter integration into the Russian economic system brought considerable changes. In the oases this meant more intensive cultivation of cotton, with the necessary irrigation, establishment of textile mills, and laying of railways, usually staffed by Russian immigrants.

"In the steppes the changes were even more far-reaching. Land was expropriated from the traditional elites, the khans and beks, to redistribute among ordinary tribal members. This policy also made it easier to award land to peasants being resettled from overcrowded and poverty-stricken regions of European Russia..."<sup>387</sup>

This discontent encouraged Pan-Islamism and Pan-Turkism, culminating in a large-scale insurrection in the Fergana valley in 1916...

In 1898 the Urmian spiritual mission of the Russian Orthodox Church was opened in Persia. By 1900 it had already opened more than 60 schools serving 2300 students. On August 21, 1901 the future Hieromartyr, Fr. John Vostorgov was sent to oversee the work of the mission, labouring for the conversion of the Syro-Chaldeans to Orthodoxy. For several years he waged a determined battle, the result of which was that three bishops - Mar Elijah, Mar John and Mar Marian - expressed their desire to be united to the Church. Thus was initiated the Syro-Chaldean Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church.<sup>388</sup>

\*

We may conclude that Russification was not a success in any of the regions of the Russian empire where it was applied, even in those, such as Ukraine and Belorussia, where religious, linguistic and cultural similarities were greatest. It even helped to create anti-Russian national movements where none had existed before. Nevertheless, it is an exaggeration to call this policy one of oppression and tyranny (we shall deal with the special case of the Jews later).

In general, in spite of the epithet "the prison of the peoples", Russia coped remarkably well with the extraordinary diversity of peoples and traditions within her borders. "The Russian empire," writes Lieven, "included a wide range of peoples of very different cultures and levels of socio-economic development. Any attempt to impose a single, 'coherent' strategy on all of them would have been unthinkable and catastrophic. Moreover, it should by now be clear that there was no easy solution to the dilemmas of empire in the modern era. If tsarism floundered, so too did all its imperial rivals,"<sup>389</sup> none of whom succeeded any better in solving one the most intractable problems of politics: how to accommodate different peoples with different cultures and religions

---

<sup>387</sup> Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 325.

<sup>388</sup> Gubanov, *op. cit.*, p. 690; "The New Martyr Archpriest John Vostorgov", *Orthodox Life*, vol. 30, N 5, September-October, 1980. Mar John became a bishop of the Russian Church Abroad, dying in Chicago in the 1960s.

<sup>389</sup> Lieven, *Empire*, p. 275.

within a unitary state. The British had the problem of Ireland, the French – of Algeria; while the Austro-Hungarians had to contend with a whole series of discontented nationalities.

Lieven thinks that “in principle it might have been possible to strengthen empire by the appeal of the great civilization [understood here in a sense inclusive of “culture”] to which the imperial regime was linked. Together with the economic and military advantages of empire, this might at least have provided some defence against the nationalist challenge... The century before 1914 had witnessed a tremendous flowering of Russian literary and musical culture. Not only had the Russian intelligentsia developed a very impressive high culture, but it was also open to people of varying races and religions, and had genuinely cosmopolitan sympathies and outlooks. Drawing inspiration from all the strands of European culture and speaking many languages, the Russian intelligentsia’s culture was in some respects genuinely broader than the more national perspective common in the individual cultures of Western Europe. Though Polish and German subjects of the tsar were never likely to defer to Russian culture, the educated classes of Ukraine, Belorussia and the other smaller Christian peoples might well do so, especially if they were allowed to develop their own languages and cultures alongside Russian. Even the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century Muslim reformers, the so-called Jadids, often had considerable respect for the Russian intelligentsia’s culture and were inclined to ally with it in order to modernize their own societies. Given the deep antagonism between the tsarist regime and much of the Russian intelligentsia, however, the pull of intelligentsia culture on the non-Russians was not much help to the empire’s rulers. If, for example, Ukrainian or Jewish socialists were often drawn to all-imperial revolutionary parties rather than to more narrowly national ones, this was scarcely a gain from the tsar’s point of view...”<sup>390</sup>

Here we come to the hub of the matter: Russification was of little value if the Russia it propagated was not *Orthodoxy*, the root of Russian culture and the one thing that could truly unite its peoples at a deep level. But the Russian government, while generously supporting Orthodoxy everywhere, did not always see its nationalities policy in terms of the spreading of Orthodoxy.

One reason for this was that the actual preaching of Orthodoxy is primarily the task of the Church, not the State – and the Church, hamstrung by its dependence administratively on the State, was barely able to cope with the task of preaching the Gospel to the Russians themselves.<sup>391</sup> Secondly, the principles of religious tolerance and religious indifferentism had let down deep roots into the culture of the elites, who, if they had to preach or impose something, preferred that it would not be a dogmatic religion. And thirdly and most importantly, as Lieven points out, the dominant culture and religion of the

---

<sup>390</sup> Lieven, *Empire*, p. 276.

<sup>391</sup> Thus St. John of Kronstadt had wanted to preach Christ to the Alaskan Indians, but decided to stay in Russia, where so many baptised people were still in need of conversion to True Christianity.



Russian elites *was no longer Orthodoxy*, but West European liberalism, which led naturally to socialism, anti-tsarism and anti-Russianism. And so if the Russians were going to draw the peoples of the empire away from nationalism and towards universalism, it would be unlikely to be to the universalist civilization or “high culture” of Orthodox Christianity, the official religion of the empire, but to the quite different “high culture” of West European liberalism. What actually happened was a kind of bifurcation. Orthodoxy continued to be preached, with positive results, to the pagans and to the peasants, but the intelligentsia also continued to preach their gospel, the gospel of westernism, constitutionalism and ecumenism, with the most catastrophic results for the whole world...

Figes makes the important observation that it was not the liberals with their emphasis on individual human rights who exploited the nationalist unrest among the empires non-Russian peoples, but the socialists. “This socialistic aspect of the nationalist movements is worth underlining. For the late twentieth-century reader might be tempted to assume, on the basis of the collapse of Communism and the rise of nationalism in Eastern Europe, that they must have been opposed to socialist goals. What is striking about the nationalist movements within the Russian Empire is that their most successful political variants were nearly always socialist in form: Joseph Pilsudski’s Polish Socialist Party led the national movement in Poland; the Socialist Party became the national party of the Finns; the Baltic movements were led by socialists; the Ukrainian Socialist Revolutionaries were the leading Ukrainian national party; the Mensheviks led the Georgian national movement; and the Dashnak socialists the Armenian one. This was in part because the main ethnic conflict also tended to run along social lines: Estonian and Latvian peasants against German landlords and merchants; Ukrainian peasants against Polish or Russian landlords and officials; Azeri workers, or Georgian peasants, against the Armenian bourgeoisie; Kazakh and Kirghiz pastoralists against Russian farmers; and so on. Parties which appealed exclusively to nationalism effectively deprived themselves of mass support; whereas those which successfully combined the national with the social struggle had an almost unstoppable democratic force...”<sup>392</sup>

### 31. YOUNG TURKS AND YOUNG BOSNIANS

The year 1908 was a critical year because of two events: the revolution of the Young Turks in the Ottoman empire, and the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina by Austria-Hungary. With the benefit of hindsight, we can see that these two revolutionary events effectively cancelled the good work of the Russian counter-revolution and made world war much more likely. For while the internationalist revolution had been checked, its terrible twin, the nationalist revolution, was now on the cusp of victory against the forces of law and order.

---

<sup>392</sup> Figes, op. cit., p. 71.

Important changes were taking place in the dominant great power in the Balkans – Turkey, where the old system of Islamic Sharia law combined with the Sultan’s personal decrees was being undermined by a new liberal legal system, introduced under pressure from the Western powers, whose main idea was the equality of all citizens, both Muslim and Christian. The liberal legislation, which was incorporated into the Constitution in 1876, was displeasing to Muslims and Christians alike. For, on the one hand, the Muslims felt that they were losing their superiority to the “infidel”. And on the other hand, the Christians were worried about losing some of the exemptions they enjoyed under the old *millet* system.

For “in some ways,” as Taner Akçam writes, “Christians were better off than the average Turkish peasant, given their exemption from military service, and often the support of a foreign consulate, which excluded them from Ottoman courts, protected their homes from being searched by the authorities and freed them from Ottoman taxes. ‘The maligned Turkish peasant, at the other end of the social scale, was generally no better off than the ordinary non-Muslim and as much oppressed by maladministration... He was as much in need of reformed government as the Church, but [h]e had neither treaty, foreign power, nor patriarch to protect him, and his lot was generally unknown in Europe.’”

Defeat at the hands of Russia in 1877-78, and the gradual liberation of their European Christian subjects, increased the sense of grievance and frustration among the Turks. Massacres of Christians began, notably of Armenians (200,000 in 1894-96, nearly two million in 1915). And a new nationalist ideology began to be worked out on the basis of the empire’s Muslim Turks being the “*millet-i Hakime*”, or “ruling nation”.

In 1908 a modernizing group called “The Committee for Union and Progress” (CUP), or “The Young Turks”, seized power in Constantinople. The CUP’s stronghold was the Army in Macedonia, which had learned much from the discipline and conspiratorial techniques of the Bulgarian and Macedonian guerrillas. In fact, some of the rebel soldiers in Macedonia formed pacts with the Albanians, and with the Bulgarian and Serbian guerrillas they were supposed to be fighting.<sup>393</sup>

The result was a stunning victory for the revolution. In 1909 the Sultan was deposed. By 1913 the government had come under the complete control of the CUP. The Young Turks were thought to be liberals, but in fact were nationalists. Thus they declared: “We can compromise with the Christians only when they accept our position of dominance.” One of their leaders, Namik Kemal, spoke of the Turks as “occupying the pre-eminent position in the Ottoman collective... on account of their great numbers and abilities, excellent and meritorious qualities such as ‘breadth of intelligence’, ‘cool-headedness’, ‘tolerance and repose’”. Another leader, Ali Suavi, declared that “the Turkish

---

<sup>393</sup> Glenny, *The Balkans. 1804-1999*, London, p. 215.

race [is] older and superior... on account of its military, civilizing and political roles”.

Now the CUP was a Masonic group, so we need say some words on the origins of Masonry in the Ottoman empire. As the Ottoman empire declined in power, it became more and more cosmopolitan, liberal and ecumenist, at least in the capital; and Freemasonry played no small part in this process. Thus Philip Mansel writes: “From 1884 the *Cercle d’Orient*, one of the main centres of news and gambling in the city, was housed in a magnificent building on the Grande Rue de Pera. It was open to men of every race and religion, and viziers were members *ex officio*. Freemasons had existed in Constantinople since the eighteenth century; the Bektashki order had remarkable, and remarked on, similarities with the Masons, perhaps due to contacts with France through Bonneval Pasha. The masonic message of universal fraternity and abolition of religious and national differences seemed especially appropriate to the Ottoman Empire. The lodge *Le Progrès*, founded in 1868, held meetings in Ottoman and Greek. It was joined by men of different religions... In another lodge called the *Union d’Orient*, in 1866, a French atheist cried, perhaps for the first time in Constantinople: ‘God does not exist! He has never existed.’”<sup>394</sup>

An important member of *Le Progrès* was the wealthy Greek banker and believer in the Ottoman Empire Cleanti Scalieris (Kleanti Skalyeri in Turkish), who was born into a noble family in Constantinople in 1833. According to Jasper Ridley, he was “initiated in 1863 into a lodge which had been established in Constantinople by the French Grand Orient. He was friendly with Midhat Pasha, a high official in the Sultan’s government who was secretly the leader of the Young Turks. Midhat Pasha had been initiated as a Freemason while he was a student in England. After he returned to Turkey he was appointed Governor of the Danube region, and established a regime in which there was no religious persecution. In 1872 he was for a short time Grand Vizier, the head of the Turkish government.

“Scalieris and Midhat Pasha were able to exercise their influence on Prince Murad, the nephew of the Sultan Abd-UI Aziz and the heir to the throne. Murad listened with sympathy to their progressive liberal views, and at their suggestion became a Freemason in 1872, joining a Greek-speaking lodge in Constantinople under the authority of the French Grand Orient. In 1876, while the Bulgarian revolt against Turkish rule was taking place and Russia was preparing to go to war with Turkey in support of the Bulgarians, Midhat Pasha carried out a coup, deposed Abd-UI Aziz, and proclaimed Murad as the Sultan Murad V.

“A liberal-minded Freemason was now Sultan of Turkey; but within a few months he was deposed after another coup which placed the tyrannical Abd-UI Hamid II on the throne. During his thirty-three-year reign he acquired international notoriety both by his despotic government and by the sexual

---

<sup>394</sup> Mansell, *Constantinople*, London: Penguin, 1995, p. 293.

excesses of his private life. At first he maintained Midhat Pasha as Grand Vizier, but then arranged for him to be assassinated. He kept Murad imprisoned in the palace. Scaleris tried to arrange for Murad to escape, but the rescue attempt failed. Murad died in 1904, having been kept as a prisoner in the palace for 28 years.

“Abd-Ul Hamid continued to reign until 1909, when he was deposed and imprisoned after the revolution of the Young Turks.”<sup>395</sup>

The Young Turks encouraged the prevailing nationalist mood, declaring: “We can compromise with the Christians only when they accept our position of dominance.” One of their leaders, Namik Kemal, spoke of the Turks as “occupying the pre-eminent position in the Ottoman collective... on account of their great numbers and abilities, excellent and meritorious qualities such as ‘breadth of intelligence’, ‘cool-headedness’, ‘tolerance and repose’”.

At first, however, they renounced nationalism so as to bring as many members of other nationalities of the multi-national empire onto their side. Similarly, they were secularists at heart, but concealed this in order not to alienate the Turkish masses, who were fervently religious. And so in Constantinople Muslims joined with Armenians in requiem services for the massacres of 1896. Again, on July 23, 1908, “Salonika’s gendarmerie commander observed how [o]n the balcony of the Konak [town hall], Greek and Bulgarian bishops and the mufti shook hands and then in the name of fraternity, they invited their co-religionists to follow suit... A cry of joy burst from every lung in the crowd and you could see Muslims, Greeks and Bulgarians, the old mortal enemies, falling into one another’s arms. An indescribable delirium ensued as the reconciliation of the races and religions was consecrated underneath an immense flag emblazoned with the words ‘Long Live the Constitution’...”<sup>396</sup>

It was indeed an extraordinary moment, comparable only to the frenzied joy that accompanied the overthrow of the Tsar only nine years later in Petrograd. Like Herod and Pilate, bitter rivals abandoned their enmity in joy at the overthrow of their common enemy – one-man-rule that recognized its authority as coming, not from men, but from the One God. Instead, a new god, “the Constitution”, was erected and worshipped by all.

Meanwhile, the priests of the new religion, the Masons, took over the reins of government – men such as Mehment Talaat Pasha, Grand Master of the Turkish Grand Orient, and Kemal Ataturk, who had been initiated into an Italian lodge in Macedonia. On July 23, 1908, the same day as the celebrations in Salonika, they restored the *Midhat* constitution on the empire. In 1909 the Sultan was deposed and became a constitutional monarch. And by 1913 the

---

<sup>395</sup> Ridley, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 1999, pp. 216-217.

<sup>396</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, p. 216.

government had come under the complete control of the Committee of Union and Progress.

However, the new government soon cast off its liberal mask. "Over three years of counterrevolution and restoration, revolutionary idealism turned into a regime whose brutality surpassed that of Abdulhamid. 'The old espionage had returned, the extortion had never ceased, the oppression against non-Moslems had now acquired a fresher and more sinister vigour, for the measure of freedom that each nationality had once enjoyed was now being ruthlessly crushed by a heretofore unknown chauvinism.'"<sup>397</sup>

"Ottomanization" in effect meant "Turkification", including the imposition of Turkish as the single official language throughout the empire. This was an important stimulus to the rise of Arab nationalism (few Arabs understood Turkish), and the Arab rising against Ottoman power in the First World War. As for the Christians, in a secret speech in 1910, one of the three leaders of the Young Turks, Talaat Bey, "said that, while the constitution provided for equality of 'Mussulman and Ghiaur [i.e. non-Muslims]', they all knew that this was an unrealizable ideal. 'The Sheriat [i.e. *sharia*], our whole past history and the sentiments of hundreds of thousands of Mussulmans and even the sentiments of the Ghiaurs themselves, who stubbornly resist every attempt to ottomanize them, present an impenetrable barrier to the establishment of real equality. We have made unsuccessful attempts to convert the Ghiaur into a loyal Osmanli and all such efforts must inevitably fail, as long as the small independent States in the Balkan Peninsula remain in a position to propagate ideas of separatism among the inhabitants of Macedonia...'"<sup>398</sup>

\*

Tsar Nicholas II knew better than anyone the true significance of the events of 1908, and the great danger they posed for the whole of Orthodoxy. Basically, the whole vast region of the Ottoman Empire had fallen under the power of Orthodoxy's greatest enemy, *the revolution*, albeit in its *nationalist* rather than internationalist form. The Serbs, the Bulgarians and the Greeks, in spite of their recent rejoicing *with* the Turks over their revolution, were now gripped by a mad enthusiasm for war *against* Turkey, whose revolution was seen by them as a sign of weakness. In October, Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria declared his country, which until then had been nominally under the suzerainty of Turkey, completely independent. Days later, Austria, "fearing that the Young Turk revolution at Constantinople would undermine the position she had built up over thirty years, Austria-Hungary had finally annexed the Balkan lands of Bosnia and Hercegovina, which she had occupied since 1878."<sup>399</sup> Then Greece declared her *enosis* with Crete. "These events," writes Glenny, "in particular Vienna's annexation of Bosnia, set alarm bells ringing in the Ottoman military

---

<sup>397</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>398</sup> Peter Mansfield, *A History of the Middle East*, London: Penguin, 2003, pp. 128-129.

<sup>399</sup> Rebecca Fraser, *A People's History of Britain*, London: Chatto & Windus, 2003, pp. 613-614.

barracks, the real power behind the CUP. Henceforth, any Christian demands which smacked of secessionism would be rejected. In response, the guerrillas in Macedonia – Serb, Bulgarian, Greek and, significantly, Albanian – took to the hills once more. The military establishments of Greece, Serbia, Bulgaria and the Ottoman Empire had taken their first steps along the road that ended with the First and Second Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913.”<sup>400</sup>

The Tsar wanted to work with Austria in order to cool passions and avert world war; but his situation was made the more difficult in that Austria’s annexation of Bosnia had involved a trick played by the Austrian Foreign Minister, Baron Aerenthal, on the Russian Foreign Minister, A.P. Izvolsky, that humiliated Russia and stirred Serbian and Russian public opinion to a frenzy of anti-Germanism.

The story is told by S.S. Oldenburg:- “On September 3/16, in Buchlow castle, A.P. Izvolsky met Baron Aerenthal. There are various versions of the details of this meeting. The German State-Secretary for Foreign Relations, von Schen, referring to the conversation with A.P. Izvolsky, wrote to Bülow on September 13/26 that in Buchlow Aerenthal had put forward the following plan: Austria would limit herself to annexing Bosnia and Herzegovina, but would forbear from moving on Salonika and would take her armies out of the Novi-Pazar Šandjak and would support Russia’s demand that her fleet be given free passage through the Straits. At the same time Turkey’s sovereignty over Bulgaria, which had for long been a pure formality, would be proclaimed to be annulled.

“Izvolsky evidently approved this plan in its general form. We have to bear in mind that already in 1876, at the Reichstag agreement, and then in a special clause of the Austro-German-Russian agreement of June 18, 1881, Russia had declared her consent to the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina: ‘Austro-Hungary,’ declared this clause, ‘retains for herself the right to annex both these provinces at a time when she considers it necessary’. So the hands of the Russian minister were tied, and it was a matter only of this or that compensation. A.P. Izvolsky thought that Austria’s renunciation of the Šandjak, the freedom of travel through the Straits for Russia and the independence of Bulgaria (together with a profitable trade agreement for Serbia) represented enough compensation. Evidently he also counted on these changes to the Berlin congress agreement being accepted at the same time – perhaps with the help of a new international conference.

“But already on September 24 / October 7 Baron Aerenthal told the delegations of the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, explaining this step on the grounds of the necessity of giving these provinces representative organs, so that the local population should not turn out to be at a disadvantage by comparison with the Turkish domains.

---

<sup>400</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 218-219.

“At the same time, Prince Ferdinand of Bulgaria proclaimed the complete independence of Bulgaria and took the title of tsar.

“Both these acts were undoubtedly a rejection of the obligations undertaken at the Berlin congress, although in essence they only confirmed a situation that had existed *de facto* for a long time.

“In international relations, ‘*c’est le ton qui fait la musique*’, and public opinion in Russia and especially in Serbia reacted badly to these steps. In Belgrade they deemed Austria’s declaration as the first step towards the establishment of her hegemony in the Balkans. Bulgaria’s decision was seen as ‘the acceptance of independence from the hands of Austria’, while the annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina – as Austria’s self-willed appropriation of Slavic lands”.<sup>401</sup>

“Since these two formally Ottoman provinces,” writes Clark, “had been under Austrian occupation for thirty years and there had never been any question of an alteration of this arrangement, it might seem that the nominal change from occupation to outright annexation ought to have been a matter of indifference. The Serbian public took a different view. The announcement created an ‘unparalleled outburst of resentment and national enthusiasm’, both in Belgrade and in the provinces... The Russian liberal Pavel Miliukov, who visited Serbia in 1908, was shocked by the intensity of the public emotion. The anticipation of war with Austria, he recalled, became ‘a readiness to fight, and victory seemed both easy and certain’. These views were universal and so unquestioned that ‘to get into an argument over [them] would have been totally useless.’

“The mental maps that informed elite and popular understandings of Serbia’s policy and purpose were once again in evidence. The only way to understand the intensity of the feeling aroused in Serbia by the annexation, the British minister in Belgrade explained in a report of 27 April 1909, was to recall that ‘Every patriotic Servian who takes any interest or active part in politics, thinks of the Servian nation not as merely including the subjects of King Peter, but as consisting of all those who are akin to them in race and language. He looks forward, consequently, to the eventual creation of a Greater Servia, which shall bring into one fold all the different sections of the nation, at present divided under Austrian, Hungarian and Turkish dominion... From his point of view, Bosnia is both geographically and ethnographically the heart of Great Servia.’

“In an almost contemporary tract on the crisis, the celebrated ethnographer Jovan Cvijic, Nikola Pašić’s most influential adviser on the nationality question, observed that ‘it [was] plain that Bosnia and Herzegovina, by... their central position in the ethnographical mass of the Serbo-Croat race,... hold the key to the Serb problem. Without them, there can be no Great Serb state’. From the

---

<sup>401</sup> Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, vol. 2, pp. 36-37.

perspective of pan-Serb publicists, Bosnia-Herzegovina belonged to the 'Serb lands under foreign domination' – its population was 'entirely Servian in face and language', consisting of Serbs, Serbo-Croats and 'Serb-Mohammedans', except, of course, for the minority of 'temporary inhabitants' and 'exploiters' installed by the Austrians over the previous thirty years."<sup>402</sup>

It is striking that Orthodox Christianity here does not count as one of the criteria of Serbness, only race and language... This demonstrates the secularism of Serbian nationalism of the time.

In March 1909, writes Lieven, "Vienna demanded that Petersburg and Belgrade formally recognize the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. It prepared to invade Serbia to enforce this demand. Meanwhile Germany sent Russia a fierce note calling on it to defuse the crisis by agreeing immediately and unconditionally to recognize the annexation. Given its military and political weakness, Russia had no alternative but to do so."<sup>403</sup>

\*

But the feeling of resentment was great... The German action stirred up a huge wave of anti-German feeling in the two Slavic countries. Although the Russians were too weak, so soon after the Russo-Japanese war and the 1905 revolution, to take decisive action at this point, their humiliation strengthened their determination not to allow the Austrians to get away with it next time... Nevertheless, the Russians, while sharing the Serbs' frustration with Austria, did not share their nationalist frenzy. The Serbian minister in St. Petersburg was warned that they should in no way mobilize against Austria because nobody would help them – the world wanted peace, not war.<sup>404</sup>

The Serbs paid no attention. On March 31, 1909 the government was forced by the Great Powers officially to renounce her claims on Bosnia-Herzegovina. But that was only the official position. A new nationalist organization, *Srpska Narodna Odbrana* (Serbian National Defence), also known as "Black Hand", sprang up with hundreds of committees throughout Serbia and a network of auxiliaries within Bosnia and Herzegovina. Then, in March 1911 a group of seven veterans from the Macedonian struggle, five of whom were officer-regicides founded a new secret organization under the leadership of Apis. "The constitution of *Ujedinjenje ili smrt!* [Union or Death!] opened with the unsurprising declaration that the aim of the new association was the 'unification of Serbdom'. Further articles stated that the members must strive to influence the government to adopt the idea that Serbia was the 'Piedmont' of the Serbs, and indeed of all the South Slav peoples – the journal founded to expound the ideals of *Ujedinjenje ili smrt!* duly bore the title *Pijemont*. The new movement assumed an encompassing and hegemonic concept of Serbdom – Black Hand

---

<sup>402</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 33-35.

<sup>403</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, p. 193.

<sup>404</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 36.



propaganda did not acknowledge the separate identity of Bosnian Muslims and flatly denied the existence of Croats. In order to prepare Serbdom for what would be a violent struggle for unity, the society would undertake revolutionary work in all territories inhabited by Serbs. Outside the borders of the Serbian state, the society would also combat by all means available the enemies of the Serbian idea.

“In their work for the ‘national cause’ these men increasingly saw themselves as enemies of the democratic parliamentary system in Serbia and especially of the Radical Party, whose leaders they denounced as traitors to the nation...

“The movement thrived on a cult of secrecy. Members were inducted by means of a ceremony devised by Jovanović-Čupa, a member of the founding council and a freemason. New recruits swore an oath before a hooded figure in a darkened room pledging absolute obedience to the organization on pain of death...”<sup>405</sup>

“Within Bosnia and Herzegovina, the networks of *Ujedinjenje ili smrt!* and *Narodna Odbrana* became interwoven with local groups of pan-Serb activists, of which the most important was *Mlada Bosna* (‘Young Bosnia’). *Mlada Bosna* was not a unified organization, but rather an aggregation of groups and cells of revolutionary youth operating across the province from around 1904; its focus was less narrowly Serbian than that of the Black Hand or of *Narodna Odbrana*. Since they were operating under the eyes of the Austrian police, the Young Bosnians adopted a decentred, flexible structure based on small ‘circles’ (*kruzki*), linked only by designated intermediaries. Young Bosnia’s great hour arrived in 1910, when one of their number launched a suicide attack on the Austrian governor of Bosnia. On 3 June 1910, on the occasion of the opening of the Bosnian parliament, Bogdan Žerajić, a Serbian student from Herzegovina, fired five shots at Governor Marijan Varešanin. When all his bullets went wide, Žerajić emptied the sixth and last round into his own head. He was buried anonymously in a section of Sarajevo cemetery reserved for criminals and suicides, but his grave soon became a shrine for the Serb underground movement and his deed was celebrated by the nationalist press in Belgrade...”<sup>406</sup>

In a very short time the *status quo* in the Balkans which Russia and Austria had pledged to preserve in 1897 had been blown apart. And now, with the prospect of a further disintegration of Turkish rule in the Balkans, the three Orthodox States of Serbia, Bulgaria and Greece began rapidly rearming themselves, as a result of which all were deeply in debt to western arms manufacturers - the Serbs to French ones, the Bulgarians to German ones.

---

<sup>405</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 38-39.

<sup>406</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 41.

The Bosnian crisis strengthened the alliance between Russia and France; for both countries were now more determined than ever to oppose any further gains for Austria in the Balkans.

## 32. RASPUTIN

On November 1, 1905 the Tsar noted in his diary his first meeting with the peasant Gregory Rasputin... Kerensky later said that “without Rasputin, there could have been no Lenin”. This is a gross exaggeration: God would not have allowed the greatest Christian empire in history to fall because of the sinfulness of one man! Nevertheless, slanderous stories about the “elder’s” supposed sexual relationship with the Empress, and of his control of the Russian government through her, undoubtedly had a particularly corrosive influence on the reputation of the monarchy during the war and hastened its demise.

It is very difficult to disentangle the fact from the fiction of Rasputin’s life. Douglas Smith, however, his most thorough-going biographer has done a valiant job in collecting the vast amount of evidence and trying to establish the truth. Of a few things we can be sure: that he was a drunkard and a womanizer and that he had a certain quasi-hypnotic power whose precise nature is difficult to define. He was also not truly Orthodox in faith, although it is not established with certainty that he belonged to the sectarian khlysts, as many asserted. But his heterodoxy in other respects is undoubted. A man who supported the heretical name-worshippers, who asserted that “my feelings are the feelings of God”<sup>407</sup>, and who was ecumenist with regard to other religions than Orthodoxy (“every faith comes from the Lord,” he wrote, “one must never criticize another faith”<sup>408</sup>), could hardly be called right-believing!

Since the early 1990s there have been attempts to rehabilitate the reputation of Rasputin, notably by the historians Oleg Platonov and Alexander Bakhanov.<sup>409</sup> We can sympathize with these attempts insofar as they are motivated by a desire to protect the reputation of the Tsar and Tsarina, which suffered so much because of their (especially her) credulity in relation to Rasputin. Moreover, it is right to point out that many of those who attacked Rasputin in the dying days of the empire were motivated not so much by a desire to save the empire as by mercenary, egoistic and unpatriotic considerations that make their testimony highly dubious.

However, even after discounting these evilly-motivated testimonies, and taking into account the political bias of such “champions of the truth” about Rasputin as Guchkov and Rodzyanko, the evidence against Rasputin is too great and too varied to dismiss wholesale. In 1995 the historian and dramatist Edvard Radzinsky came into possession of the long-lost file of testimonies to the Extraordinary Commission set up by the Provisional Government in March, 1917 to investigate the truth or otherwise of accusations against the Royal Couple and those close to them.<sup>410</sup>

---

<sup>407</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, London: Pan, 2017, p. 370.

<sup>408</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 159. However, during his pilgrimage to the Holy Land in 1911 Rasputin did make some complimentary remarks about other faiths...

<sup>409</sup> Bakmatov, *Pravda o Grigorii Rasputine* (The Truth about Gregory Rasputin), Moscow, 2010.

<sup>410</sup> Radzinsky, *Rasputin: The Last Word*, London: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 2000.

These testimonies, which include some by close friends of Rasputin, such as his publisher Filippov, several of his female victims, as well as others whose integrity and devotion to the Royal Couple cannot be doubted, force us to the conclusion that, barring some of the wildest accusations, Rasputin was guilty to a large degree of the accusations launched against him.

Also impossible to reject wholesale are the very extensive police reports on Rasputin's immoral behaviour.<sup>411</sup>

\*

It is impossible to understand the phenomenon that is Rasputin and his power over the Royal Family unless one takes into account the general spiritual atmosphere of the time. A kind of pseudo-spiritual mania prevailed throughout Europe - a mixture of increased interest in religion and mysticism combined with decadence in art and morals. But it was worse in Russia, because most Russians, unlike the Europeans, had received the Holy Spirit in true Baptism, but now by their loss of faith and pagan morals were rapidly losing it. But, as the Lord says, "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeing rest, and finds none. Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order. Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation." (Matthew 12.43-45). And so it was with the last Russian generation before the revolution, when many deluded and demonized cult-leaders collected multitudes of disciples in both the upper and the lower classes. Rasputin was only one of a kind; the difference with him was that he enabled the devil to enter the very highest family in the land...

This atmosphere helped to magnify the impact Rasputin made. The occult wave sweeping the country during the Silver Age undermined the foundations of Holy Rus' just as surely as the anti-monarchism of the revolutionaries. Theosophy was especially rampant.<sup>412</sup> "So many upper-class people," writes Maria Carlson, "were drawn into the pursuit of truth through metarational means, outside the Orthodox faith; attending séances, studying the Cabbala, reading journals called *From There* and *The Spiritualist*, visiting mediums and acquiring obscure books of hermetic wisdom. Self-proclaimed spiritual teachers sprang up in Petersburg, gathered worshipful followers into cultlike

---

<sup>411</sup> Alexander Khitrov was right to point out that the police were, after the Tsar himself, the very first victims of the February revolution, and so cannot be accused of simply making up the whole story ("Rasputin-Novykh Grigory Efimovich i kratkaia istoria spornogo voprosa o priznanii v RPTsZ ego oschetserkovnogo pochitanii, kak pravoslavnogo startsa" (Gregory Efimovich Rasputin-Novykh and a short history of the controversial question of his recognition in ROCOR of his veneration throughout the Church as an Orthodox elder). However, Smith also is right to point out that some of these reports may have been distorted by a desire to please their anti-Rasputinite superiors (for example, the famous incident at the Yar restaurant) (Smith, *op. cit.*, chapter 40).

<sup>412</sup> Maria Carlson, "No Religion Higher than Truth": *A History of the Theosophical Movement in Russia, 1875-1922*, Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993.

societies, and made fortunes offering advice, healing and the cachet of possessing hidden learning.

“Within the imperial family itself, Nicky’s relative Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich was, in the words of the highly sceptical Count Witte, ‘one of the chief, if not the chief initiator of that abnormal mood of Orthodox paganism and searching for miracles, into which they obviously strayed in the highest circles.’”<sup>413</sup>

This was a period of apocalyptic ideas and great unrest among the people, with new gods and unorthodox saints. One of the many new sects was that of the “Johnnites”, who worshipped St. John of Kronstadt as god. Tens of families uprooted themselves from Vladimir province in order to live closer to their idol in Kronstadt. Needless to say, St. John strongly disapproved of these supposed supporters of his, and even anathematized them.

In the winter of 1912-13 there was another large migration of peasants from Moldavia to Murom province and from there to Kargopol in Olonets province in the far north. They were followers of the defrocked hieromonk Innokenty of Theodosiev monastery in Balts province. Many, including many children, perished from hunger and cold during this “exodus”.<sup>414</sup>

Rasputin spent some years as a wanderer, going from monastery to monastery, and also to Athos and Jerusalem. In 1899 he married and had children, but in 1902 was recommended by Bishop Chrysanthus of Kazan to the rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy, Bishop Sergius (Stragorodsky, the future patriarch). “The latter, in his turn, presented Rasputin to the professor, celibate priest Veniamin, and to the inspector of the Academy, Archimandrite Theophan.”<sup>415</sup> Rasputin met the Tsar for the first time on November 1, 1905 through the Montenegrin Grand Duchesses Militsa and Anastasia, who knew him through their spiritual father, Fr. Theophan.

The Royal Couple had already shown their vulnerability to religious quacks in the affair of the French charlatan, “Monsieur Philippe” of Lyons, a magician who conducted séances at which the spirits of Louis XVI and Alexander III were conjured up. At that time Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the Tsarina’s sister, had tried to open her eyes to the deception, but without success – she attributed her failure to her sister’s inability to distinguish between the true faith and the condition of religious exaltation.<sup>416</sup>

---

<sup>413</sup> Carolly Erickson, *Alexandra. The Last Tsarina*, London: Constable, 2001, pp. 96-97.

<sup>414</sup> M.B. Danilushkin, *Istoria Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi* (A History of the Russian Orthodox Church), St. Petersburg, 1997, vol. I, pp. 54-57.

<sup>415</sup> Alexander Bokhanov, Manfred Knodt, Vladimir Oustimenko, Zinaida Peregudova, Lyubov Tyutyunnik, *The Romanovs*, London: Leppi, 1993, p. 233.

<sup>416</sup> *Velikaia Kniaginia Elizaveta Fyodorovna i Imperator Nikolai II* (Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fyodorovna and Emperor Nicholas II), St. Petersburg: Aleteia, 2009, p. 34.

Philippe falsely prophesied that the Empress would have a son – it turned out to be a phantom pregnancy. But he did give one piece of good advice: he advised her to pray to St. Seraphim of Sarov, through whose prayers the Tsarevich Alexis was born in 1904. But he also, fatefully, said that after his death, which took place in 1905, another “Friend” like himself would come to the Royal Family. So the way was prepared for Rasputin... Finally, a letter of warning from St. John of Kronstadt convinced the tsar to send the Frenchman – who had been exposed by French agents as a charlatan and was rumoured to be a Mason and a member of the *Alliance Israélite* – home to France.<sup>417</sup>

St. Elizabeth Fyodorovna would also become a strong opponent of her sister’s “second Friend”, Rasputin. But the second Friend had a powerful weapon – his apparent ability to heal the symptoms of the Tsarevich Alexei’s haemophilia, a closely guarded secret and a cause of great anguish to his parents.

As Pierre Gilliard, the Tsarevich’s French tutor, said: “The illness of the Tsarevich cast a shadow over the whole of the concluding period of Tsar Nicholas II’s reign, and... was one of the main causes of his fall, for it made possible the phenomenon of Rasputin and resulted in the fatal seduction of the sovereigns who lived in a world apart, wholly absorbed in a tragic anxiety which had to be concealed from the eyes of all.”

As Archpriest Michael Polsky writes, Rasputin was “a simple man, uneducated, coarse but clever, he possessed a hypnotic power of suggestion and some clairvoyance. He cloaked his words and actions in a religious and Orthodox form. He was kind to all who sought his help, but dissolute in his personal life. The literature about him is full of conjecture, and the man remains an enigma. In the guileful environment of the court, he was able to have an influence on the pure, truth-loving and pious Royal couple... [But] this relationship was founded only on a mother’s noble and heart-felt feelings for her seriously ill child...”<sup>418</sup>

Douglas Smith thinks there was more to the Tsar’s and Tsaritsa’s credulity than that. He cites evidence that, only four days after meeting the Tsar for the first time, Rasputin was offering to advise him; “he did not shy away from addressing affairs of state with the tsar”.<sup>419</sup> And the Tsaritsa wanted Rasputin’s influence to strengthen the tsar’s weak will against the enemies of the throne in high society. But most Russians considered that the tsar should exert his will first of all against the Tsaritsa and Rasputin...

Be that as it may, the abortive revolution of 1905 had demonstrated conclusively – to those with eyes to see – that it was not only the intelligentsia or the open revolutionaries that were enemies of the Tsar’s rule, but also many

---

<sup>417</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 44.

<sup>418</sup> Polsky, in Liubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Richfield Springs, N.Y.: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 2009, p. 214.

<sup>419</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, London: Pan, 2017, p. 69.

of the simple people. This must have been a shattering revelation for the tsar, who always believed in the people's love for him. And they were indeed the foundation of his rule, a fact which had been demonstrated movingly during the Sarov days. Rasputin's appearance must have reassured the Tsar that the simple peasants were indeed still with him; he was accepted in the first place because he seemed to represent that loyal and truly Orthodox peasantry that, unlike the intelligentsia, was still loyal to the throne. For, whatever his sins, Rasputin constantly spoke about God, was always loyal to "Papa" and "Mama" and reminded them constantly of their autocratic power.

Another powerful reason for his acceptance was his apparent healing gift. General V.N. Voeikov, commandant of the palace guard and a close friend of the Royal Couple until the end, was sceptical about Rasputin from the beginning. But he witnessed to his healing power: "From the first time Rasputin appeared at the bed of the sick heir, alleviation followed immediately. All those close to the Royal Family were well acquainted with the case in Spala, when the doctors found no means of helping Alexis Nikolayevich, who was suffering terribly and groaning from pain. As soon as a telegram was sent to Rasputin on the advice of the Tsaritsa's friend Vyubova, and the reply was received, the pains began to decrease, his temperature began to fall, and soon the heir got better.

"If we take the point of view of the Empress-mother, who saw in Rasputin a God-fearing elder who had helped her sick son by his prayers - much should be understood and forgiven by every Russian devoted to the throne and the Homeland.

"The help he gave to the heir strengthened the position of Rasputin to such a degree at court that he no longer had need of the support of the [Montenegrin] Great Princesses and clergy. As a completely uneducated man, he was not able or did not want to hide this, and simply turned his back on his benefactors. Then there began denunciations against him; in the Synod they began a case to investigate the life and activity of Rasputin with the aim of demonstrating that he was a sectarian [a *khlyst*] preaching principles harmful to Orthodoxy; while in society they began to speak about him as about a debauchee who cast a shadow on the empress by his appearances at court. The excuse for these conversations was disillusionment in Rasputin, who did not justify the hopes laid upon him.

"The stronger the campaign of denunciation against Rasputin coming from the Duma, the more there developed in her Majesty the feeling that it was necessary to protect the man who was irreplaceable for the health of the heir: the influence of the empress on certain appointments can be explained by her desire to distance people who were dangerous to Rasputin from power.

“Taking full account of all this, Rasputin put on the mask of a righteous man at court, but outside it did not disdain to use the privileges of his position and to satisfy his sometimes wild instincts...”<sup>420</sup>

There has been much speculation on the source of Rasputin’s healing power, human, demonic or Divine. We cannot answer this question with confidence.

Nor can we be sure that he really did heal. For the possibility remains that his healings were actually the work of the prayers of those close to the Tsarevich or to the Grace communicated in the holy sacraments.

Thus the most famous case of healing – at Spala in Poland on October 10, 1912 – actually took place immediately after he had received Divine Communion, and in his account to his mother the Tsar mentions the Communion but not Rasputin...<sup>421</sup>

“Let us not judge the doting parents,” writes D.P. Anashkin, “for grasping at any opportunity to aid their son, who himself loved Grigory Efimovich. But again arises the question of this character’s two-faced nature. Did he truly love the Royal Family? If it were so, he would not have discredited them in the eyes of the public by his behavior. Or, if he saw that the situation had gotten out of hand, then he would have quietly withdrawn. Instead, he placed self-assuredness before this. Besides which, sanctity does not signify omniscience. Though sincere, the Royal Family misjudged their ‘friend.’

“It must be noted that the ‘special intimacy of the elder’ with the Royal Family advertised by Rasputin’s admirers is greatly exaggerated. To be exact, there was no ‘special bond’ at all. The Tsar, contrary to the commentary of both the pro-Rasputin and the Soviet press, did not place blind trust in Rasputin. In a letter to the Empress, he writes, ‘As far as Rasputin’s counsels, you know how carefully one must regard his counsels.’”<sup>422</sup>

Again, on 7 September, 1916 the Tsar wrote to his wife: “Our Friend’s opinions about people are sometimes quite odd, as you yourself know. One should therefore be careful, especially when appointments to high positions are concerned.”<sup>423</sup>

And on 10 November he wrote again to her concerning his decision to sack one of his ministers: “Only please don’t mix in our Friend. It is I who carry the responsibility [and] I want to be free to choose accordingly.”<sup>424</sup>

---

<sup>420</sup> Voeikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 58-59.

<sup>421</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 146.

<sup>422</sup> Anashkin, “The Real Rasputin?: A Look at His Admirers’ Revisionist History”, *Orthodox Life*, May 4, 2017.

<sup>423</sup> Radzinsky, *Rasputin: The Last Word*, p. 413.

<sup>424</sup> Radzinsky, *Rasputin: The Last Word*, p. 410.



This judgement was confirmed by the Tsar's sister Grand Duchess Olga Alexandrovna, who claims that the real influence of Rasputin on the Tsar was negligible: "Knowing Nicky as I did, I must insist that Rasputin had not a particle of influence over him. It was Nicky who eventually put a stop to Rasputin's visits to the palace. It was again Nicky who sent the man back to Siberia and that more than once. And some of Nicky's letters to Alicky are proof enough of what he really thought of Rasputin's advice..."

Nevertheless, during the war through the Empress Rasputin's *pressure* on the Tsar (during the war in her letters to him she mentioned Rasputin 228 times, while the tsar mentioned him only eight times<sup>425</sup> undoubtedly increased. And also, it would seem, the comfort he brought him. For in August or September 1916, to General Alexeyev's question what he could see in the dirty peasant, the Tsar replied: "I find in him what I cannot find in any of our clergy".<sup>426</sup>

"As of 1914," writes Smith, "Nicholas had rarely ever taken Rasputin's advice on important matters and when he did, it was restricted to religious affairs. It was not until a year later after Nicholas had assumed supreme command of the armed forces in 1915 and was away at general headquarters (Stavka) that he showed any willingness, and then reluctantly and rarely, to follow Rasputin's advice."<sup>427</sup>

But Rasputin's influence became stronger and more dangerous during the war because, with the Tsar at the front, control of home appointments *de facto* came under the control of the Tsarina, who always turned to Rasputin and to those who were approved by him...

Voeikov points out that from 1914 Vyubova and Rasputin "began to take a greater and greater interest in questions of internal politics", but at the same time argues that the number of appointments actually made by the Tsarina were few.<sup>428</sup> Bakhanov calculates that there were eleven...

But these few included Prime Ministers, Interior Ministers and Church Metropolitans! Moreover, even the Tsaritsa admitted that one of these appointments, that of A.N. Khvostov as Interior Minister, was disastrous!<sup>429</sup> It is hardly surprising, in those circumstances, that the reputation of the Royal Couple suffered...

\*

---

<sup>425</sup> Sergei Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' Nakanune Peremen* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes), Moscow, 2002, p. 475

<sup>426</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 452.

<sup>427</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 364.

<sup>428</sup> Voeikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 143.

<sup>429</sup> Bakhanov, *Imperator Nikolai II-ij*, Moscow, 1998, p. 371.

Of particular significance was the relationship between Rasputin and Archimandrite, later Bishop Theophan (Bystrov).<sup>430</sup> Vladyka was at first impressed by the peasant, but became disillusioned with him after becoming convinced, from his own observations and from the confessions of his spiritual daughters, that the man was untrustworthy and sexually rapacious.

“After a while,” he testified to the Extraordinary Commission, “rumours reached me that Rasputin had resumed his former way of life and was undertaking something against us... I decided to resort to a final measure – to denounce him openly and to communicate everything to the former emperor. It was not, however, the emperor who received me but his wife in the presence of the maid of honour Vyubova.

“I spoke for about an hour and demonstrated that Rasputin was in a state of spiritual deception... The former empress grew agitated and objected, citing theological works... I destroyed all her arguments, but she... reiterated them: ‘It is all falsehood and slander’... I concluded the conversation by saying that I could no longer have anything to do with Rasputin... I think Rasputin, as a cunning person, explained to the royal family that my speaking against him was because I envied his closeness to the Family... that I wanted to push him out of the way.

“After my conversation with the empress, Rasputin came to see me as if nothing had happened, having apparently decided that the empress’s displeasure had intimidated me... However, I told him in no uncertain terms, ‘Go away, you are a fraud.’ Rasputin fell on his knees before me and asked my forgiveness... But again I told him, ‘Go away, you have violated a promise given before God.’ Rasputin left, and I did not see him again.”

At this point Vladyka received a written confession from a former devotee of Rasputin’s, Khionia Berladskaya. On reading this, he understood that Rasputin was “a wolf in sheep’s clothing” and “a sectarian of the *khlyst* type” who “taught his followers not to reveal his secrets even to their confessors. For if there is allegedly no sin in what these sectarians do, then their confessors need not be made aware of it.”

“Availing myself of that written confession, I wrote the former emperor a second letter... in which I declared that Rasputin not only was in a state of spiritual deception but was also a criminal in the religious and moral sense... In the moral sense because, as it followed from the ‘confession’, Father Gregory had seduced his victims.”

---

<sup>430</sup> On this important, but unsung hero of the faith, see Monk Anthony (Chernov), *Vie de Monseigneur Théophane, Archevêque de Poltava et de Pereiaslavl* (The Life of his Eminence Theophan, Archbishop of Poltava and Pereyaslavl), Lavardac: Monastère Orthodoxe St. Michel, 1988; Richard Bettes, Vyacheslav Marchenko, *Dukhovnik Tsarskoj Sem’i* (Spiritual Father of the Royal Family), Moscow: Valaam Society of America, 1994, pp. 60-61; Archbishop Averky (Taushev), *Vysokopreosviashchennij Feofan, Arkhiepiskop Poltavskij i Pereiaslavskij* (His Eminence Theophan, Archbishop of Poltava and Pereyaslavl), Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1974; V. Moss, *The Golden Ring*, Lulu.com, 2021; Radzinsky, *Rasputin*, op. cit.

There was no reply to this letter. "I sensed that they did not want to hear me out and understand... It all depressed me so much that I became quite ill." And indeed, the Tsaritsa's faith in the "elder" was unshakeable; she felt in her heart - "which has never deceived me" - that Rasputin was a man of God and that her family and Russia lived through his prayers. It must be remembered that by this time the empress, worn down by many trials, had developed what Dr. Botkin, who was later martyred with the Royal Family, called "progressive hysteria". In his view, her major illness was "psychosomatic", although she had real physical weaknesses in the form of sciatica and a weak heart. These factors must be taken into account when assessing her behaviour.

In fact, Vladyka's letter had reached the Tsar, and the scandal surrounding the rape of Alexei's nurse, Maria Vishnyakova, whose confessor was Vladyka, could no longer be concealed. Vishnyakova herself testified to the Extraordinary Commission that she had been raped by Rasputin during a visit to Verkhoturys Monastery in Tobolsk province, a journey undertaken at the empress's suggestion. "Upon our return to Petrograd, I reported everything to the empress, and I also told Bishop Theophan in a private meeting with him. The empress did not give any heed to my words and said that everything Rasputin does is holy. From that time forth I did not see Rasputin, and in 1913 I was dismissed from my duties as nurse. I was also reprimanded for frequenting the Right Reverend Theophan."

Another person in on the secret was the maid of honour Sophia Tyutcheva, grand-daughter of the famous poet. As she witnessed to the Commission, she was summoned to the Tsar, who said to her:

"You have guessed why I summoned you. What is going on in the nursery?"

She told him.

"So you too do not believe in Rasputin's holiness?"

She replied that she did not.

"But what if I told you that all these difficult years I have survived only because of his prayers."

"You have survived them because of the prayers of the whole of Russia, Your Majesty."

Then he "began saying that he did not believe any of the stories, that the impure always sticks to the pure, and that he did not understand what had suddenly happened to Theophan, who had always been so fond of Rasputin. During this time he pointed to a letter from Theophan on his desk."

“‘You, your majesty, are too pure of heart and do not see what filth surrounds you.’ I said that it filled me with fear that such a person could be near the grand duchesses.

“‘Am I then the enemy of my own children?’ the sovereign objected.

“He asked me never to mention Rasputin’s name in conversation. In order for that to take place, I asked the sovereign to arrange things so that Rasputin would never appear in the children’s wing.”

But her wish was not granted...

In March and April, 1910 the newspaper *Moscow Gazette*, whose editor was the monarchist Lev Tikhomirov, published three articles against Rasputin by a member of the circle of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, Michael Alexandrovich Novoselov, the future bishop-martyr of the Catacomb Church. "Why do the bishops," he wrote, "who are well acquainted with the activities of this blatant deceiver and corrupter, keep silent?... Where is their grace, if through laziness or lack of courage they do not keep watch over the purity of the faith of the Church of God and allow the lascivious *khlyst* to do the works of darkness under the mask of light?" The brochure was forbidden and confiscated while it was still at the printer's, and the newspaper *The Voice of Moscow* was heavily fined for publishing excerpts from it.

However, Tikhomirov, while not changing his opinion about Rasputin, came to believe that exposing him in print was counter-productive and only strengthened the determination of the Tsarina to defend him while undermining the authority of the Tsar. This was also the opinion of Prime Minister Kokovtsev.

Private admonitions, however, were another matter. Also disturbed by the rumours about Rasputin was Kokovtsev’s predecessor as Prime Minister, Peter Arkadievich Stolypin. But he had to confess, as his daughter Maria relates: “Nothing can be done. Every time the opportunity presents itself I warn his Majesty. But this is what he replied to me recently: ‘I agree with you, Peter Arkadievich, but better ten Rasputins than one hysterical empress.’ Of course, the whole matter is in that. The empress is ill, seriously ill; she believes that Rasputin is the only person in the whole world who can help the heir, and it is beyond human strength to persuade her otherwise. You know how difficult in general it is to talk to her. If she is taken with some idea, then she no longer takes account of whether it is realisable or not... Her intentions are the very best, but she is really ill...”

Stolypin’s testimony, based as it is on the direct and obviously completely sincere words of the Tsar himself, is very important...

In the spring of 1911, after listening to a report on Rasputin by Stolypin, the tsar thanked him and said: “I know and believe, Peter Arkadyevich, that you

are sincerely devoted to me. Perhaps all that you say is true. But I beseech you never again to talk to me about Rasputin. In any case I can do nothing..."<sup>431</sup>

In 1911 even the first-hierarch of the Russian Church, Metropolitan Anthony (Vadkovksy) reproached the Tsar about Rasputin – but was told that it was none of his business...<sup>432</sup>

In November, 1910, Bishop Theophan went to the Crimea to recover from his illness. But he did not give up, and inundated his friend Bishop Hermogen of Saratov, the future hieromartyr, with letters. It was his aim to enlist this courageous fighter against freethinking in his fight against Rasputin. But this was difficult because it had been none other than Vladyka Theophan who had introduced Rasputin to Bishop Hermogen, speaking of him, as Bishop Hermogen himself said, "in the most laudatory terms." Indeed, for a time Bishop Hermogen and Rasputin had become allies in the struggle against freethinking and modernism.

Unfortunately, a far less reliable person then joined himself to Rasputin's circle – Sergius Trophanov, in monasticism Iliodor, one of Bishop Theophan's students at the academy. He later became a Baptist, emigrated to America, married and had seven children. In an interview with the newspaper *Rech'* (January 9, 1913) Fr. Iliodor said: "I used to be a magician and fooled the people. I was a Deist." He built a large church in Tsaritsyn on the Volga, and began to draw thousands to it with his fiery sermons against the Jews and the intellectuals and the capitalists. He invited Rasputin to join him in Tsaritsyn and become the elder of a convent there. Rasputin agreed.

However, Iliodor's inflammatory sermons were not pleasing to the authorities, and in January, 1911 he was transferred to a monastery in Tula diocese. But he refused to go, locked himself in his church in Tsaritsyn and declared a hunger-strike. Bishop Hermogen supported him, but the tsar did not, and ordered him to be removed from Tsaritsyn. When Rasputin's bad actions began to come to light, Hermogen vacillated for a long time. However, having made up his mind that Vladyka Theophan was right, and having Iliodor on his side now too, he decided to bring the matter up before the Holy Synod, of which he was a member, at its next session. Before that, however, he determined to denounce Rasputin to his face.

On December 16, 1911, according to Iliodor's account, Hermogen, clothed in hierarchical vestments and holding a cross in his hand, "took hold of the head of the 'elder' with his left hand, and with his right started beating him on the head with the cross and shouting in a terrifying voice, 'Devil! I forbid you in God's name to touch the female sex. Brigand! I forbid you to enter the royal household and to have anything to do with the tsarina! As a mother brings forth the child in the cradle, so the holy Church through its prayers, blessings,

---

<sup>431</sup> Bakhanov, *Imperator Nikolai II*, Moscow, 1998, p. 294.

<sup>432</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 460.

and heroic feats has nursed that great and sacred thing of the people, the autocratic rule of the tsars. And now you, scum, are destroying it, you are smashing our holy vessels, the bearers of autocratic power... Fear God, fear His life-giving cross!"

Then they forced Rasputin to swear that he would leave the palace. According to one version of events, Rasputin swore, but immediately told the empress what had happened. According to another, he refused, after which Vladyka Hermogen cursed him. In any case, on the same day, December 16, five years later, he was killed...

Then Bishop Hermogen went to the Holy Synod. First he gave a speech against the *khlysty*. Unfortunately, only a minority of the bishops supported the courageous bishop. The majority followed the over-procurator in expressing dissatisfaction with his interference "in things that were not of his concern". Moreover, accusations of *khlystovstvo* carried much less weight after Bishop Alexis of Tobolsk decided, in November, 1912, to cut short and shelve his diocese's official inquiry into Rasputin's supposed *khlystovstvo*.<sup>433</sup>

Vladyka Hermogen was then ordered to return to his diocese. As the director of the chancery of the over-procurator witnessed, "he did not obey the order and, as I heard, asked by telegram for an audience with the tsar, indicating that he had an important matter to discuss, but was turned down." On receiving this rejection, Bishop Hermogen began to weep. Then he said: "They will kill the tsar, they will kill the tsar, they will surely kill him."

The opponents of Rasputin now felt the fury of the Tsar. Bishop Hermogen and Iliodor were exiled to remote monasteries. (Iliodor took his revenge by leaking forged letters of the Empress to Rasputin.) And Vladyka Theophan was transferred to the see of Astrakhan. The Tsar ordered the secular press to stop printing stories about Rasputin. But as well as being against the constitution, which guaranteed freedom of the press, this order proved to be ineffectual – the torrent of rumours about Rasputin could not be stopped.

Before leaving the Crimea, Vladyka called on Rasputin's friend, the deputy over-procurator Damansky. He told him: "Rasputin is a vessel of the devil, and the time will come when the Lord will chastise him and those who protect him." Later, in October, 1913, Rasputin tried to take his revenge on Bishop Theophan by bribing the widow of a Yalta priest who knew him to say that Vladyka had said that he had had relations with the empress. The righteous widow rejected his money and even spat in his face...

\*

Who, then, was Rasputin? Clearly he was a clever and gifted man, but also unrestrained, immoral and in spiritual deception (*prelest'*)... But this takes us

---

<sup>433</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, pp. 469-70.

only part of the way to understanding his personality and significance. Bishop Theophan's wrote to the Tsar that Rasputin was "in spiritual delusion" and "a criminal in both the religious and moral sense of the word".<sup>434</sup> At the same time, in Theophan's opinion "he was not a hypocrite, not a scoundrel. He was a true man of God, having come from the simple people. But under the influence of high society, which could not understand the simple man, a terrible spiritual catastrophe took place, and he fell. And the milieu that had brought this about looked upon it with the most frivolous attitude. For high society this was nothing but a 'laugh'."

This opinion is close to that of Rasputin's daughter, Maria, and accords with the words of the holy Elder Gabriel of Seven Lakes Monastery (+1915), who had once tried to dissuade Rasputin from going to the capital: "You'll lose your way in Petersburg, the city will ruin you." Unfortunately, Rasputin did not heed his advice. And so, as his Maria wrote, he allowed himself "to be caught by the seductions of the capital".<sup>435</sup>

Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) had a similar opinion. After having tea with him twice, Rasputin "revealed himself as a deceiver and intriguer..." But the Royal Couple, "surrounded as they were from all sides by flattery and slanders, decided that love for truth and honourableness remained only in the simple people, and therefore turned to 'the people's reason'... However, they forgot about the most important point in such a choice. I myself was raised in the countryside amidst middle-ranking landowners and close to the people, and I share all the positive declarations about the people's reason and honourableness. But I insist on my conviction that a peasant is worthy of every respect only as long as he remains a peasant. But if he enters the milieu of the masters, he will unfailingly be corrupted..."<sup>436</sup>

Perhaps the most weighty witness concerning Rasputin came from St. John of Kronstadt, who died in 1908, before Rasputin had become notorious. According to a chanter in the choir of his St. Andrew cathedral in Kronstadt, "Once, at the end of a service, when Fr. John came out onto the ambon, a tall man with a black beard came up to him, asking for a blessing. Fr. John stepped away from him, stretching the palm of his right hand towards him, and exclaimed threateningly: 'You will not have my blessing, for your life will be in accordance with your name ['debauched']. The perplexity of those who heard and saw this was soon explained: this turned out to be Rasputin..."<sup>437</sup>

---

<sup>434</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 163.

<sup>435</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, pp. 52, 58.

<sup>436</sup> Khrapovitsky, "Moi Vospominania" (My Reminiscences), *Tserkovnie Vedomosti*, N 450, in Archbishop Nikon (Rklitsky), *Zhizneopisanie Blazhennejshago Antonia* (Biography of his Beatitude Anthony), vol. 3, New York, 1957, pp. 8-11.

<sup>437</sup> Liubov Millar, *Tsarskaia Semia - zhertva temnoj sily* (The Royal Family - victims of the dark force), Melbourne, 1998, pp. 107-108.

### 33. NAME-WORSHIPPERS, SYMBOLISTS AND OCCULTISTS

The famous historian A.J.P. Taylor writes: "Men's minds seem to have been on edge in the last two or three years before the war in a way they had not been before, as though they had become consciously weary of peace and security. You can see it in things remote from international politics... in the artistic movement called Futurism, in the militant suffragettes... in the working class trend toward Syndicalism. Men wanted violence for its own sake; they welcomed war as a relief from materialism. European civilization was, in fact, breaking down even before war destroyed it..."<sup>438</sup>

This was a revolution in spirit before the revolution in material forms. In Russia, this revolutionary spirit took a particular form, often religious and esoteric. The contagion spread even outside Russia, into the Russian monastery and sketes of Mount Athos. Here it manifested itself especially in the so-called name-worshipping heresy. The ignorance and superstition of the name-worshipping monks did not grow on an empty place; and pseudo-elders such as Rasputin and Ilidor could not have flourished in a more truly pious society...

In 1907, a Russian Athonite, Schema-monk Hilarion, published a book on the Jesus prayer entitled *On the Mountains of the Caucasus*. This book was at first well-received and passed the spiritual censor; but later its claim that the name of God is God - more precisely, that the Name of God as uttered in the Jesus prayer is not only holy and filled with the grace of God, but is holy *in and of itself*, being *God Himself* - elicited criticism. Although both the Greek and Russian Churches condemned the heresy<sup>439</sup>, the name-worshippers rose up and expelled their Orthodox abbots and spiritual leaders.

The leaders of the heresy on Mount Athos were Hieromonk Anthony (Bulatovich) and Archimandrite David, of the Russian skete of St. Andrew. Bulatovich was the son of a rich landowner of leftist political views. . In 1905, during the Russo-Japanese war, Bulatovich had commanded a squadron and for some reason ordered his men to attack a Russian battalion. 2000 men were killed or wounded. For this he was deprived of his officer's rank. According to the law, he should have been shot. But he was delivered from that fate on the grounds that he was mad. He was sent St. John of Kronstadt so that the saint should pray for him and lead him to repentance. St. John blessed him to become a monk, and in 1906 he was tonsured in the Nikifor podvorie in St. Petersburg.

---

<sup>438</sup> Taylor, *Englishmen and Others*, London: Hamish Hamilton, 1956, p. 121.

<sup>439</sup> The heresy was condemned by the Ecumenical Patriarchate in 1912 (Charter No. 8522 of Patriarch Joachim III to Mount Athos, dated September 12) and 1913 (Charter No. 758 of Patriarch German V to Mount Athos, dated February 15), and by the Russian Holy Synod in 1913 (Epistle of May 18, and Decree of August 27, No. 7644). See *Ekklesiastiki Alitheia*, N 16, April 20, 1913, pp. 123-125, N 19, May 11, 1913, pp. 145-146, N 11, N 24, June 15, 1913, pp. 187-191, March 15, 1914, p. 119 (in Greek); "O lzhe-uchenii imiabozhnikov", *Tserkovnie Vedomosti*, N 20, 1913. Cf. Bishop Photius of Marathon, "A Response to certain Name-Worshippers", *The Church of the GOC of America*, February 29, 2012, <http://www.hotca.org/orthodoxy/theological-texts/352-a-response-to-certain-name-worshippers>.



In 1910 he went to Mount Athos and was received into the St. Andrew skete. St. John had blessed him to receive Communion every week, but on Athos monks were not allowed to commune more often than once every two weeks. He began to demand that he commune every day. So the abbot had him made a hieromonk, in which rank he could commune at every liturgy. In 1911 he was ordained and immediately went to Abyssinia, where he had some acquaintances, taking with him two monks from Athos. On arriving there, he decided to open a monastery without a blessing, and demanded that Athos send 50 monks to Abyssinia so as to build a monastery there. But nobody wanted to join him, and the two monks who were with him returned to Athos. In 1912 he returned to Athos and became the leader of the name-worshippers, who supported Hilarion's brochure. He gathered together a group of young monks and created a rebellion. He beat up the abbot, kicked out the elders and took over the skete. Monk Clement witnesses that Bulatovich and his supporters even trampled on their opponent with their feet.

The other leader of the group, Archimandrite David, openly declared at a meeting of the monks that Archimandrite Jerome, the superior of the skete, had "renounced God". Jerome replied that he did not recognize Bulatovich's teaching, but by no means renounced the Lord Jesus Christ, and believed that Christ was true God and that His name was holy, terrible, worthy of veneration, but not God Himself.

"But I," said Fr. David, "confess that the name of Jesus is God Himself in His essence and with all His attributes."

"What do you think when you meet the name of Jesus in the Divine Scriptures, as the son of Nun, or the son Sirach?" asked Abbot Jerome.

"Then, of course, it is not God."

"So what are you arguing about?"

Then Archimandrite David went out of the church and shouted: "Brothers, run! Our abbot is a Mason. He has renounced Jesus in front of the whole assembly..."

Finally, in 1913, after every attempt at peaceful persuasion had failed, the Tsar authorized a warship to be sent to Athos. The rebellious monks were transported to Odessa and then sent to different places of exile (for example, Novy Afon).

The first to oppose the teaching was an Athosian monk, Elder Kallinikos the Hesychast, who famously said of the name-worshippers that "they have abandoned the head and worship the hat". He was given a medal by the Tsar.

As for Russia, monastic opinion soon polarised between those who, like the monks of the Kiev Caves Lavra, approved of the book and its name-

worshipping thesis (*imiabozhie* in Russian), and those, like the monks of the Pochaev Lavra and the Optina Desert, who rejected it. However, as Gubanov writes, “the illiterate G.E. Rasputin interceded for the heretical name-worshippers and even tried to incite the empress to attack the fighters against the heresy of name-worshipping.”<sup>440</sup>

In 1914 the leading name-worshippers, including Hieroschemamonk Anthony (Bulatovich), author of *An Apology of Faith in the Name of God and the Name of Jesus* (1913), were justified by the Moscow Diocesan Court, which declared: “... The Synodal Office has found that in *the confessions of faith in God and in the Name of God* coming from the named monks, in the words, ‘I repeat that in naming the Name of God and the Name of Jesus as God and God Himself, I reject both the veneration of the Name of God as His Essence, and the veneration of the Name of God separately from God Himself as some kind of special Divinity, as well as any deification of the very letters and sounds and any chance thoughts about God’ – there is contained information allowing us to conclude that in them there is no basis for leaving the Orthodox Church for the sake of the teaching on the Names of God.’ (decree № 1443 of May 8, 1914)”.

Of course, this decree did not constitute a “justification” of the name-worshippers’ teaching, especially in view of the fact that *on the same day* the Office, led by Metropolitan Makary, affirmed that name-worshipping – “*the new false-teachings on the names of God proclaimed by Schema-Monk Hilarion and Anthony Bulatovich*” – was a heresy (decree № 1442 of May 8, 1914). Moreover, in rejecting “any deification of the very letters and sounds and any chance thoughts about God”, Bulatovich was obliged also to renounce his words in the *Apology*: “Every mental representation of a named property of God is the Name of God [and therefore, according to the name-worshippers, God Himself]”, “the contemplation of the His name is God Himself”, “the conscious naming of God is God Himself”, “Every idea about God is God Himself”, “we call the very idea of God – God”.

Unfortunately, the repentance of the name-worshippers turned out to be fictional. Bulatovich concealed his heresy behind ambiguous words and phrases. Thus on May 18, 1914, in a letter to Metropolitan Makary, Bulatovich thanked him for his “justification”, and nobly deigned to declare that he was now ready to return into communion with the Orthodox Church (!). And he added: “Concerning the Name of God and the Name of Jesus Christ, we, in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, confessed and confess the Divinity and the Divine Power of the Name of the Lord, but we do not raise this teaching to the level of a dogma, for it has not yet been formulated and dogmatised in council, but we expect that at the forthcoming Council it will be formulated and dogmatised. Therefore we, in accordance with the teaching of the Holy Fathers, in the words of the ever-memorable Father John of Kronstadt said and say that the Name of God is God Himself, and the Name of the Lord Jesus is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, understanding this not in the sense of a

---

<sup>440</sup> Gubanov, *Tsar’ Nikolaj II i Novie Mucheniki*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 770.

deification of the created name, but understanding it spiritually, in the sense of the inseparability of the God-revealed Truth, Which is the Action of the Divinity." These words of Bulatovich show that he was not sincere in his signature below his *Confession*, but deceived Metropolitan Macarius (who was probably under pressure from the Over-Procurator Sabler, who was in turn under pressure from the fervent name-worshipper Gregory Rasputin). "Mixing truth with unrighteousness" (Romans 1.18), Bulatovich mixed Orthodoxy with heresy. Thus Orthodoxy recognises that there is a "Divine Power" in the name of Jesus, but does *not* recognise that it *is* "Divinity". Again, Orthodoxy recognises that in prayer the name of God is indeed inseparable from God, but it does not *confuse* the two, as does Bulatovich. For while a shadow is inseparable from the body that casts it, this is not to say that the shadow *is* the body. Finally, Bulatovich's "dogma" is still not "formulated and dogmatised in council" - because it is *not* a dogma, but heresy!

The Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church accepted that Bulatovich and his fellows had not really repented, so they set aside the decree of the Moscow Synodal Office, and confirmed the sentences against the name-worshippers (decree № 4136 of May 10-24, 1914), which confirmation was again confirmed by decree № 2670 of March 10, 1916. "In this decree of the Most Holy Synod," wrote the future Hieromartyr Bishop Basil (Zelentsov), "we find a confirmation of the basic rule that the name-worshippers must be received into ecclesiastical communion and admitted to the sacraments of the Church only on the unfailing condition that they reject the false teaching of name-worshipping and witness to their faithfulness to the dogmas and teaching of the Church and to their obedience to Church authority."

Although name-worshipping was on the agenda of the 1917-18 Council and a subcommission to study it under the leadership of Archbishop Theophan of Poltava and Fr. Sergius Bulgakov was formed, the subcommission did not have time to complete its work before the Council was terminated by the Bolsheviki. However, on October 8/21, 1918, Patriarch Tikhon and the Most Holy Synod declared: "The Most Holy Synod does not change its former judgement on the error itself [of name-worshipping]... and has in no way changed its general rule, according to which the name-worshippers, as having been condemned by the Church authorities, can be received into Church communion... only after they have renounced name-worshipping and have declared their submission to the Holy Church... The petition of Hieroschemamonk Anthony to allow him to serve is to be recognised as not worthy of being satisfied so long as he continues to disobey Church authority and spread his musings which have been condemned by the Church hierarchy to the harm of the Church".

After this decision, the leading name-worshipper, Anthony Bulatovich, broke communion for the second time with the Russian Church and was shortly afterwards killed by robbers.

\*

The name-worshipping movement survived in the Caucasus and South Russian region (where the Tsar had transported the rebellious monks); and the sophianist heretics Florensky and Bulgakov also confessed name-worshipping in the inter-war period. In modern times the heresy has enjoyed a revival in intellectualist circles in Russia, especially in the works of "Bishop" Gregory (Lourié), who supports the heretical views of Bulatovich, considers him to be a saint, and those who oppose his ideas, including several hieromartyrs of the Russian Church to be "enemies of the Name"!

Reasons for the failure to stamp out the heresy included the comparatively weak defence of the truth produced by the Greek and Russian theologians<sup>441</sup>, the aura of martyrdom which was attached to the name-worshippers as a result of their forcible expulsion from Mount Athos to Russia on a Russian cruiser, and the fact that the heresy coincided with the end of the Balkan wars and the transfer of Mount Athos from Turkish to Greek dominion after the Treaty of Bucharest, which meant that mutual suspicions between the Greeks and the Russians concerning the status of Athos hindered a united and thorough approach to the problem. Many took up the cause of the name-worshippers as part of their general attack on the "paralytical" Russian Holy Synod. Soon the debate acquired political overtones: democrats and socialists generally took the side of the name-worshippers, and the monarchists – that of the Orthodox.<sup>442</sup> Bulatovich himself was a left social revolutionary.<sup>443</sup>

In 1918 Patriarch Tikhon indicated that the controversy needed further study "in essence" at a future Pan-Russian (or Ecumenical) Council. But this did not mean, as some have claimed, that the Church had not delivered her verdict on the question. She has done so: but the reasons for that verdict need to be more extensively elaborated, and the "positive" teaching of the Church on the relationship between the uncreated and the created in prayer needs to be expounded still more clearly and thoroughly.<sup>444</sup>

\*

Just as the ascetic name-worshippers of Mount Athos wished to identify the Divinity with a created name, so the decadent artists of the Symbolist movement of Russia's so-called "Silver Age" wanted to capture the Divinity in artistic symbols. For them, symbolism took the place of religion; it was a new kind of religion, the religion of symbol-worshipping. "In the Symbolist aesthetic," as J.W. Burrow writes, "the intense focusing on the thing taken as a

---

<sup>441</sup> The best effort was by S. Troitsky in one of the three reports attached by the Russian Holy Synod to their decision of 1913: "Afonaskaia Smuta", *Tserkovnie Vedomosti*, N 20, 1913, pp. 882-909.

<sup>442</sup> Constantine Papoulides, *Oi Rossoi onomolatroi tou Agiou Orous*, (The Russian Name-Worshippers of Mount Athos), Thessaloniki, 1977 (in Greek).

<sup>443</sup> "Kratkoe opisanie biografii menie nyedostojnago skhiepiskopa Piotra Ladygina" (MS written in Bishop Peter's own hand, 1948); *Tserkovnaia Zhizn'*, NN 5-6, 7-8, 9-10, 11-12, 1984; NN 1-2, 3-4, 5-6, 7-8, 1985.

<sup>444</sup> See V. Moss, "The Name of God and the Name-Worshipping Heresy", [http: www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com](http://www.orthodoxchristianbooks.com); E.S. Polischuk (ed.), *Imiaslavie. Antologia*, Moscow, 2002.

symbol, the perception of its numinous aura, gave access to another, as it were, parallel, invisible world of light and ecstasy."<sup>445</sup>

This "parallel, invisible world of light and ecstasy" was demonic, and obsession with "dark forces" and the devil was common to many Silver Age artists. Thus the Symbolist painter Michael Vrubel achieved fame with a large mosaic-like canvas called "Seated Demon" (1890), and went mad while working on the dynamic and sinister "Demon Downcast" (1902).<sup>446</sup> Again, the composer Alexander Scriabin "came to fear his own Sixth Piano Sonata, convinced that it had been corrupted by demonic forces and so refused to play it in public. Scriabin considered himself to be God (if one is to believe some of his later poetry) and even tried to walk on the waters of Lake Geneva (unsuccessfully), and after attempting to exorcize the demons by way of his Seventh Sonata, he went on to compose a Ninth Sonata in 1913 known as 'The Black Mass' with references to devil worship, saism and even necrophilia."<sup>447</sup>

In his *First Symphony*, echoing Wagner, Scriabin praised art as a kind of religion. *Le Divin Poem* (1902-1904) sought to express the evolution of the human spirit from pantheism to unity with the universe. *Poème de l'extase* (1908) was accompanied by the elaborately selected colour projections on a screen. In Scriabin's synthetic performances music, poetry, dancing, colours, and scents were used so as to bring about *supreme, final ecstasy*. In 1909, after a spell in Paris with the impresario Diaghilev, Scriabin returned to Russia permanently, where he continued to compose, working on increasingly grandiose projects. For some time before his death he had planned a multi-media work to be performed in the Himalayas, that would bring about Armageddon, "a grandiose religious synthesis of all arts which would herald the birth of a new world."<sup>448</sup>

Similar ideas to Scriabin's on the stage fusion of all arts were elaborated by the poet Andrej Bely and the painter Vassily Kandinsky, who, like so many creative artists of the time, was a Theosophist.<sup>449</sup> In 1913 Kandinsky's expressionist "Painting with White Lines" started a revolution in art, and sold for £29.2 million (excluding auctioneer's commission) in 2020.

Another of Diaghilev's composer-protégés, Sergei Prokofiev, was also influenced by Symbolism (and Mary Baker Eddy's Christian Science). Among the propositions of his theory of creative action were: "1. I am the expression of Life, i.e. of divine activity. 2. I am the expression of spirit, which gives me power to resist what is unlike spirit... 9. I am the expression of perfection, and this leads me to the perfect use of my time..."<sup>450</sup>

---

<sup>445</sup> Burrow, *The Crisis of Reason: European Thought, 1848-1914*, Yale University Press, 2000, p. 223.

<sup>446</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_Symbolism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Symbolism).

<sup>447</sup> Douglas Smith, *Rasputin*, London: Pan Books, 2016, p. 96.

<sup>448</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander\\_Scriabin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Alexander_Scriabin).

<sup>449</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian\\_Symbolism](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russian_Symbolism).

<sup>450</sup> Thomas Schipperges, *Prokofiev*, London: Haus Publishing, 2003, p. 8.

These strivings for mangedness – in defiance of the only God-Man – among Russia's creative intelligentsia were associated by them with a revolutionary future that rejected the past more or less totally. Hence the brief fashion for the European movement of Futurism with its radical rejection of the past and all past and present ideas of what is beautiful and tasteful – and its glorification of war. The Italian Futurist and future fascist Filippo Tommaso Marinetti extolled "the beauty and necessity of violence", declaring that war was "the sole hygiene of the world."<sup>451</sup>

"Russian Futurists," writes Charles Emmerson, "embraced the spirit of hooliganism, expressing a desire to shock the public out of their bourgeois values. In 1912 they published a manifesto for their movement entitled *A Slap in the Face of Public Taste*. In December 1913 they put on a Futurist opera in St. Petersburg's Luna Park theatre in which the sun itself, symbol of enlightenment, was taken captive and then killed..."<sup>452</sup>

The futurist obsession with the imagery of restless, continual movement was akin to Trotsky's idea of permanent revolution – early Soviet culture was similarly obsessed with machine imagery. As Nicholas Berdiaev wrote: "Just as pious mystics once strove to make themselves into an image of God, and finally to become absorbed in Him, so now the modern ecstasies of rationalism labour to become like the machine and finally to be absorbed into bliss in a structure of driving belts, pistons, valves and fly-wheels..."<sup>453</sup>

Fr. George Florovsky described this aesthetic-revolutionary experience as utopian and a kind of "cosmic possession": "The feelings of unqualified dependence, of complete determination from without and full immersion and inclusion into the universal order define utopianism's estimate of itself and the world. Man feels himself to be an 'organic pin', a link in some all-embracing chain – he feels unambiguously, irretrievably forged into one whole with the cosmos... From an actor and creator, consciously willing and choosing, and for that reason bearing the risk of responsibility for his self-definition, man is turned into a thing, into a needle, by which someone sews something. In the organic all-unity there is no place for action – here only movement is possible."<sup>454</sup>

The idea that the art of the time was creating a revolution of the world outside art was expressed in a public speech by Diaghilev in 1905: "We are witnesses of the greatest movement of summing-up in history, in the name of a new and still unknown culture, which will be created by us, and which will also sweep us away. That is why, without fear of misgiving, I raise my glass to

---

<sup>451</sup> Marinetti, in Piers Brendon, *The Dark Valley*, London: Pimlico, 2011, p. 120, and Margaret Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 247.

<sup>452</sup> Emmerson, 1913. *The World before the Great War*, London: Vintage, 2013, pp. 122-123.

<sup>453</sup> Berdiaev, *The Russian Revolution*, Ann Arbor, 1966, p. 58; quoted in Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, London: Harper Perennial, 2007, p. 41.

<sup>454</sup> Florovsky, "Metafizicheskie predposylki utopizma" (The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Utopianism), *Put'* (The Way), June-July, 1926, p. 30.

the new aesthetic. The only wish that I, an incorrigible sensualist, can express, is that the forthcoming struggle should not damage the amenities of life, and that the death should be as beautiful and as illuminating as the resurrection."<sup>455</sup>

Diaghilev's words on "a new and still unknown culture, which will be created by us" were remarkably prescient. The old civilization was soon to be swept away in a terrible orgy of destruction (but for Diaghilev, at any rate, "the amenities of life" were not completely destroyed). In its place, however, was not a radically new civilization, but a catastrophic regression to Europe's pre-Christian, pagan past.

And perhaps the clearest prophecy of this barbaric civilization was provided by Diaghilev himself in the ballet he produced in conjunction with the composer Igor Stravinsky, in 1913 – *The Rite of Spring*.

As Oliver Figes writes, "the idea of the ballet was originally conceived by the painter Nikolai Roerich... a painter of the prehistoric Slavs and an accomplished archaeologist in his own right. He was absorbed in the rituals of neolithic Russia, which he idealized as a pantheistic realm of spiritual beauty where life and art were one, and man and nature lived in harmony. Stravinsky approached Roerich for a theme and he came to visit him at the artists' colony of Talashkino, where the two men worked together on the scenario of 'The Great Sacrifice', as *The Rite of Spring* was originally called. The ballet was conceived as a re-creation of the ancient pagan rite of human sacrifice. It was meant to *be* that rite – not to tell the story of the ritual but (short of actual murder) to re-create that ritual on the stage and thus communicate in the most immediate way the ecstasy and terror of the human sacrifice...

"Artistically, the ballet strived for ethnographic authenticity. Roerich's costumes were drawn from peasant clothes in Tenisheva's collection at Talashkino. His primitivist sets were based on archaeology. Then there was Nijinsky's shocking choreography – the real scandal of the ballet's infamous Paris première at the Théâtre des Champs-Élysées on 29 May 1913. For the music was barely heard at all in the commotion, the shouting and the fighting, which broke out in the auditorium when the curtain first went up. Nijinsky had choreographed movements which were ugly and angular. Everything about the dancers' movements emphasized their weight instead of their lightness, as demanded by the principles of classical ballet. Rejecting all the basic positions, the ritual dancers had their feet turned inwards, elbows clutched to the sides of their body and their palms held flat, like the wooden dolls that were so prominent in Roerich's mythic paintings of Scythian Russia. They were orchestrated, not by steps and notes, as in conventional ballets, but rather moved as one collective mass to the violent off-beat rhythms of the orchestra. The dancers pounded their feet on the stage, building up a static energy which finally exploded, with electrifying force, in the sacrificial dance. This rhythmic violence was the vital innovation of Stravinsky's score. Like most of the ballet's

---

<sup>455</sup> Diaghilev, in Paul Johnson, *Modern Times*, New York: Harper Perennial, 1992, p. 8.

themes, it was taken from the music of the peasantry. There was nothing like these rhythms in Western art music (Stravinsky said that he did not really know how to notate or bar them) – a convulsive pounding of irregular downbeats, requiring constant changes in the metric signature with almost every bar so that the conductor of the orchestra must throw himself about and wave his arms in jerky motions, as if performing a shamanic dance. In these explosive rhythms it is possible to hear the terrifying beat of the Great War and the Revolution of 1917...<sup>456</sup>

Indeed, *The Rite of Spring* not only created a revolution in music comparable to that created by *Tristan und Isolde* fifty years before: it prefigured the Bolshevik revolution as did no other work of art. Stravinsky's earlier works, *The Firebird* (1910) and *Petrushka* (1911), though innovative, were recognizably the work of the student of Rimsky Korsakov, the great Russian Romantic composer. But *The Rite of Spring*, both as a ballet and in its music, constituted a clean break with all earlier Russian traditions, whether Christian or Romantic. Its content is the purest paganism, sex and violence and the worship of false gods. Stravinsky himself was going through an atheist phase at the time (he returned to Orthodoxy in the 1920s). If it had a lesson about the revolution, it was that the revolution's deepest roots lay, not in any strand of European history of the last 1600 years, but in its pre-Christian paganism, in the darkest, most unredeemed passions of man...<sup>457</sup>

\*

Artistic movements such as symbolism, expressionism and futurism took place in the context of a greatly increased participation in heretical, sectarian and occult practices by society as a whole, and especially the intelligentsia.

Thus M. Rodzianko writes that "among the intelligentsia, especially of St. Petersburg, all kinds of groups began to organize, often infected by sectarianism. Simultaneously the enthusiasm for the teaching of [the Englishman Lord] Redstock, the passion for theosophy, occultism, spiritism and other teachings condemned by the Church was considerable. During the period after 1901 the society of 'Argonauts' was formed, which met at the home of Andrew Bely... This is how he describes those times: 'Among the "unseeing", "seers" appeared, who recognized each other; they were drawn to share incomprehensible knowledge with each other; their interest in everything appeared new to them, encompassed with rays of cosmic and historical importance. The "seers" differed in their conjectures: one was an atheist, another a theosophist, one was drawn to piety, another was pulled away from

---

<sup>456</sup> Figes, *Natasha's Dance*, pp. 279, 280-282. However, a year later, on April 5, 1914, the reaction was different: "The audience gave it a standing ovation, and afterward ran behind the stage and carried the composer out in their arms." (Ilya Ovchinnikov, "Contact with a Mystery", *Russian Life*, June 17, 2017). In 2013 the Mariinsky ballet under Valery Gergiev recreated Nijinsky's original 1913 production in its original location, Paris. See <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BryIQ9QpXwI>

<sup>457</sup> The biopic *Nijinsky* (1980) is an excellent description of the Ballets Russes, the genesis of *The Rite of Spring* and the madness to which it brought its most famous artist, the dancer Nijinsky.



it, but all agreed one with the other as to the imminence of a dawning: “something is shining forth”, and from this “something” the future will unfold its destinies’ (*Épopée*, vol. 1, pp. 136-137). This dawn was disclosed as the goddess Sophia and this in fact became the beginning, the ‘disclosure’ by the Russian progressive society of the object of its worship, tearing it away from Orthodoxy, i.e. from the Church, in order to begin a ‘philosophical’ combat with it. Numbered among the ‘Argonauts’ we meet the following widely known people: the poet Balmont, Valery Bryusov, Baltushaytis, S.I. Taneyev, N.A. Berdyaev, S.N. Bulgakov, later a priest, D.V. Filosofov, prof. Kadlukov, D.N. Merezhkovsky, Igor Kistyakovsky, Z.N. Hippius, A.V. Kartashev, Theodore Sologub and others (*Épopée*, vols. 1, 2 and 3; pp. 179, 191, 181, 144). The Russian intelligentsia of that time, knowingly or not, was undermining the age-old foundations of the Russian Orthodox Church. The guiding center was the ‘Religious-Philosophical Society’, created during this period. In this society were: V. Ivanov, D.V. Filosofov, S. Kablukov, Merezhkovsky, Rozanov, Kartashev, Bulgakov, Berdyaev and others (*Epopée*, vol. 1, pp. 61, 130, 156). This society held closed as well as open meetings, having as its goal the wide propaganda of the spirit of the revolution, reformation and sophianism...<sup>458</sup>

Another fad was hypnotism, which, as Douglas Smith writes, “was more popular in early twentieth-century Russia than in Western Europe and was a particularly common practice among Petersburg psychiatrists. The poet Osip Mandelstam was a visitor to the home of the Petersburg physician Dr. Boris Sinani, famous for his ability to cure his patients merely ‘by suggestion’, as Mandelstam put it. The best known popular psychiatrist-hypnotist at the time was Vladimir Bekhterev, who used hypnosis as part of the science of ‘psychoneurology’.

“The fascination for the occult became widespread, extending well beyond Russia’s artists and intellectuals and reaching deep into the middle classes, becoming a truly popular cultural pastime. By 1914, Petersburg counted thirty-five officially registered occult circles and hundreds more informal ones; the craze was not limited to the capital but by then had seduced Moscow and most provincial cities and towns. If for some the occult was deeply serious, for others it was simply a form of entertainment. Russia hosted a variety of mediums, clairvoyants and savants for every taste: there was the ‘Mysterious Dog Jack’ able to guess one’s age, the year of one’s wedding, and even the amount of money in one’s pocket; there was the Indian somnambulist Princess Madame Naindra; and there was the Polish medium Yan Guzik, who could summon not only the spirits of Alexander the Great, Napoleon, and Pushkin, but even those of dead animals, some of which were so ferocious that spectators were known to seek medical attention after his séances.

“Even Russia’s peasants and workers, the vast majority of the population, embraced new spiritual movements and religious practices. Holy pilgrimage attracted ever larger numbers, including the likes of Rasputin, and the belief in

---

<sup>458</sup> Rodzianko, *The Truth about the Russian Church Abroad*, Jordanville, 1975, pp. 5-6.

spirits, possession, miracles, and magic flourished. Groups of peasants came together to establish their own Christian communities, at times without the blessing of the church or even without the participation of any clergy. In the cities workers, too, took an interest in their spiritual well-being, flocking to mystics and popular preachers promising salvation."<sup>459</sup>

---

<sup>459</sup> Douglas Smith, *Rasputin*, London: Pan Books, 2016, pp. 90-91.

### 34. VEKHI: THE ROOTS OF THE REVOLUTION

One of the good consequences of the failure of the 1905 revolution was that the radical intelligentsia began to look more closely and critically at themselves and their liberal and socialist philosophies.

Richard Pipes offers the following definition of socialism: "Socialism is commonly thought of as a theory which aims at a fairer distribution of wealth for the ultimate purpose of creating a free and just society. Indisputably this is the stated program of socialists. But behind this program lurks an even more ambitious goal, which is creating a new type of human being. The underlying premise is the idea of Helvétius that by establishing an environment which makes social behaviour a natural instinct, socialism will enable man to realize his potential to the fullest. This, in turn, will make it possible, ultimately, to dispense with the state and the compulsion which is said to be its principal attribute. All socialist doctrines, from the most moderate to the most extreme, assume that human beings are infinitely malleable because their personality is the product of the economic environment: a change in that environment must, therefore, alter them as well as their behaviour.

"Marx pursued philosophical studies mainly in his youth. When, as a twenty-six-year-old émigré in Paris, he immersed himself in philosophy, he at once grasped the political implications of the ideas of Helvétius and his French contemporaries. In *The Holy Family* (1844-45), the book which marked his and Engels's break with idealistic radicalism, he took his philosophical and psychological premises directly from Locke and Helvétius: 'The whole development of man...,' he wrote, 'depends on *education* and *environment*.' 'If man draws all his knowledge, sensations, etc., from the world of the senses and the experience gained from it, the empirical world must be arranged so that in it man experiences and gets used to what is really human... If man is shaped by his surroundings, his surroundings must be made human.'

"This, the *locus classicus* of Marxist philosophy, justifies a total change in the way society is organized – that is, revolution. According to this way of thinking, which indeed inexorably flows from the philosophical premises of Locke and Helvétius, man and society do not come into existence by a natural process but are 'made'. This 'radical behaviorism', as it has been called, inspired Marx in 1845 to coin what is probably his most celebrated aphorism: 'The philosophers have only interpreted the world in various ways: the point, however, is to change it.' Of course, the moment a thinker begins to conceive his mission to be not 'only' observing the world and adapting to it, but changing it, he ceases to be a philosopher and turns into a politician with his own political agenda and interests.

"Now, the world can conceivably be 'changed' gradually, by means of education and legislation. And such a gradual change is, indeed, what all intellectuals would advocate if their exclusive concern were with improving the human condition, since evolution allows for trial and error, the only proven

road to progress. But many of those who want to change the world regard human discontent as something not to be remedied but exploited. Exploitation of resentment, not its satisfaction, has been at the center of socialist politics since the 1840s: it is what distinguished the self-styled 'scientific' socialists from their 'utopian' forerunners. This attitude has led to the emergence of what Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu called in 1902, in a remarkably prescient book, the 'politics of hatred'. Socialism, he noted, elevates 'hatred to the heights of principle', sharing with its mortal enemies, nationalism and anti-Semitism, the need "chirurgically" to isolate and destroy the alleged enemy.' Committed radicals fear reform because it deprives them of leverage and establishes the ruling elite more solidly in power: they prefer the most savage repression. The slogan of Russian revolutionaries - '*chem khuzhe, tem luchshe*' ('the worse, the better') spelled out this kind of thinking."460

But where does this hatred come from? Further insight into this question is gained by studying a collection of articles written by a group of converts from socialism and published in 1909 under the title *Vekhi* (Landmarks), which criticized the revolutionary credo of the intelligentsia from several points of view. The contributors included some names that were to become famous in the Paris emigration: Nicholas Berdyaev, Sergei Bulgakov and Simeon Ludwigoich Frank.

"The leading spirit of *Vekhi* was Petr Struve, the economist who had written the Social Democrats' first program and then become a founder of the Union of Liberation and of the Kadet Party. Now he was disillusioned again, convinced that the Cadets had in effect become collaborators in the revolutionaries' attempt to destroy the Russian state. Statehood and nationhood were, he argued, no less important in Russia than in any other European people, and they required that educated people recognize the autonomous value of law and order, property and culture; both the Russian forms of socialism, Marxism and populism, preached the destruction of the state, and Marxism also aimed to dissolve the nation in an international proletariat. Impressed by the example of Germany under Bismarck, Struve preached that 'the national idea of contemporary Russia is reconciliation between the authorities and the people, which is awakening to its own identity... State and nation must organically coalesce.'"461

One of the contributors, the philosopher Simeon Ludwigoich Frank, wrote: "The Symbol of Faith of the Russian *intelligent* is the good of the people, the satisfaction of the needs of 'the majority'. The service of this aim is for him the highest and in general the only duty of man, and what is more than this is of the evil one. It is precisely for this reason that he not only simply denies or does not accept other values - he even directly fears and hates them. One cannot serve two gods at the same time, and if God, as Maxim Gorky had already openly made known, was 'the essence of the people's soul', then all the other

---

460 Pipes, *op. cit.*, pp. 135-137.

461 Hosking, *Russia and the Russians*, p. 384.

gods were false gods, idols or devils. Activity guided by love for science or art, life overshadowed by a religious light in the direct sense, that is, communion with God, all this distracts from service to the people, weakens or destroys moralistic enthusiasm and signifies, from the point of view of the *intelligent's* faith, a dangerous hunting after mirages. Therefore all this is rejected, partly as stupidity or 'superstition', partly as an immoral direction of the will. This, of course, does not mean that the Russian intelligentsia is in fact alien to scientific, aesthetic and religious interests and experiences. It is impossible to kill the spirit and its inveterate demands, and it is natural that living people who have clothed their soul in the moral uniform of the 'intelligent' should retain in themselves all the feelings intrinsic to man. But these feelings live in the soul of the Russian *intelligent* in approximately the same way as the feeling of pity for an enemy lives in the soul of a warrior, or as the striving for the free play of fantasy in the consciousness of a strictly scientific thinker: they live precisely as an unlawful, albeit ineradicable weakness, as something in the best case merely tolerable. Scientific, aesthetic and religious experiences are always referred here, so to speak, to the private, intimate life of a man; more tolerant people look on them as a luxury, an amusement for hours of leisure, as a sweet eccentricity; the less tolerant condemn them in others and hide them with shame in themselves. But the *intelligent*, as an *intelligent*, that is, in his conscious faith and public activity, must be alien to them – his world-view and his ideal are hostile to these sides of human life. From science he takes several popularized, distorted or *ad hoc* positions, and although he often prides himself in the 'scientificness' of his faith, he also rejects scientific criticism with annoyance, as well as all the pure, disinterested work of scientific thought; while aesthetics and religion are completely unnecessary for him. All this – pure science, and art, and religion – is incompatible with moralism, with the service of the people; all this relies on love for objective values and, consequently, is alien, and for that reason also hostile, to that utilitarian faith which the Russian *intelligent* confesses. The religion of the service of earthly needs and the religion of the service of ideal values strike against each other, and however complex and varied their irrational psychological interweaving in the soul of the *intelligent*, in the sphere of the *intelligent's* consciousness their conflict leads to the complete annihilation and expulsion of ideal demands in the name of the integrity and purity of the moralistic faith.

"Nihilistic moralism is the fundamental and most profound trait of the spiritual physiognomy of the Russian *intelligent*: from the denial of objective values there proceeds the deification of the subjective interests of one's neighbour ('the people'), hence there follows the recognition that the highest and only task of man is the service of the people, and hence in its turn there follows ascetic hatred for everything that hinders or even merely does not assist the realization of this task. Life has no other objective, inner meaning; its only good is to be materially provided for, to be satisfied in one's subjective demands; therefore man is bound to devote all his strength to the amelioration of the lot of the majority, and everything that distracts from this is evil and must be mercilessly rooted out – that is the strange, logically badly founded, but psychologically strongly welded together chain of judgements that rules

the whole behaviour and all the valuations of the Russian *intelligent*. Nihilism and moralism, lack of faith and a fanatical severity of moral demands, and a lack of principle in a metaphysical sense – for nihilism is also the denial of principled demands, it is an idiosyncratic, rationally unfathomable and at the same time in real life a strong merging together of antagonistic motives into a powerful psychical force. And it is that frame of mind which we call nihilistic moralism.”<sup>462</sup>

If we look more closely at the nature and origins of this atheistic but moralistic, rationalistic but at the same time quasi-mystic faith of the Russian intelligentsia we may find it in the Jewish chiliasm of the early Christian centuries. Thus Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov, who in the 1870s was still a revolutionary, but who later repented and became an ardent monarchist, wrote: “In spite of the seeming irreligiousness of the 19th century, in its most passionate dreams it is reminiscent of a moment not so much of cold unbelief, as of *an error of religious thought*, Jewish messianism or the Christian *chiliasm* that was born from it. The idea of earthly all-blessedness, whether it is expressed in the expectation of ‘the sensible kingdom of Christ’ or of a sorrowless ‘future order’ in the most various of philosophies, grows on the soil of one and the same psychology. The new chiliasm has *consciously* abandoned religion. But this difference is not as decisive as it seems. The very dreams about an *earthly* blessedness are already a rebuke to the weakness of spiritual feeling. On the other hand, the unconscious feeling which makes our rationally unbelieving revolutionaries, not simple epicureans, but fanatical dreamers about their future sorrowless order, bear unmistakable signs of the spiritual strivings of an erring religious quest...

“One may even now foresee some features of a future *mystical* anarchism, which is still thought now by the revolutionaries to be sick and illogical, but – as in Count L. Tolstoy, for example, – is already making itself talked about, and not only in Russia...

“It is not the inadequacies of the old order, but an insuperable dream about the new order that was and will remain the moving power of the revolution...

“There is nothing that can be done against further corruption until people understand the source of the mistake.

“This mistake consists in the concept of the autonomy of the personality. The false teaching of its supposed autonomy appears first of all as a result of its rebellion against God. Being left without God, and in this condition feeling itself to be autonomous, the personality at first tries to find a full satisfaction of its strivings in this earthly world. But this is impossible. The world is not capable of that. From here there begins the renunciation of the world in the form that it is according to these earthly laws. One after another there appear dreams of ‘the future order’. Trying these orders, the autonomous personality

---

<sup>462</sup> Frank, “Etika nigilizma” (The Ethics of Nihilism), in *Vekhi* (Landmarks), Moscow, 1909, pp. 183-185.

rejects them one after the other, intensifying its rejection of the real world more and more..."<sup>463</sup>

"Among us revolutionary destruction constitutes the faith, hope and duty of every good radical. Everything that is rebellion, protest, overthrow is looked upon as something useful, containing the seed of progress. Destruction is considered still more useful if it is directed against the preservation of the existing order."<sup>464</sup>

Frank also saw the desire for autonomy as lying at the root of the revolution: "Socialism is at the same time the culmination and the overthrow of liberal democracy. It is ruled by the same basic motive that rules the whole modern era: to make man and mankind the true master of his life, to present him with the possibility of ordering his own destiny on his own authority... Socialism is the last stride in the great rebellion of mankind and at the same time the result of its total exhaustion - the complete spiritual impoverishment of the prodigal son in the long centuries of his wandering far from his father's home and wealth."<sup>465</sup>

Utopianism-chiliasm is based not only on a heretical eschatology, but also on a false anthropology that denies the fall of man. For utopia on earth is possible only on the assumption that the men who live in the utopia are sinless and passionless, being governed only by perfect love and humility. To suppose that any class of men, once delivered from injustice and poverty, will automatically behave like angels, is a myth. Still more mythical is the idea that the kingdom of love and brotherhood can be ushered in by hatred and fratricidal war. The means do not justify the ends; and the employment of evil means leads unfailingly to evil ends.

As Solzhenitsyn has said, "If only it were all so simple! If only there were evil people somewhere insidiously committing evil deeds and it were necessary only to separate them from the rest of us and destroy them. But the dividing line between good and evil cuts through the heart of every human being, and who is willing to destroy his own heart?"<sup>466</sup> If the line between good and evil passes, not between classes or nations, but down the middle of each human heart, it follows that the triumph of good over evil is possible only through the purification of the human heart, *every* human heart. And that is a spiritual task that is accomplished by spiritual, not material or political means, by confession of the faith and repentance of sin, not by rebellion against the king and the redistribution of property.

---

<sup>463</sup> Tikhomirov, "Bor'ba veka" (The Struggle of the Century), in *Kritika Demokratii* (A Critique of Democracy), Moscow, 1997, pp. 189-190, 191, 192, 195-196.

<sup>464</sup> Tikhomirov, "Pochemu ia perestal byt' revoliutsionerom" (Why I ceased to be a Revolutionary), in "Korni zla" (The Roots of Evil), *Pravoslavnaia Rus'* (Orthodox Russia), N 7 (1412), April 1/14, 1990.

<sup>465</sup> Frank, "Religioznoe-Istoricheskoe Znachenie Russkoj Revoliutsii" (The religio-historical significance of the Russian revolution), *Po Tu Storonu i Po Pravu* (On That Side and on the Right), Paris: YMCA Press, 1972.

<sup>466</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *The Gulag Archipelago*.

This brings us to a still deeper flaw of utopianism – its materialism. For while the heresy of chiliasm at any rate recognized the existence of God and the spiritual nature of man, utopianism reduces everything to the blind determinism of insensate matter. For the ancient heretics, utopia could only be introduced by God, and was awarded to the righteous in response to the right use of their freewill. For the moderns, there is neither God nor freewill – but utopia will come in any case, as the result of the iron laws of necessity. And this fatalistic faith both gives the revolution its frightening power – for men acquire extraordinary self-confidence when they know that they must win in the end – and guarantees its terrifying cruelty – for without freewill there is no responsibility, and, as one of Dostoyevsky’s characters said, “if there is no God, everything is permitted”.

“Cosmic possession,” writes Fr. George Florovsky, “– is how we can define the utopian experience. The feelings of unqualified dependence, of complete determination from without and full immersion and inclusion into the universal order define utopianism’s estimate of itself and the world. Man feels himself to be an ‘organic pin’, a link in some all-embracing chain – he feels unambiguously, irretrievably forged into one whole with the cosmos... From an actor and creator, consciously willing and choosing, and for that reason bearing the risk of responsibility for his self-definition, man is turned into a thing, into a needle, by which someone sews something. In the organic all-unity there is no place for action – here only movement is possible.”<sup>467</sup>

As another contributor to *Vekhi*, Nicholas Berdyaev, wrote: “Just as pious mystics once strove to make themselves into an image of God, and finally to become absorbed in Him, so now the modern ecstasies of rationalism labour to become like the machine and finally to be absorbed into bliss in a structure of driving belts, pistons, valves and fly-wheels...”<sup>468</sup>

The arguments of *Vekhi* had their effect. But still more important in quenching the self-confidence of the intelligentsia was the obvious success of the Tsar’s government, in the last decades before the revolution, in raising Russia’s standard of living and general effectiveness. For example, in St. Petersburg a congress of teachers – traditionally among the most revolutionary layers of the population – passed without any political demands or demonstrations. It even became fashionable to love your country and believe in it again...

For “the intelligentsia,” writes S.S. Oldenburg, “had lost faith in their former ideals. They already had doubts about materialism, about the ideas of the 18th and 19th centuries, even about the all-saving significance of the revolution, but they had as it were not decided to admit this to themselves. Moreover, this

---

<sup>467</sup> Florovsky, “Metafizicheskie predposylki utopizma” (The Metaphysical Presuppositions of Utopianism), *Put’* (The Way), June-July, 1926, p. 30.

<sup>468</sup> Berdyaev, *The Russian Revolution*, Ann Arbor, 1966, p. 58; quoted in Michael Burleigh, *Sacred Causes*, London: Harper Perennial, 2007, p. 41. The French composer Ravel composed his famous *Bolero* (1928) with its strong rhythm for a factory setting.



disillusion went very deep, it was reflected in the younger generation, among the students, even among the adolescents who were only beginning to live consciously. 'The authority of the older generation has been lowered still more in the eyes of the younger than is usual among fathers and sons...' wrote Professor V.I. Vernadsky in the Cadet *Yezhegodnik* of the newspaper *Rech'* for 1914.

"The fall of the old *intelligenty* beliefs engendered, in the period around 1910, a wave of suicides among the young students. This wave then began to fall and be converted into religious searchings. In higher education, where politics had completely died out - not so much because of the energetic repressive measures of L.A. Kasso, but rather as a result of the change in mood among the students themselves, - various religious conversation circles began to appear - a hitherto unheard-of phenomenon...

"Russian society began to depart from the well-beaten track; it no longer preached atheism, materialism and socialism with its former fanatical conviction. But this change did not reach the broad, semi-intellectual masses. There, on the contrary, the sowing of the 19th century had only just put forth shoots; there the old dogmas were still considered unquestionable, and with the growth of literacy they quickly spread among the people..."<sup>469</sup>

Moreover, there were still many *intelligenty* who clung stubbornly to the old, well-beaten track of rationalism. The most famous of these was Lev Tolstoy, who mistranslated the beginning of St. John's Gospel as: "In the beginning was reasoning..."

Tolstoy was brilliant at portraying the concrete life of men and at exposing the falsehoods of others, but remained blind to the truth that stood before him face-to-face. Thus *War and Peace* is justly famous for the superb vividness of its descriptions of free, living men and women; but one of the author's main messages is the perversely false one that man in all his thoughts, feelings and actions is completely determined... As Berlin writes: "At once insanely proud and filled with self-hatred, omniscient and doubting everything, cold and violently passionate, contemptuous and self-abasing, tormented and detached, surrounded by an adoring family, by devoted followers, by the admiration of the entire civilized world, and yet almost wholly isolated, he is the most tragic of the great writers, a desperate old man, beyond human aid, wandering self-blinded at Colonus."<sup>470</sup>

In 1910, still clinging to his rationalism and having abandoned Orthodoxy, he died, alone and still unreconciled with God, at a remote railway station while on his way to Optina, that citadel of the Orthodox faith which he revered

---

<sup>469</sup> Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaiia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, vol. II, 121, 122.

<sup>470</sup> Berlin, "The Hedgehog and the Fox", in *The Proper Study of Mankind*, p. 498.

in spite of himself. The scene was captured on cine-film, the first “scoop” of the new leading art of the twentieth century, cinematography. ...

To Tolstoy's sister, who was the nun Alexandra, his voluntary rejection of the truth was revealed in a vision: “When I returned from the burial of my brother Sergei to my home in the monastery, I had some kind of dream or vision which shook me to the depths of my soul. After I had completed my usual cell rule, I began to doze off, or fell into some kind of special condition between sleep and waking, which we monastics call a light sleep. I dropped off, and beheld... It was night. There was the study of Lev Nikolayevich. On the writing desk stood a lamp with a dark lampshade. Behind the desk, and leaning with his elbows on it, sat Lev Nikolayevich, and on his face there was the mark of such serious thought, and such despair, as I had never seen in him before... The room was filled with a thick, impenetrable darkness; the only illumination was of that place on the table and on the face of Lev Nikolayevich on which the light of the lamp was falling. The darkness in the room was so thick, so impenetrable, that it even seemed as if it were filled, saturated with some materialisation... And suddenly I saw the ceiling of the study open, and from somewhere in the heights there began to pour such a blindingly wonderful light, the like of which cannot be seen on earth; and in this light there appeared the Lord Jesus Christ, in that form in which He is portrayed in Rome, in the picture of the holy Martyr and Archdeacon Laurence: the all-pure hands of the Saviour were spread out in the air above Lev Nikolayevich, as if removing from invisible executioners the instruments of torture. It looks just like that in the picture. And this ineffable light poured and poured onto Lev Nikolayevich. But it was as if he didn't see it... And I wanted to shout to my brother: Levushka, look, look up!... And suddenly, behind Lev Nikolayevich, - I saw it with terror, - from the very thickness of the darkness I began to make out another figure, a terrifying, cruel figure that made me tremble: and this figure, placing both its hands from behind over the eyes of Lev Nikolayevich, shut out that wonderful light from him. And I saw that my Levushka was making despairing efforts to push away those cruel, merciless hands...

“At this point I came to, and, as I came to, I heard a voice speaking as it were inside me: 'The Light of Christ enlightens everyone!'"<sup>471</sup>

---

<sup>471</sup> I.M. Kontzevich, *Optina Pustyn' i ee Vremia* (Optina Desert and its Era), Jordanville: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1970, pp. 372-73.

## 35. THE ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION: (1) THE JEWS

If, as the writers of *Vekhi* believed, the root of the revolution was a nihilistic-messianic-chiliastic kind of faith built out of many strands of European and Jewish thought, the actual composition of forces that brought about the revolution was no less varied. We need to distinguish between three levels at which the revolution took place. First was the level of the out-and-out revolutionaries, often *intelligenty* who were supported by many from the industrial proletariat and the revolutionary-minded peasantry. They were aiming to destroy Russian tsarism and Russian Orthodox civilization completely before embarking on a world revolution that would dethrone God and traditional authority from the hearts and minds of all men everywhere. This level was led by Lenin, Trotsky and Stalin; its ethnic composition was mainly Jewish, but there were also Russians, Latvians, Georgians, Poles and others. They were possessed by the revolutionary faith to the greatest extent, and owed no allegiance to any nation or traditional creed or morality.

Secondly, there was the level of the Freemasons, mainly aristocratic and middle-class Duma parliamentarians and their supporters in the country at large, who were not aiming to destroy Russia completely, but only to remove the tsar and introduce a constitutional government on the English model. This level was led by Guchkov, Rodzyanko and Kerensky; it was composed mainly of Russians, but also contained most of the intelligentsia of the other nations of the empire. They believed in the revolutionary faith, but still had moral scruples derived from their Christian background.

Thirdly, there were the lukewarm Orthodox Christians, the great mass of ordinary Russians, who did not necessarily want either world revolution or a constitutional government, but who lacked the courage and the faith to act openly in support of Faith, Tsar and Fatherland. It is certain that if very many Russians had not become lukewarm in their faith, God would not have allowed the revolution to take place. After the revolution, many from this level, as well as individuals from the first two levels, seeing the terrible devastation that their lukewarmness had allowed to take place, bitterly repented and returned to the ranks of the confessing Orthodox Christians.

The extraordinary prominence of Jews in the revolution is a fact that must be related, at least in part, to the traditionally anti-Russian and anti-Christian attitude of Jewish culture, which is reflected in both of its major political offspring – Bolshevism and Zionism. The theist Jews who triumphed in Israel in 1917, and especially in 1948 after the foundation of the State of Israel, came from the same region and social background – the Pale of Settlement in Western Russia – as the atheist Jews who triumphed in Moscow in 1917, and sometimes even from the same families. One such family was that of Chaim Weitzmann, the first president of Israel, who in his *Autobiography* wrote that his own mother

was able to witness her sons' triumph both in Bolshevik Moscow and in Jerusalem...<sup>472</sup>

The simultaneous triumph of the Jews in Russia and Palestine was indeed an extraordinary "coincidence": Divine Providence drew the attention of all those with eyes to see this sign of the times when, in one column of newsprint in the London *Times* for November 9, 1917, there appeared two articles, the one announcing the outbreak of revolution in Petrograd, and the other – the promise of a homeland for the Jews in Palestine (the Balfour declaration). M. Heifetz also points to the coincidence in time between the October revolution and the Balfour declaration. "A part of the Jewish generation goes along the path of Herzl and Zhabotinsky. The other part, unable to withstand the temptation, fills up the band of Lenin and Trotsky and Stalin." "The path of Herzl and Bagritsky allowed the Jews to stand tall and immediately become not simply an equal nation with Russia, but a privileged one."<sup>473</sup>

Indeed, the Russian revolution may be regarded as one branch of that general triumph of Jewish power which we observe in the twentieth century in both East and West, in both Russia and America and Israel. The mainly Jewish nature of the world revolution cannot be doubted.

Thus Winston Churchill wrote: "It would almost seem as if the Gospel of Christ and the gospel of anti-Christ were designed to originate among the same people; and that this mystic and mysterious race had been chosen for the supreme manifestations, both of the Divine and the diabolical... From the days of 'Spartacus' Weishaupt to those of Karl Marx, and down to Trotsky (Russia), Bela Kun (Hungary), Rosa Luxembourg (Germany) and Emma Goldman (United States), this worldwide conspiracy for the overthrow of civilization and for the reconstitution of society on the basis of arrested development, of envious malevolence and impossible equality, has been steadily growing. It played, as a modern writer, Mrs. Nesta Webster, has so ably shown, a definitely recognizable part in the tragedy of the French Revolution. It has been the mainspring of every subversive movement during the nineteenth century; and now at last this band of extraordinary personalities from the underworld of the great cities of Europe and America have gripped the Russian people by the hair of their heads and have become practically the undisputed masters of that enormous empire. There is no need to exaggerate the part played in the creation of Bolshevism and in the bringing about of the Russian Revolution by these international and for the most part atheistical Jews. It is certainly a very great one; it probably outweighs all others."<sup>474</sup>

Liberals ascribed the revolutionary character of the Jews to antisemitism, and, in the Russian case, to pogroms and the multitude of restrictions placed on the Jews by the Russian tsars. However, as we have seen, far fewer Jews

---

<sup>472</sup> Weitzmann, *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weitzmann*, New York: Harper, 1949.

<sup>473</sup> Heifetz, "Nashi Obschie Uroki", 22, 1980, N 14, p. 162; in Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

<sup>474</sup> *Illustrated Sunday Herald*, February 8, 1920; quoted in Douglas Reed, *The Controversy of Zion*, Durban, S.A.: Dolphin Press, 1978, pp. 272-273.

died in the pogroms than Russian officials in terrorist attacks (1845 by the year 1909), while the restrictions were placed on the Jews in order to protect the Russian peasant, who was ruthlessly exploited by them. As the future Hieromartyr John Vostorgov said in 1906: "The Jews are restricted in their rights of residence not as a confessional unit, but as a predatory tribe that is dangerous in the midst of the peaceful population because of its exploitative inclinations, which... have found a religious sanction and support in the Talmud... Can such a confession be tolerated in the State, when it allows its followers to practise hatred and all kinds of deceit and harm towards other confessions, and especially Christians? ... The establishment of the Pale of Settlement is the softest of all possible measures in relation to such a confession. Moreover, is it possible in this case not to take account of the mood of the masses? But this mood cannot be changed only by issuing a law on the complete equality of rights of the Jews. On the contrary, this can only strengthen the embitterment of the people..."<sup>475</sup>

"Let us remember," writes Solzhenitsyn: "the legal restrictions on the Jews in Russia were never racial [as they were in Western Europe]. They were applied neither to the Karaites [who rejected the Talmud], nor to the mountain Jews, nor to the Central Asian Jews."<sup>476</sup>

In other words, restrictions were placed only on those Jews who practised the religion of the Talmud, because of its vicious anti-Christianity and double morality. Moreover, the restrictions were very generously applied. The boundaries of the Pale (a huge area twice the size of France) were extremely porous, allowing large numbers of Jews to acquire higher education and make their fortunes in Great Russia.

Indeed, so great was the Jewish domination of Russian trade and, most ominously, the Russian press by the time of the revolution that Stolypin wanted to remove the restrictions on the Jews. But in this case the Tsar resisted him, as his father had resisted Count Witte before him...<sup>477</sup>

This was not because the Tsar felt no responsibility to protect the Jews; he spoke about "my Jews", as he talked about "my Poles", "my Armenians" and "my Finns". And his freedom from anti-semitism is demonstrated by his reaction to the murder of Stolypin by a Jewish revolutionary, Bogrov, in Kiev on September 1, 1911. As Robert Massie writes: "Because Bogrov was a Jew,

---

<sup>475</sup> Vostorgov, in Fomin, S. and Fomina, T., *Rossia pered vtorym prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. II, p. 624.

<sup>476</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

<sup>477</sup> As Witte recorded in his *Memoirs*: "'Are you right to stand up for the Jews?' asked Alexander III. In reply Witte asked permission to answer the question with a question: 'Can we drown all the Russian Jews in the Black Sea? If we can, then I accept that resolution of the Jewish question. If not, the resolution of the Jewish question consists in giving them a chance to live. That is in offering them equal rights and equal laws.'" (Edvard Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar*, London: Arrow, 1993, p. 69). But Witte's reply misses the point, as if the choice lay between killing all the Jews or giving them complete equality. No State can give complete freedom to a section of the population that does not respect the law and endangers the lives or livelihoods of the majority.

the Orthodox population was noisily preparing a retaliatory pogrom. Frantic with fear, the city's Jewish population spent the night packing their belongings. The first light of the following day found the square before the railway station jammed with carts and people trying to squeeze themselves on to departing trains. Even as they waited, the terrified people heard the clatter of hoofs. An endless stream of Cossacks, their long lances dark against the dawn sky, rode past. On his own, Kokovtsev had ordered three full regiments of Cossacks into the city to prevent violence. Asked on what authority he had issued the command, Kokovtsev replied: 'As head of the government.' Later, a local official came up to the Finance Minister to complain, 'Well, Your Excellency, by calling in the troops you have missed a fine chance to answer Bogrov's shot with a nice Jewish pogrom.' Kokovtsev was indignant, but, he added, 'his sally suggested to me that the measures which I had taken at Kiev were not sufficient... therefore I sent an open telegram to all governors of the region demanding that they use every possible means - force if necessary - to prevent possible pogroms. When I submitted this telegram to the Tsar, he expressed his approval of it and of the measure I had taken in Kiev.'"478

In the end, the Pale of Settlement was destroyed, not by liberal politicians, but by right-wing generals. In 1915, as the Russian armies retreated before the Germans, some Jews were accused of spying for the enemy and were shot, while the Jewish population in general was considered unreliable. And so a mass evacuation of the Jews from the Pale was ordered by the authorities. But the results were disastrous. Hordes of frightened Jews fleeing eastwards blocked up vital roads along which supplies for the front were destined. Landing up in large cities such as Moscow and Petrograd where there had been no large Jewish population before, these disgruntled new arrivals only fuelled the revolutionary fires. And so was created precisely the situation that the Pale of Settlement had been designed to avert. As the Jews poured from the western regions into the major cities of European Russia, they soon acquired prominent executive positions in all major sectors of government and the economy...

---

478 Massie, *op. cit.*, p. 229.

## 36. THE ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION: (2) THE FREEMASONS

If the October revolution was largely engineered by Bolshevik Jews, the February revolution which preceded it and made it possible was engineered by Masonic Russians under the directions of the Grand Orient of Paris.

The Bolsheviks were not in general Masons (after the revolution they suppressed Masonry in Russia), but played the same role as the Illuminati in the French revolution – that of ultimate victors. But the question arises: were any of the leading Bolsheviks also Masons?

According to Subdeacon Konstantin Preobrazhensky, formerly a lieutenant-general of the KGB: “One of the leaders of the KGB Intelligence, Colonel Lolly Zamoisky, was also a famous journalist and writer. He was studying masons on his own. Once I invited him to read a lecture on them for us, less than ten officers, members of Group ‘A’ of Directorate ‘T’ of the KGB First Directorate. Group ‘A’ was a group of assistants to the head of scientific and technical intelligence, Major General Leonid Zaitsev. Zamoisky told a lot of interesting things. In particular, he said that Lenin has left his signature in the visitors’ book of one of the Masonic lounges [lodges?] in Switzerland, introducing himself as ‘brother-visitor’.”<sup>479</sup>

I.L. Solonevich sees the Masonic aristocracy as no less guilty of the revolution than the Jews: “The whole of the nineteenth century was filled with the struggle of the autocracy against the aristocratic elite. In this struggle both warring sides perished. However, the monarchy perished with some chance of resurrection, but the aristocracy – with absolutely no chance (I am speaking of the destruction of the aristocracy as a ruling class).

“The roots of this struggle go deep into the past – perhaps as far as Kalita and the Terrible one. But we shall not descend to the depths of the ages. We shall only recall that while the mystical beginning of the Russian revolution is usually ascribed to the Decembrists, there were no Jews among them. Then there came Belinsky and Chernyshevsky and Bakunin and Herzen and Plekhanov and Lavrov and Milyukov and Lenin and many other sowers of ‘the rational, the good and the eternal’. In the course of a whole century they shook and undermined the building of Russian statehood. All this work was covered by the moral authority of Prince Peter Alexeyevich Krapotkin, who had not been bought by the Jews, and Count Leo Nikolayevich Tolstoy, who, although taking no bribes from the Jews, undermined both the State and the Church and even the family very thoroughly.

“And any Berdichev chemist from the [[Jewish] Bund or from the Bolsheviks, in his struggle against the order created by history, could have taken me by the

---

<sup>479</sup> Preobrazhensky, personal communication, July 26, 2014.

lapel and said: 'Listen, are you an intelligent person? Can't you see that I am walking in the steps of the best lights of Russian thought?'

"And what could I as 'an intelligent person' reply to this chemist? Truly he was walking in their steps! And Chernyshevsky really was a 'light'...

"If we, out the whole of this extraordinarily complicated combination of factors that was making and supporting the revolution, concentrate our fire only on one - on Jewry, - then we have lost the plot. It's all not so simple. They say: the Jew Jacob Schiff gave money for the Russian revolution. Yes, he did. But [the Old Ritualist] Savva Morozov also gave money for the same revolution. And Germany gave more than any - not the Germany of Weimar and Ebert, and still less Hitler, but the Germany of the Hohenzollerns... It's no secret for anybody that all these 'entrenched truths' were published on German money, while in the Kseshinskaya palace German marks were valued above all... But if you simplify the matter to such a degree that one can make a revolution in the world with money, then the October revolution was made on German money. *À la guerre comme à la guerre*. However, it was with the closest and most powerful participation of almost the whole of Russian Jewry...

"And so: the elite of the aristocracy laid the main weight of the struggle against the monarchy on their own shoulders. Then they were joined by the 'raznochintsy', and by the very last decades of the past century this anti-monarchist front received powerful support from the whole of Russian Jewry."480

Fr. Lev Lebedev writes: "Soon after the manifesto of October 17, 1905 which gave certain freedoms, legal Masonic lodges, which before had been banned, began to appear. And although, practically speaking, secret Masonry never ceased to exist in Russia, the absence of legal lodges was for the Masons a great obstacle... A 'reserve' was being prepared in France by the 'Grand Orient'. Already in the 60s some Russians had entered French Masonry in Paris. Among them was the writer I.S. Turgenev, later - Great Prince Nicholas Mikhailovich (the 'Bixiot' lodge), and then the philosopher V. Vyrubov, the psychiatrist N. Bazhenov, the electrophysicist P. Yablochkov, the historian M. Kovalevsky. In 1887 the 'Cosmos' (no. 288) lodge was founded for Russians - the writer A. Amphiteatrov, the zemstvo activist V. Maklakov and the activist of culture V.N. Nemirovich-Danchenko. From 1900 the Masonic Russian School of social sciences began its work in Paris, and there arose yet another Russian lodge, 'Mount Sinai'.481 At the beginning of 1906, with the agreement of the 'Grand Orient of France', M. Kovalevsky opened a lodge of French obedience in Russia. The first such lodge was joined by the already mentioned Kovalevsky, Bazhenov, Maklakov, Nemirovich-Danchenko, and also new people such as S.

---

480 Solonevich, "Rossia, Revoliutsia i Yevrejstvo" (Russia, the Revolution and Jewry), *Rossia i Revoliutsia* (Russia and the Revolution), Moscow, 2007, pp. 26-27.

481 Both 'Cosmos' and 'Mount Sinai' were under the Supreme Council of the Ancient and Accepted Scottish Rite, according to the Mason Boris Telepneff, Russian Assistant Consul in Paris in 1922 (*An Outline of the History of Russian Freemasonry*). (V.M.)



Kotlyarovsky, E. Kedrin (the jurist), the historian V.O. Klyuchevsky, Prince S. Urusov, the Jewish doctor and lawyer M. Margulies, the diplomat I. Loris-Melikov and others. This lodge had two main affiliates: in Moscow – ‘Regeneration’, and in St. Petersburg – ‘Polar Star’. They were ‘opened’ by two high-ranking Masons, Sencholle and Boulet, who came specially from France. Later, in 1908, they gave ‘Polar Star’ the right to open new lodges in Russia without the prior agreement of the French. Many lodges with various names appeared [such as ‘the Iron Ring’ in Nizhni], but the leading role continued to be played by ‘Polar Star’, which was led by Count A. Orlov-Davydov, and only Masons of no lower rank than the 18th degree were admitted into it. The Masons were also joined by the Cadet A. Kolyubakin, Prince Bebutov, Baron G. Maidel, the public library worker A. Braudo, the historians N. Pavlov-Silvansky and P. Schegolev, the lawyers S. Balavinsky and O. Goldovsky, the Octobrist A.I. Guchkov, his comrade in the party M.V. Rodzyanko, the Cadet N.V. Nekrasov, the workers’ party A.F. Kerensky (in 1912, through the ‘Ursa Minor’ lodge<sup>482</sup>), the Mensheviks A. Galpern, Chkheidze, the Bolsheviks Trotsky, Lunacharsky, Skvortsov-Stepanov, Krasin, Boky, Sereda, Chicherin, the millionaires N.I. Tereschenko, A. Konovalov, P.P. Ryabushinsky (with his two brothers), Prince V. Obolensky, Countess S.V. Panina, Baron V. Meller-Zakomelsky (not to be confused with the general), M. Gorky, his wife E. Peshkova, his godson the Jew Zenobius Peshkov (the brother of Ya. Sverdlov), their friend E.D. Kuskova (a female Mason of the higher degrees), her husband S. Prokopovich, Prince G. Lvov (president of the Zemstvo and City Unions), Prince A. Khatistov (the city commandant of Tiflis), Prince P. Dolgorukov, Major-General P. Popovtsev (of the 33rd degree), Mark Aldanov, Fyodorov, Chelnokov, the Menshevik G. Aronson, the artist Mark Chagall, the cadet V. Velikhov and very many other prominent activists of that time. The lists of Russian Masons do not contain the name of the Cadet historian P. Milyukov (he even concealed his Masonry), but only because he had for a long time been in purely French Masonry... Masonic lodges appeared and functioned also, besides Moscow and Petersburg, in Kiev, Odessa, Nizhni-Novgorod, Minsk, Vitebsk, Tver, Samara, Saratov, Tiflis, Kutaisi and other cities. In the words of Kuskova, before 1917 the whole of Russia was covered by a net of Masonic lodges of which many thousands of people were members.”<sup>483</sup>

The Mason Boris Telepneff wrote: “The existence of Masonic Lodges was discovered by the Russian Government in 1909; it also became known to the authorities that they were of French origin. It was then decided by the Russian Lodges to suspend work... This was done accordingly until 1911, when some of their members decided to renew their activities with due prudence. One would not call these activities Masonic in any sense, as their chief aim was

---

<sup>482</sup> According to George Sprukts, Kerensky also belonged to the “Grand Orient of the Peoples of Russia” and the Scottish Rite (32nd degree) (“Re: [paradosis] Re: White army”, [orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com](mailto:orthodox-tradition@yahoogroups.com), June 9, 2004). (V.M.)

<sup>483</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.* “Telepneff reported that two Russian Lodges had been formed in Paris under the auspices of the Grand Lodge of France while a Russian Lodge existed in Berlin, the Northern Star Lodge, under a warrant of the Grand Lodge of the Three Globes.” (Richard Rhoda, “Russian Freemasonry: A New Dawn”, a paper read at the Orient Lodge no. 15 on June 29, 1996, <http://members.aol.com/houltonme/rus/htm>).

purely political – the abolition of the autocracy, and a democratic regime in Russia; they acknowledged allegiance to the Grand Orient of France. This political organization comprised about forty Lodges in 1913. In 1915-1916 disagreements arose between their members who belonged to two political parties (the constitutional democrats and the progressives) and could not agree on a common policy. Ten Lodges became dormant. The remaining thirty Lodges continued to work, and took part in the organization of the 1917 March revolution and in the establishment of the Provisional Government. Their political aim being attained, the organization began to decay; twenty-eight Lodges existed on the eve of the Bolshevik revolution, and since then most of their members have left Russia.”<sup>484</sup>

Lebedev continues: “Besides lodges of the ‘Polar Star’ structure there also existed lodges of a mystical tendency. Among them were the Martinists (old-style) headed by a ‘Great Master’, Count Musin-Pushkin, which was joined by many from the aristocracy and even from the Imperial Family – Great Princes Nicholas Nikolayevich [supreme commander of the Russian armed forces in 1914-15], Peter Nikolayevich and George Mikhailovich.<sup>485</sup> Among them at one time was the noted Mason and occultist Papius, who was very active. Papius even hoped to draw his Majesty Nicholas II, but was not successful! Among the mystics were the Masons Philaletes, who were joined by Great Prince Alexander Mikhailovich (the brother of George) and a string of aristocrats, about one thousand people in all. Their main occupation was spiritist séances (supposed ‘communion’ with the spirits and souls of the dead), which quite a lot of the intelligentsia were interested in at that time. <sup>486</sup> Finally, there was the directly Satanist lodge ‘Lucifer’, which included many from the ‘creative’ sort, basically decadents such as Vyacheslav Ivanov, V. Bryusov and A. Bely...

“On the direct orders of the ‘Grand Orient of France’, Masonry extended its tentacles into the State apparatus, into the diplomatic corps. Thus according to the data of N. Verberova in her book, *People and Lodges*<sup>487</sup>, the Masons in the diplomatic service were: K.D. Nabokov (England), A.D. Kandaurov (France), G.P. Zabello (Italy), A.V. Nekludov (Sweden), I.G. Loris-Melikov (Norway),

---

<sup>484</sup> Telepneff, *op. cit.*

<sup>485</sup> Telepneff also reported that “an independent lodge of the so-called Martiniste Rite was formed among the entourage of Czar Nicholas II under the name of ‘The Cross and the Star’... which suspended its work in 1916.” Perhaps Great Prince Nicholas Mikhailovich Romanov, the Chairman of the Russian History Society, was a member of this lodge. Edvard Radzinsky (*The Last Tsar*, London: Arrow Books, 1993, p. 111) writes that he “was a mystic, a mason, and a freethinker... In the family he was called Monsieur Egalité, as the eighteenth-century liberal, the Duc d’Orléans, was called.” (V.M.)

<sup>486</sup> “Other Martiniste lodges opened ... ‘Apollonius’ in St Petersburg (1910), ‘St John’ in Moscow (1911), ‘St Andrew’ in Kiev (1912). A very curious lodge existed among the Russian Navy League, calling themselves ‘Philaletes’; beside philanthropic and intellectual work, it pursued a political aim in opposition to that of the Grand Orient lodges, namely the support of the monarchy of Nicholas II. Probably this movement arose in connection with the Paris branch of the Swiss Order of the Chevaliers ‘Philaletes’ which established two lodges in St Petersburg: ‘The Pyramid of the North’ and ‘The Star of the North’. Both pursued studies of mysticism and symbolism.” (Telepneff, quoted in “Russian Freemasonry” by Worshipful Brother Dennis Stocks, Barron Barnett Lodge. <http://www.casebook.org/dissertations/freemasonry/russianfm.html>). (V.M.)

<sup>487</sup> Nina Berberova, *Liudi i Lozhi: russkie masonry XX stoletia*, New York, 1986. (V.M.)

K.M. Onu (Switzerland), B.A. Bakhmetev (USA), N.A. Kudashev (China), A.I. Scherbatsky (Brazil), etc.

“All the Masonic lodges in Russia were linked and communicated with each other and with foreign centres, first of all with the ‘Grand Orient of France’. And all of them together were ruled by the purely Jewish community (called sometimes a ‘lodge’ and sometimes an ‘order’) Bnai Brith, which was at the head of united world Zionism, with its centre in the USA.

“For the western centres, the most important thing from a political point of view was Russian political Masonry of the ‘Polar Star’ structure. In 1909 it declared that it was liquidating itself. This was a manoeuvre, well-known from the times of [the Decembrist] P. Pestel, whose aim, on the one hand, was to get rid of ‘ballast’ and spies that had penetrated into its midst, and on the other hand, to create a new secret union for the political struggle that would not be subject to the suspicion and danger its legal ‘brothers’ were in...

“As we can see, Masonry contained prominent activists and members of the leadership of almost all the parties and major organizations. Kerensky later recalled that in Masonry they almost never allowed themselves to violate the unity of the ‘brotherhood’ by party disagreements. But ‘in public’ a sharp polemic between the parties went on, a struggle that sometimes seemed irreconcilable to the public (the ‘profanes’)! So that whatever party came to power in the event of the revolution, there would in any case be ‘brother-masons’ at the helm of this power!”<sup>488</sup>

Yana Sedova writes: “This group of Masons – about 300 people – had absolutely no interest in the aims of Masonry and rituals. They had their own clearly defined aim – to gain political power in the Russian Empire...”<sup>489</sup> Their numbers were too small to effect a revolution on their own; but they were hoping that a coming Great War would make their task easier...

---

<sup>488</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 448-451.

<sup>489</sup> Sedova, “Byl li masonskij zagovor protiv russoj monarkhii?” (Was there a masonic plot against the Russian Monarchy?), *Nasha Strana*, November 24, 2006, N 2808, p. 4.

### 37. THE ACTORS IN THE REVOLUTION: (3) THE CHRISTIANS

Long before the Jews began to join terrorist organizations, or the intelligentsia to weave plots against the tsar, the Russian people began to fall away from the faith. This was mentioned by Saints Seraphim of Sarov and Tikhon of Zadonsk; and St. Ignaty Brianchaninov spoke about “hypocrisy”, “scribes and Pharisees” and “the salt losing its savour”. By the eve of the revolution this decline was still more noticeable. “Are many Orthodox Christians firm in the faith which they confess?” asked St. Joseph of Optina. “Do not the greater portion of them have something of a weak faith, like a tiny spark which might be extinguished at any moment?”<sup>490</sup>

The Church hierarchy was corrupted by renovationists such as Archbishop Sergei (Stragorodsky) and Bishop Antonin (Granovsky). There were few bishops who spoke out openly against the revolutionary madness... The reputation of the hierarchs had plummeted; they were seen as mere executors of the will of the state.” Thus the future Metropolitan Benjamin (Fedchenko) wrote: “We had ceased to be ‘salted with salt’ and therefore were not able to salt others.”<sup>491</sup>

As a result, people of all classes – from the peasants and workers to the grand dukes and tsars – sought religious enlightenment outside the official Orthodox Church. As in the 1870s, there was a “going to the people”, in search of “elders” and “healers” and “prophets”, of whom the most famous was Rasputin...

In the monasteries it was the same story. In the years 1908-13 there was a series of rebellions against the abbots and elders of some of the best monasteries in Russia: Optina, Solovki, Glinsk. These were usually linked with monks who had entered the monasteries during the revolutionary years 1905-07. The future Elder Gabriel of Seven Lakes was warned by St. Ambrose of Optina “to go wherever he please, so as only not to live in Moscow”, where monasticism was at such a low level.<sup>492</sup> A generation later, in 1909, Archbishop Nikon (Rozhdenstvensky) pointed to many serious failings of contemporary monasticism at an All-Russian Monastic Conference.<sup>493</sup> In the same year, St. Barsanuphy of Optina said: “Contemporary monasticism strives in all things to fulfil its own will. Abba Dorotheus says: ‘I know of no other fall for a monk than as a consequence of his own will.’”<sup>494</sup>

---

<sup>490</sup> Holy Transfiguration Monastery, Boston, *The Elder Joseph of Optina*, Boston, Mass.: Holy Transfiguration Monastery, 1984, p. 284.

<sup>491</sup> Fedchenko, in Sergei Firsov, *Russkaia Tserkov' Nakanune Peremenov* (The Russian Church on the Eve of the Changes), Moscow, 2002, p. 450.

<sup>492</sup> Fr. Simeon Kholmogorov, *One of the Ancients*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood, 1988, p. 67.

<sup>493</sup> <http://www.pravoslavie.ru/sm/30988.htm>.

<sup>494</sup> St. Barsanuphiy in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, p. 409.

Elder Gerasimus of Alaska relates how Elder Joasaph of St. Tikhon's monastery, Kaluga province, would often say in those pre-revolutionary years: "Misha, you see how monks are complaining - either the food is bad or something else is not good enough! Misha, grumbling is a frightful sin. For grumbling, God punished the chosen Israelite people not just once. Palestine is not far from Egypt, but the Lord led the Jews a whole forty years, and not many of them reached the Promised Land. See what a terrible sin it is - grumbling against God. And why should monks grumble? They usually have a warm cell, decent food, and enough bread to eat any time they want it. They have both shoes and clothing. While our peasant, having a family, often lacks those things, and then there are crop failures, and they have to pay taxes. And yet many of them are bearing this horrendous burden. Oh Misha, you'll see, the Lord will send terrible trials. He will take everything away from us, and then we will say, "Bad times have come; we have nothing to eat." Misha, this will inevitably take place if we do not repent; for such a sin God will not spare either our luxurious temples or the beautiful belfries, or the bells, or even the whole of our brotherhood - everything, everything will be taken away for our sinful grumbling."<sup>495</sup>

Churchmen were particularly guilty of failing to support the monarchical principle. Thus in May, 1913, the Holy Synod took the important decision to forbid clergy from taking part in political movements. However, since most clergy affected by this decree were working in the monarchist "Black Hundreds" movement, this was, in effect, an anti-monarchist move; it was hardly consistent with the Epistle that the Synod issued in February, 1913 on the occasion of the 200th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty, in which they declared that "only in an unbroken union of the Church with the state is the strength and might of our native Rus'". As a result of the May decree, such prominent monarchist clergy as Archimandrite Vitaly (Maximenko) and Protopriest John Vostorgov were forced to abandon the "Black Hundreds" movement. As a result, the movement went into a sharp decline...

Again, in 1916 all 45 priests who were deputies in the Duma and were considered "rightists" presented the Tsar with a petition to re-establish "conciliarity" in the Church and stop using the clergy "as an instrument of the government's internal politics". At such a critical moment in the country's life such a petition was more than a little misplaced... When the liberal "Progressive Bloc" had been formed in 1915, more than half of these priests joined it.

All this demonstrated how the revolutionary spirit had penetrated even into the very heart of Holy Rus', the church hierarchy.<sup>496</sup>

---

<sup>495</sup> Fr. Leonid Kavelin, *Elder Macarius of Optina*, Platina, Ca.: St. Herman of Alaska Brotherhood Press, 1995, pp. 276-277.

<sup>496</sup> Hieromonk Simeon (Kalugin), "Optinskaia Smuta 1910-1912 gg. V kontekste istoricheskikh sobytij" (The Optina disturbances of 1910-1912 in the context of historical events), <http://cliuchinskaya.blogspot.co.uk/2016/01/1910-1912.html>

A particular characteristic of the pre-revolutionary period – and a propaganda gift for the revolutionaries – was the extravagance of the rich and their flagrant immorality. The Romanovs – with the shining exceptions of the Tsar and Tsarina, Great Princess Elizabeth and some others – were among the worst sinners. Thus, as Nils Johanssen writes, there was the Tsar’s uncle, Great Prince Alexei Alexeyevich – General-Admiral and head of the whole fleet. “His lover, the French dancer Eliza Baletta, quickly became one of the richest women in Russia. Thus the money that had been assigned to buy new cruisers in England was spent by the prince on diamonds... After the Tsushima catastrophe the theatre public whistled both at him and at his passion. ‘Prince Tsushima!’ they cried at the courtier. ‘The blood of our sailors is on your diamonds!’ – this was directed at the Frenchwoman. On June 2, 1905 Alexis Alexeyevich was forced to go into retirement. He took his stolen capital and together with Baletta set off for France.”<sup>497</sup>

The increasing hard-heartedness of wealthy Russian Christians to the poor was bewailed by many leading churchmen, such as St. John of Kronstadt. Almost the only thing shared by St. John and his ideological opposite, Lev Tolstoy, was their condemnation of the rich. Thus Tolstoy wrote already in 1886 in *What Then Must We Do?*: “The hatred and contempt of the oppressed masses are increasing, and the physical and moral forces of the wealthy classes are weakening; the deception on which everything depends is wearing out, and the wealthy classes have nothing to console themselves with in this mortal danger.

“To return to the old ways is not possible; only one thing is left for those who do not wish to change their way of life, and that is to hope that ‘things will last my time’ – after that let happen what may. That is what the blind crowd of the rich are doing, but the danger is ever growing and the terrible catastrophe draws near...”<sup>498</sup>

Both rich and poor tended to forget the Christian teaching on social inequality, namely, that it is an opportunity for the rich to show compassion and for the poor to display patience. For, as Bishop Nikolai Velimirovich wrote, “it is God’s desire that men be unequal in externals: riches, power, status, learning, position and so forth. But he does not recommend any sort of competitiveness in this. God desires that men compete in the multiplying of the inner virtues.”<sup>499</sup>

But the rich in every age have been corrupt. What of the poor?...

---

<sup>497</sup> Johansen, “Lovushka dlia Imperatora” (A Trap for the Emperor), *Kul'tura*, January 8, 2015.

<sup>498</sup> Tolstoy, in A.N. Wilson, *Tolstoy*, London: Atlantic Books, 2012, pp. 362-363.

<sup>499</sup> Velimirovich, *Homilies*, Birmingham: Lazarica Press, volume 2.

In the villages and factories, as we have seen, revolutionary propaganda made deep inroads. Although only a minority of peasants took part in the burning of landowners' estates in the 1905 revolution, by 1917 the experience of the war and the lying propaganda directed against the Tsar and his family had sapped trust in the authorities, increasing the numbers of deserters, thieves and arsonists. In the elections to the Constituent Assembly in 1917 no less than 80% of the population voted for socialist deputies.<sup>500</sup> Moreover, support for the Bolsheviks in the elections, as Richard Pipes writes, "came not from the region of Jewish concentration, the old Pale of Settlement, but from the armed forces and the cities of Great Russia, which had hardly any Jews".<sup>501</sup> So blame for the Russian revolution must fall on Russians as well as Jews, and not only on the aristocratic or Masonic Russians, but on large swathes of the Christian working population.

What of "the vanguard of the revolution", the industrial workers? In 1917, writes Smith, "there were still only 3.6 million workers in Russia's factories and mines, yet their concentration in particular regions and in relatively large enterprises gave them a political clout out of all proportion to their numbers, Mainly recruited from the peasants - 'snatched from the plough and hurled into the factory furnace' in L.D. Trotsky's memorable phrase - they varied considerably in the extent to which they were tied to the land, involved in urban culture, educated, and skilled. There were big differences, for example, between the skilled metalworkers of Vyborg district in Petrograd, the textile-workers of the Moscow industrial region, and the workers from the mining settlements of the Urals. Nevertheless the proportion of workers who had severed their ties with the village and who were becoming socialized into the urban industrial environment was increasing. Towns provided workers with cultural opportunities, such as evening classes, clubs, libraries, theatres, and mass entertainment, and exposed them to the subversive political ideas of Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. The wretched conditions in which workers lived, the drudgery of their work and their pitiful wages heightened their sense of separateness not only from the government but from privileged society in general.

"Following the general strike of 1905, the autocracy conceded limited legalization of trade unions, but employers showed little desire to reform the authoritarian system of industrial relations. Moreover, since the response of the authorities to strikes and demonstrations was to send in police and Cossacks, workers were easily politicized, seeing in the state and capitalists a single mechanism of oppression. Deprived the change to pursue improvement by gradualistic means, Russian workers became the most strike-prone in Europe..."<sup>502</sup>

\*

---

500 Edward Roslof, *Red Priests: Renovatism, Russian Orthodoxy, and Revolution, 1905-1946*, Indiana University Press, 2002, p. 15.

501 Pipes, *op.cit.*, p. 113.

502 Smith, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

The Tsar was blamed for everything, although, as we have seen, he did much to help the peasants, and did his best for the workers by his personal generosity and by introducing good labour legislation. However, the problems associated with rapid industrialization were virtually insoluble in all countries, and were hardly the Tsar's fault. He just had the extra problem of very rapid demographic expansion, shortage of funds (income tax was not introduced until 1916) and a constant barrage of anti-tsarist propaganda from all classes at home and from the Jewish press at home and abroad...

The fact is, as F. Vinberg writes: "Everyone was guilty! Both the higher circles of the nobility, and the major and minor merchants, and the representatives of science, and the servant classes, and in particular the adulterers of the word, the corrupters of thought, many Russian writers of the last decades, lawyers and professors: for all these categories of Russian citizens there can be no forgiveness for the great crime they committed."503

And so Ivan Solonevich's words had a very wide reference: "With the substitution of faith in absolute Good with faith in relative sausages, everything else also begins to take on a relative character, including man. With the loss of faith in God, loss of faith in man is also lost. The Christian principle, 'love your neighbour as yourself', for your neighbour is *also* a part of absolute Good, is exchanged for another principle: 'man is a means for the production of sausages'. The feeling of absolute morality is lost... Consequently faith ceases to exist not only in man generally, but also in one's 'neighbour' and even in the neighbour himself. And then begins mutual extermination..."504

A particular vice of the simple people was drunkenness. The future hieromartyr Bishop Herman (Ryashentsev) of Vyazniki wrote: "The most evil infirmity of our countryside and the strongest brake on all real enlightenment and spiritual growth is alcohol. If in antiquity 'Rus' used to drink with gladness', now it has turned into a passion and a chronic illness, and our people not only drinks away its last substance, an excess of which destiny never spoiled them with, but, what is worst of all, it drinks away its mind, its conscience, its soul, the man himself. On the soil richly watered with alcohol there develop card games, interspersed with pearls of foul language, and there grow quarrels and fights, those eternal companions of drunkenness.

"And new infirmities are added to these: the sowing of our political innovators brings forth abundant shoots: they develop lack of respect to the person and to parents, an easy attitude to other people's property. Instances of thievery and violence become more frequent. Add to that a distorted manifestation of an incorrectly understood notion of the freedom of the

---

503 Vinberg, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

504 I.L. Solonevich, *Narodnaia Monarkhia* (The People's Monarchy), Minsk, 1998, pp. 384, 385.



personality, which is reflected in the fall of morality among the young, and you receive quite a full picture of the spiritual life in the countryside..."<sup>505</sup>

The general condition of the Russian Christian people on the eve of the Great War was described by Dmitri Merezhkovsky as follows: "If you asked me what is the main characteristic of Russian people in our days, I would reply: loneliness. Never and nowhere have there been so many lonely people as now in Russia. Even those who not long ago were sociable, have suddenly become solitary. People are dispersing like iron filings bound together by a magnet when the magnet has lost its strength: they are falling out of society like a fish out of a holy sweepnet..."<sup>506</sup>

And the loneliest of all was the Tsar, upon whom fell the whole weight of the preservation of the Orthodox commonwealth and the lives of tens of millions of people. While he might consult with many, very few, if any, could comprehend the huge complexity of the questions that faced him. And only he could take the momentous decisions: to fight or not to fight, to rule or not to rule, to resist the spirit of the age or go along with it...

---

<sup>505</sup> *Pis'ma Vladyki Germana* (The Letters of Bishop Herman), Moscow: St. Tikhon Theological Institute, Moscow, 2004, p. 13.

<sup>506</sup> Merezhkovsky, *Bylo i Budet* (It was and shall be).

### 38. THE BEILIS TRIAL AND THE JEWISH “BLOOD LIBEL”

In 1911, a Christian boy, Andrew Yushchinsky, a student at a theological school, was killed in Kiev. “He had been killed in a bestial and unusual manner,” writes Solzhenitsyn. “He had been stabbed 47 times, moreover with an evident knowledge of anatomy – into the cranial vein, into the veins and arteries of the neck, into the liver, the kidneys, the lungs and the heart, with the evident aim of draining him of all blood. Moreover, judging from the blood flows, he had been alive and in a standing position (and, of course, bound and with his mouth gagged). Only a very skilled criminal could have done this – and not on his own. The murdered [child] was discovered a week later in a cave on the territory of the factory of Zaitsev. But the cave was not the site of the murder... The murder coincided with the approach of the Jewish Pascha and, supposedly, of the laying of the foundation of a new synagogue on the territory of Zaitsev (a Jew). Four months after the murder a worker at Zaitsev’s factory, Menachem Mendel Beilis, 37 years old, was arrested.”<sup>507</sup>

The police seriously bungled the investigation, and there were many irregularities. For example, the barn in which the murder was suspected to have taken place was burned to the ground, and two important witnesses, the sons of Vera Cheberiak, who were friends of Yushchinsky, mysteriously died. The trial, which became an international *cause célèbre*, eventually began over two years later with a multitude of expert and non-expert witnesses (many who were called did not turn up). The jury was split (6 to 6), and Beilis was acquitted. However, it was established that the murder had been carried out in a ritual manner...<sup>508</sup>

In order to understand the significance of this trial, it is necessary briefly to review the roots of “the Jewish question” in Russia and of the so-called Jewish “blood libel”.

By 1914 there were about seven million Jews in the Russian empire – the largest non-Slavic ethnic minority. Most of them lived in the Pale of Settlement, a very large area in the west of Russia approximately the size of France and Germany combined. Russian law, very loosely observed, confined them to this area, but on religious, not racial grounds – the sacred book of the Jews, the Talmud, is so hostile to Christ and Christians, allowing all manner of crimes to be committed by Jews against Christians, that those who follow it were deemed to be a threat to the lives and livelihoods of Christians. That these restrictions were indeed religious and not racial is proved by the fact that the Karaite Jews, who did not accept the Talmud, the Mountain Jews of the Caucasus, who were

---

<sup>507</sup> Solzhenitsyn, *Dvesti Let Vmeste* (Two Hundred Years Together), Moscow, 2001, vol. 1, p. 445.

<sup>508</sup> See M.V. Danilushkin, *Istoria Russkoj Pravoslavnoj Tserkvi, 1917-70* (A History of the Russian Orthodox Church, 1917-70), St. Petersburg, 1997, vol. 1, pp. 784-793; Alexander Solzhenitsyn, *op. cit.*, pp. 444-451; Oleg Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia’s Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, ch. 35.

strongly tainted with paganism, and Jews who became Christians of any denomination, were given equal rights with the rest of the population.<sup>509</sup>

Moreover, permission to live outside the Pale was given to various categories of Jews: Siberian colonists, domestic servants, artisans, university graduates (one-fifth of the students of Kharkov university were Jews), businessmen, industrialists, bankers and others. This meant that in spite of the discriminatory laws there were considerable colonies of Jews throughout the empire and even in the capital, which enabled them to play a prominent role in the cultural and commercial life of pre-revolutionary Russia. In all, Jews made up about a third of Russia's total trading community.

In spite of the considerable opportunities thus presented to Jews in the Russian Empire, the traditionalist, rabbi-dominated Talmudic Jews of the Pale continued to think of Christians and Christian society as unclean and despicable. "The eminent Jewish-Russian lawyer, Genrikh Sliozberg," write Kyril Fitzlyon and Tatiana Browning, "never forgot the 'real grief' of his family and relations when they discovered that his father had sent him to a Russian grammar school. His school uniform they found particularly irritating, sinful even. It was, they thought, 'an apostate's garb', and his mother and grandmother cried bitterly every time they saw him in it.' Again, 'the Russian-Jewish revolutionary, Lev Deutsch, writing in 1923, clearly remembered the time when the Jews 'considered it sinful to learn Russian, and its use was allowed only if absolutely essential and, of course, only for speaking to Christians (the *goyim*).'"<sup>510</sup>

It was in this fanatical atmosphere that both Communist and Zionist propaganda made inroads into Jewish youth. As Chaim Weitzmann recalled in his *Autobiography*, zealots of both types were to be found in his own family, being united only in their hatred of Orthodox Russia.<sup>511</sup> Such sentiments were bound to lead to a reaction on the part of the surrounding population. Moreover, Jewish money-lenders exploited Russian peasants who wished to buy their freedom after Alexander II's emancipation of the serfs in 1861. The government tried to help with generous, low-interest loans, and on several occasions cancelled the debts outright; but the remaining need was filled by less generous Jews, who stepped in with much tougher, high-interest loans.

The pogroms of the oppressed Ukrainian peasantry against the oppressor Jewish money-lenders provided the excuse which international Jewry, together with its "Christian" front, the secularised intelligentsia of Russia and the West, needed. Soon a vast campaign was being whipped up against "the sick man of Europe", the so-called "prison of the peoples". Jewish and Socialist propaganda distorted the significance of these events, obscuring their causes,

---

<sup>509</sup> "Let us remember," writes Solzhenitsyn: "the legal restrictions on the Jews in Russia were never racial [as they were in Western Europe]. They were applied neither to the Karaites [who rejected the Talmud], nor to the mountain Jews, nor to the Central Asian Jews." (*op. cit.*, p. 292).

<sup>510</sup> Fitzlyon and Browning, *Russia Before the Revolution*, London: Penguin books, 1977, p. 46.

<sup>511</sup> *Trial and Error: The Autobiography of Chaim Weitzmann*, New York: Harper, 1949.

hiding the extremely provocative behaviour of Jewish gangs, and quite unjustly accusing the Church and the State, and in particular the Tsar, of complicity in these crimes.

The innocence of the government and Tsar is illustrated by their reaction to the assassination by the Jewish revolutionary Bogrov of Prime Minister Stolypin in Kiev Opera House in 1911. Robert Massie writes: "Because Bogrov was a Jew, the Orthodox population was noisily preparing a retaliatory pogrom. Frantic with fear, the city's Jewish population spent the night packing their belongings. The first light of the following day found the square before the railway station jammed with carts and people trying to squeeze themselves on to departing trains. Even as they waited, the terrified people heard the clatter of hoofs. An endless stream of Cossacks, their long lances dark against the dawn sky, rode past. On his own, Kokovtsev had ordered three full regiments of Cossacks into the city to prevent violence. Asked on what authority he had issued the command, Kokovtsev replied: 'As head of the government.' Later, a local official came up to the Finance Minister to complain, 'Well, Your Excellency, by calling in the troops you have missed a fine chance to answer Bogrov's shot with a nice Jewish pogrom.' Kokovtsov was indignant, but, he added, 'his sally suggested to me that the measures which I had taken at Kiev were not sufficient... therefore I sent an open telegram to all governors of the region demanding that they use every possible means - force if necessary - to prevent possible pogroms. When I submitted this telegram to the Tsar, he expressed his approval of it and of the measure I had taken in Kiev.'"512

In 1906 the future Hieromartyr Fr. John Vostorgov said: "The Jews are restricted in their rights of residence not as a confessional unit, but as a predatory tribe that is dangerous in the midst of the peaceful population because of its exploitative inclinations, which... have found a religious sanction and support in the Talmud... Can such a confession be tolerated in the State, when it allows its followers to practise hatred and all kinds of deceit and harm towards other confessions, and especially Christians? ... The establishment of the Pale of Settlement is the softest of all possible measures in relation to such a confession. Moreover, is it possible in this case not to take account of the mood of the masses? But this mood cannot be changed only by issuing a law on the complete equality of rights of the Jews. On the contrary, this can only strengthen the embitterment of the people..."513

Now stories of ritual murder of Christian children by Jews have surfaced in many countries in many ages, leading to many formal trials and convictions. These are completely dismissed by western authors, who speak about the "blood libel" against the Jews. However, in 2007 the Israelite Professor Ariel Toaff, the son of the Chief Rabbi of Rome, published *Confirming Judaic Ritual*

---

512 Massie, *Nicolas and Alexandra*, London: Book Club Associates, 1967, p. 229.

513 Vostorgov, in Fomin and Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Sergiev Posad, 1993, vol. II, p. 624.

*Murder*, in which he confirms the practice in medieval Italy.<sup>514</sup> Moreover, the Orthodox Church has canonized at least one victim of such a murder, Child-Martyr Gabriel of Zverki, Belorussia, to whom Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) wrote a service in 1908.<sup>515</sup>

In 1855 Bishop Porphyrius (Uspensky) of Chigirinsk wrote to the director of the Department of foreign confessions, Khrushchev: "Just as the Christian peoples have retained many pagan superstitions, so the Jews – it goes without saying, not all of them – continue to shed the blood of children and youths who are not of their tribe according to very ancient tradition, which points to the redemption of their whole race in a bloody human sacrifice... In the East everyone is convinced that the killing of Christian boys by the Jews is ordered in such a way that this evil is accomplished in one year in Thessalonica, for example, in another in Damascus, in a third in Spain, or Russia, or Wallachia, etc., and that the towels soaked in the blood of the unfortunate victim are burned, and their ashes are scattered to all the synagogues so that they can be baked into the paschal bread... Judge, after this, how difficult it is to catch the terrible crime... I sorrow over the existence of such a horror among the Jews... And Jews have penetrated onto Athos, and one of them in the rank of hieromonk and spiritual father killed monks coming to him for confession, and hid their corpses under his floor..."<sup>516</sup>

---

514 <http://www.revisionisthistory.org/page10.page10.html>. Lisa Palmieri-Billig ("Historian gives credence to blood libel", *The Jerusalem Post*, February 7 and 8, 2007) writes: "An Israeli historian of Italian origin has revived 'blood libel' in an historical study set to hit Italian bookstores on Thursday. Ariel Toaff, son of Rabbi Elio Toaff, claims that there is some historic truth in the accusation that for centuries provided incentives for pogroms against Jews throughout Europe.

"Toaff's tome, *Bloody Passovers: The Jews of Europe of Ritual Murders*, received high praise from another Italian Jewish historian, Sergio Luzzatto, in an article in the *Corriere della Serra* entitled 'Those Bloody Passovers'.

"Luzzatto describes Toaff's work as a 'magnificent book of history... Toaff holds that from 1100 to about 1500... several crucifixions of Christian children really happened, bringing about retaliations against entire Jewish communities – punitive massacres of men, women, children. Neither in Trent in 1475 nor in other areas of Europe in the late Middle Ages were Jews always innocent victims.'

"'A minority of fundamentalist Ashkenazis... carried out human sacrifices,' Luzzatto continued.

"Toaff offers as an example the case of Saint Simonino of Trent in March 1475, shortly after a child's body was found in a canal near the Jewish area of Trent, the city's Jews were accused of murdering Simonino and using his blood to make mazot.

"After a medieval trial in which confessions were extracted by torture, 16 members of Trent's Jewish community were hanged.

"Toaff reveals that the accusations against the Jews of Trent 'might have been true'.

"Toaff refers to kabbalistic descriptions of the therapeutic uses of blood and asserts that 'a black market flourished on both sides of the Alps, with Jewish merchants selling human blood, complete with rabbinic certification of the product – kosher blood.'"

515 S.V. Bulgakov, *Nastol'naia Kniga dlya Svyashchenno-Tserkovno-Sluzhitelia* (Handbook for Church Servers), Kharkov, 1900, p. 143. It is significant that in 1919 the Bolsheviks banned the chanting of hymns to the Child-Martyr Gabriel, whose relics reposed in the church of St. Basil the Blessed on Red Square (Vladimir Rusak, *Pir Satany* (Satan's Feast), London, Ontario: Zarya, 1991, p. 13).

For ritual murders demonstrated in court, see Dal', V. *Rozyskanie o ubiyenii evreev khristianskikh mladentsev i upotreblenii krovi ikh* (Investigation into the Killing by Jews of Christian Children and the Use of their Blood), St. Petersburg, 1844; Rozanov, V. *Oboniatel'noe i osyazatel'noe otnoshenie evreev k krovi* (The Senses of Smell and Touch of the Jews towards Blood), St. Petersburg, 1913; O. Platonov, *Ternovij venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998.

516 Uspensky, in Fomin and Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 632.

It is the tendency of pro-semitic authors to dismiss all this as “anti-semitic lies”. However, even if all the historical evidence of Jewish atrocities could be dismissed, it would be surprising indeed if a religion steeped in such hatred against Christ and Christians as Talmudic Judaism did not produce *acts* of hatred. As long as incitement to such acts exists in the “sacred” book of the Judaistic religion, there must be a presumption that some of its followers may be tempted to carry them out.

On the other hand, it cannot be denied that Christians also acted with hatred and committed atrocities, as in the pogroms in the Rhineland in 1096 or in Spain leading to the expulsion of all the Jews from Spain in 1492, or in Russia before the revolution. Hatred of enemies is forbidden by the Gospel of Christ; so such acts, whether or not they were provoked by hatred on the Jews’ side, cannot be condoned. But the justified horror at Christian antisemitism which has become so *de rigueur* in the modern world, must always be balanced by a similar horror at the antigentilism and antichristianity of the Talmud, the most hateful of all “sacred” books.

Over a hundred well-documented cases of the murder of Christian children by the Jews for ritual purposes in various countries are cited by Oleg Platonov. Especially important is the evidence of Monk Neophytus, who was until the age of 38 a Jewish rabbi but then joined the Greek Church. He exposed, not only the real existence of this horrific practice, but also the religious rationale behind it. His book, entitled *A Refutation of the Religion of the Jews and their Rites from the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments*, originally appeared in Moldavian in 1803 and was translated into Russian in 1913, the year of the Beilis trial:-

“The secret use of blood, which the Jews collect from Christians killed by them is a rite which they consider to have been commanded by God Himself and indicated in certain mysterious expressions in the Scriptures.

“Many scholars have written works aimed at proving, with the help of the Bible, the appearance of the true Messiah promised by God to our fathers, Who is the Lord Jesus Christ, the Son of the All-Pure Virgin Mary. An innumerable quantity of works have also been written to refute the superstitious beliefs of the Jews and their false teachings. Many of these authors were native Jews who converted to the Christian Faith. Meanwhile, nobody has yet published anything serious concerning this barbaric mystery of blood, which is kept and used by the synagogue. If some book hinting at this mystery happens to fall into the hands of Christians, and they make reference to it, the Jews never reply in any other way than with feigned mockery or evasions, like the following: ‘But how would we kill Christians if the law forbids us to eat blood?’

“In my opinion, the reason preventing the Jews, even those converted to Christianity, from clearly exposing this is hidden either in the fact that they really were not initiated into the mystery, or in the fact that they still foolishly

pity our unfortunate people, and fear to attract to it the powerful vengeance of the Christian peoples.

“But I, having by the mercy of God received Holy Baptism and monasticism, have no fear, in the interest of Christians, to declare everything that I know about these rites, which I myself zealously carried out and kept in the strictest secrecy all the time that I was a haham, or rabbi.

“But first of all it is necessary to explain that the mystery of blood is not known to all Jews, but only to the hahams, or rabbis, the scribes, or Pharisees, who for that reason are called the keepers of the mystery of the blood - a mystery which, moreover, is not contained in clear words in any of their books and which they pass on exclusively by oral tradition.

“The fathers of families initiated into the mystery pass it on only to that one of their sons whose secrecy they have tested. Also, they insist that he is obliged to pass on the mystery only under those condition and in that form, and that he should never disclose it to a Christian, even in the cruellest woes, and even for the saving of life. This revelation is accompanied by the most terrifying curses on anyone who gives away the secret. Here, for example, is how I was initiated into it myself.

“When I reached the age of thirteen, - the age at which the Jews have the custom of laying a wreath called the wreath of glory on the heads of their sons, - my father went apart with me and had a long talk with me, instilling hatred for the Christians into me as a duty laid down by God. This hatred was to go as far as killing them. Then he told me of the custom of collecting the blood of the murdered, and he added, embracing me: ‘So, my son, in this way I have made you confidant and as it were my second I.’ Then he put the wreath on my head and in great detail explained to me the mystery of the blood as the holiest of the holies and the important rite of the Jewish religion. ‘My son,’ he continued, ‘I abjure you by all the elements of heaven and earth always to keep this secret in your heart and not to entrust it to anyone, neither your brothers, nor your sisters, not your mother, nor, later, your wife, - not to any mortal, and especially women. If God gives you even eleven grown sons, do not reveal the secret to all of them, but only to one - the one whom you recognise to be the cleverest and the most capable of keeping the secret, just as I am now acting with you. You must take great care that this son of yours should be devoted and zealous for our faith. Once more I adjure you: beware of trusting women, even your daughters, your wife and your mother, but trust only the son whom you consider worthy of trust.’ ‘O my son,’ he cried finally, ‘may the whole earth refuse to accept your corpse and thrust you out from its depths, if, even in conditions of the most extreme necessity, you reveal this secret of blood to anyone besides him of whom I have spoken. Even if you become a Christian for the sake of profit or for other reasons. See that you do not betray your father by giving away this divine secret which I have revealed to you today. Otherwise may my curse strike you at the very hour at which you sin, and may it accompany you all the days of your life until death and to the ages of ages.’

“May the Father Whom I have acquired in heaven and Who is the Lord Jesus Christ turn away these curses from the head of him who writes exclusively for the sake of the benefit of the Church and the triumph of the Truth.

“The bases of this barbaric custom are the following: 1) hatred for Christians, 2) superstition, and 3) faith in the spiritual reality of Christian blood. I shall explain each of these points.

“On the first reason, which is hatred for Christians.

“The Jews as it were from their mother’s breast instil hatred of Christianity into their sons from the earliest childhood. On receiving these convictions from their fathers over a whole series of generations, they are really and sincerely convinced that to despise Christians and even to kill them is very pleasing to God, thereby exactly justifying the words of Divine redemption: ‘everyone who kills you will think that he is thereby serving God’ (John 16.20).

“On the second reason, which is superstition.

“The second reason is based on the superstitious beliefs which the Jews hold and which relate to the sphere of magic, sorcery, the kabbala and other mysterious rites. They believe that Christian blood is necessary for these diabolical operations. Out of all these superstitions I will indicate only one, which concerns the curse of God that fell on the unhappy people of Israel and which was prophesied by Moses himself in the following expressions: ‘the Lord will strike you with Egyptian leprosy... a foul leprosy on the knees and shins from which you will not be able to be healed’ (Deuteronomy 28.27, 35).

“This terrible illness always was and is very common among the Jews – much more common than they think... And when the haham visits the sick who have been struck down by it, and gives them medicines, he at the same time sprinkles them with Christian blood, if he has any, as the only means of healing...

“On the third and principal reason, which is the faith of the Jews in the spiritual reality of Christian blood.

“The main reason which compels the Jews to kill Christians and collect their blood is the faith, secretly preserved especially by the hahams, or rabbis, that Jesus Christ, the Son of Mary from Nazareth, who was condemned by our ancestors to death on the Cross, is, in all probability, the true Messiah who was for so long expected and invoked by the patriarchs and prophets. There are enough prophecies to convince them of this; especially important is the passage from Jeremiah: ‘Be amazed, O heavens, tremble and be seized with horror, says the Lord, for two evils have My people committed: they have abandoned Me, the source of living water, and have cut out for themselves broken cisterns which cannot hold water’ (Jeremiah 2.12,13).



“This prophecy is well-known and is understood in its true meaning by many rabbis, as it was very well known by Annas and Caiaphas. But, like them, from pride and hardness of heart, the rabbis do not want to recognise it, and therefore, resorting to pitiful interpretations, they have composed new rules – a real parody on the most important mysteries of the Church, so as to be saved by Christian blood, in which they see the blood of the Messiah Himself.

“In consequence of their conviction... the Jews use Christian blood at circumcision, which represents baptism; at marriage, which corresponds to this mystery among the Christians; in the unleavened bread of Pascha, which represents the Eucharist; at burials, imitating holy unction; in their lament over the destruction of Jerusalem, which represents the mystery of repentance. This is the basis of the secret, which I knew and sometimes applied with extraordinary zeal. I shall stop on each of these explanations.

“Marriage. When a marriage is concluded between Jews, the bride and bridegroom prepare for it with a strict fast for 24 hours, abstaining even from water until the setting of the sun. It is then that the rabbi appears. He takes a just-boiled egg, removes the shell and divides it in half. Then he sprinkles it, not with salt, but with a special ash, which I will say more about later. He gives half of this sprinkled egg to each spouse.

“Let us now say what this ash is. It is used not instead of salt, but instead of fresh Christian blood, being in actual fact changed Christian blood. It is precisely with the blood left over from the sacrifices carried out for the feast of unleavened bread, the more the better, that the rabbis infuse a corresponding quantity of flax or cotton thread, then they dry it and burn it. The ash is kept in bottles that are carefully sealed and given to the synagogue’s treasurer. The latter distributes it gradually to the rabbis who ask for it, or for their own use, or for sending to those countries where it is impossible to obtain Christian blood, whether because there are no Christians there or because the police have been roused to be more watchful and the Christians more careful.

“In any case, fresh blood is always preferable, but it is necessary only for the unleavened bread, and in the case of insurmountable obstacles the indicated dark ash represents an acceptable substitute.

“Circumcision. A rabbi also appears for the circumcision of children on the eighth day after birth. He puts into a cup some of the best wine he can get hold of and pours one drop of Christian blood into it. It has been collected from torture, but if that is not available, some of the above-mentioned ash is used, into which a drop of the blood of the circumcised child is added. When this is well mixed with the wine, the rabbi immerses the finger of the child into the cup and says: ‘I declare to you, child: your life is in your blood.’ And he twice repeats this rite and these words.

“Here is a superstitious explanation which the rabbis give for this ceremony amongst themselves. The Prophet Ezekiel twice said: “Live in your blood!” Thus I say to you: “Live in your blood!” (Ezekiel 16.6). By these words the prophet perhaps wanted to indicate the blood of Jesus Christ, Who freed from bonds the souls of the holy fathers who did not receive a water baptism; and in such a case the souls of the Jews, although also themselves deprived of the water of baptism, will be saved by the blood of a Christian baptised in water. But one of the reasons why this blood must be collected amidst the cruel sufferings of the victim is precisely the necessity of representing thereby the Passion of Christ. On the contrary, if the Prophet Ezekiel wanted to speak only about every man’s blood of circumcision, then the Jewish child will be saved by the power of the single drop of blood mixed by the rabbi in the wine with the Christian blood. What a pitiful nation!

“The anniversary of the taking of Jerusalem. The Jews again use the ash of which I have spoken on the ninth day of July, when they weep over the destruction of Jerusalem by Titus. On this anniversary they use it in two ways: first, they wipe their forehead with it, which they thought would be unseemly to do with fresh blood, and secondly, they sprinkle an egg with it, and on that day every son of Israel without exception must eat a hard-boiled egg sprinkled with this ash...

“Death. A haham immediately goes to the house of him of whose death he just learned. He takes the white of an egg, mixes into it some Christian blood and a little ash and puts this mixture into the breast of the corpse, uttering the supposed words of Ezekiel: ‘I shall sprinkle you with pure blood and you will be cleansed from all your filthiness’ (Ezekiel 36.25). Ezekiel, it is true, said, not ‘pure blood’, but ‘pure water’... But by dint of this corruption of the text the Jews convince themselves that the dead man will undoubtedly be admitted to paradise.

“The feasts of Pascha and Purim. These two feasts demand the same blood ritual.

“On paschal days the Jews must eat unleavened bread, small breads prepared only by hahams, into which Christian blood has been poured. Everyone, nobles and simple people, young and old, even those without teeth, must taste of this bread, even if it only a crumb the size of an olive...

“The feast of Purim was established in memory of the deliverance from the dominion of Haman by means of Esther and Mordecai, as this is recounted in the book of Esther. As is known, this feast comes in February. The initiated Jews are then occupied, wherever they can, with seizing as many Christians as possible, especially children. However, in this night they sacrifice only one, reproducing the torments of Haman. But for this reason, while the body is hanging, all those present cover it with thousands of insults, as if they were addressing Haman himself. The collected blood is poured out by the rabbi into flour that has already been dissolved with honey, from which he then makes

small breads in the form of a triangle for the sake of ridiculing the mystery of the Holy Trinity. These breads are meant, not for the Jews, but through boundless cunning they are distributed to the most eminent families, which must give them away – and these gifts are considered the height of kindness – to their friends from among the Christians. This rite is called the Bread of Purim.

“We should note that this rite does not require the application of too heavy tortures to the victim precisely because the collected blood does not have any other purpose than the one I have indicated.

“The rest of kidnapped Christians, however, are kept in secret hiding-places until the day of Pascha, which comes shortly after Purim. At this time they are all offered in sacrifice in the cruellest and most barbaric manner, and they collect their blood partly for the unleavened bread and partly for other necessities which come up in the course of the year and have been indicated above. These torments at Pascha have a definite aim – to renew the sufferings of Christ, and for that reason they must be carried out mainly on children who through their innocence and virginity better symbolise the Saviour.

“In these depressing pourings out of blood the words of Jeremiah written in prophecy about the Jews are justified: ‘Even on the hems of your clothes is found the blood of poor innocent people’ (Jeremiah 2.34), and still better the words of Ezekiel: ‘You eat with blood... and shed blood’ (Ezekiel 33.25). In consequence of these innumerable murders Israel was expelled from various states, in particular from Spain, thereby justifying another prophecy of Ezekiel: ‘Blood calls you to court’ (Ezekiel 30.6).”<sup>517</sup>

Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky)’s attitude to Jewish blood rituals in general, and the Beilis trial in particular, was expressed in an interview he gave to A. Chizhevsky. After reminding his readers of how, at the request of Rabbi Skomorovsky, he had twice, in 1903 and 1905, spoken up against the antisemite pogroms in Zhitomir, he went on: “But in both of the above-mentioned cases of my conversation with the rabbi, I decisively refused to say that I did not recognize the existence of ritual murders carried out by Jews, but on the contrary I expressed to my interlocutor my conviction that these murders exist, perhaps as belonging to one or another sect of the Jewish religion, perhaps as a secret of the highest spiritual government of the Jews, but there undoubtedly have been cases of ritual murders both in recent times and in antiquity.

“When my Jewish academic acquaintances pointed to the fact that Jewish law forbids the drinking of the blood even of animals, so that the thought of their mixing Christian blood with the paschal matsa was absurd, I replied that what seemed more probable to me was the link between the ritual killings and, not the Jewish feast of Pascha, but the feast that precedes it of ‘Purim’, in which the story of Esther, Haman and Mordecai is remembered, when the Persian

---

<sup>517</sup> Platonov, *op. cit.*, pp. 748-754.

king, having executed the enemy of the Jews, Haman, allowed them, who had not long before been condemned to general killing, to kill their enemies themselves. Purim in 1911 [the year of the ritual killing of Andrew Yuschinsky] took place on March 14 and 15, while the Jewish Pascha was from March 15-18...

“Already in deep antiquity the Jews were causing various disorders against various symbols hostile to them during this feast. Thus in 408 and 412 the Byzantine emperor issued two special decrees forbidding the Jews from celebrating Purim and mocking Christian crosses instead of Haman. I think that Christian children were also killed on this feast...”<sup>518</sup>

The Beilis trial polarized Russian society and, through the Jewish press, had international ramifications. Liberal opinion throughout the world pilloried Russia, which was accused of tyranny, and of systematic persecution and slander of the Jews. Unfortunately, these criticisms, though unjust<sup>519</sup>, helped to create the very phenomenon they decried. Racial anti-semitism, as opposed to religious anti-Judaism and anti-Talmudism, had been rare in Russia – rarer than in most western countries. But in the decade that followed the Beilis trial, under the stress of war and revolution and the undoubted fact that the revolution was led mainly by Jews, real anti-semitism took root in Russia, with massacres far exceeding anything seen in the times of the tsars...

---

<sup>518</sup> Archbishop Anthony, in *Zhizn' Volynii* (The Life of Volhynia), N 221, 2 September, 1913.

<sup>519</sup> As regards freedom, it is a paradoxical but true fact that Russia in the last decades before the revolution was one of the freest countries in the world. Thus Duma deputy Baron A.D. Meyendorff admitted: “The Russian Empire was the most democratic monarchy in the world” (Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 405). This view was echoed by foreign observers, such as Sir Maurice Baring: “There is no country in the world, where the individual enjoys so great a measure of personal liberty, where the ‘*liberté de moeurs*’ is so great, as in Russia; where the individual man can do as he pleases with so little interference or criticism on the part of his neighbours, where there is so little moral censorship, where liberty of abstract thought or aesthetic production is so great.” (in Eugene Lyons, *Our Secret Allies*, 1953).

## 39. THE BALKAN WARS

The murder of Stolypin in September, 1911 introduced a dangerous element of instability and indecision into Russian foreign policy. Stolypin had stood for a policy of avoidance of war and the rapid building up of Russia's financial and economic resources. His successor as prime minister, Kokovtsov, followed the same line, but lacked Stolypin's authority in keeping his ministers in order – especially the War Minister Sukhomlinov, who, together with important military figures such as the Tsar's uncle, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaievich, advocated a belligerent, anti-German and pro-Serbian foreign policy.

The Tsar himself, with his foreign minister Sazonov, wavered between the parties of peace and war (for that is what they amounted to). On the one hand, he recognized the enormous risks in allowing the extreme nationalism of the Balkan Orthodox to express itself unchecked. On the other hand, with the humiliation suffered at the hands of the Austrians in 1908-09 still fresh in his mind, his sympathies were with Serbia.

Indeed, it was just after that humiliation, in 1909, that a passionate nationalist, Nicholas Hartwig, was appointed Russian ambassador in Belgrade. "A militant pan-Slav, with long service in and knowledge of the Balkans and the Middle East, Hartwig 'used the Serb cause as a weapon in his struggle against his own government,' according to the well-informed French minister in Belgrade. With the support of conservative and orthodox circles at St. Petersburg' he battled Sazonov, the foreign minister, and he 'dragged Russian diplomacy toward the Balkan evolution of the last two years which he had the merit of conceiving and carrying out.'

"It was Hartwig who had brought the Balkan states together for a time against both Turkey and Austria..."<sup>520</sup>

"Hartwig was running something close to a rogue operation. Izvolsky and other leaders of the Russian government 'denounced the dangers of Hartwig's "incurable Austrophobia"', and what the historian Dominic Lieven has recently called 'his disloyalty to overall Russian foreign policy.'"<sup>521</sup>

However, the current of opinion was running in Hartwig's favour: between 1907 and 1914, writes Lieven, "the outlines of a coalition between sections of Russia's economic, political and intellectual élites based on a combination of liberal and nationalist ideas began to emerge. It encompassed a number of leading Moscow industrialists, some of Russia's greatest liberal intellectuals and many Duma leaders. By 1914 this shadowy coalition had important friends in both the army and the bureaucracy. Prince Grigori Trubetskoy, who ran the Foreign Ministry's department of Near Eastern and Balkan affairs, was closely linked to the Moscow industrialists and to Peter Struve, the leading intellectual

---

<sup>520</sup> David Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer*, London: Vintage, 2005, pp. 129-130.

<sup>521</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 84.

spokesman for the coalition of the liberal-conservative and nationalist elites. Even Alexander Krivoshein, the Minister of Agriculture, was a potential ally of this coalition. His ministry, and indeed he himself, maintained cordial relations with the Duma and the zemstva. On the whole, they enjoyed a good press. And Krivoshein was not merely inclined towards pro-Slav nationalist sympathies, he had also married a daughter of one of Moscow's leading industrialist families [the Morozovs]. It needs to be stressed that this coalition was still in embryo in 1907-9 and that Germany's own aggressive policies played a role in bringing it to life in later years. Nevertheless the Germans were not wrong to watch Russian domestic developments with great concern in the pre-war era. The idea that the liberal-nationalist, anti-German and pro-Slav coalition represented the wave of the future was not unreasonable and was widely believed both in Russia and abroad..."<sup>522</sup>

In the same fateful month of September, 1911 the long-expected carve-up of the Ottoman empire, "the sick man of Europe", began. Italy, which had resented Austria's annexation of Bosnia, decided to claim her share by invading the Ottoman territories of Libya and the Dodecanese islands. The Italians felt that they had a right to Libya since the French had recently taken control of Morocco. And the British, the French and the Russians encouraged them insofar as they hoped to detach Italy from her alliance with Austria and Germany... But when the Turks twice closed the Straits during their war with Italy, causing massive damage to Russia's export trade, the Russians began to see possession of the Straits as a foreign policy priority...

The invasion of Libya triggered the break-up of the Ottoman empire in Europe. The Balkan Orthodox States began preparing for war by rapidly rearming themselves. As a result, all fell deeply into debt to western arms manufacturers - the Serbs to French ones, the Bulgarians to German ones. They also made several bilateral agreements amongst themselves - first of all, the Serb-Bulgarian alliance of March, 1912.

But this did not mean that the Serbs and Bulgarians were friends... As Lieven writes, "Nobody believed that the status quo in Macedonia could survive for much longer. Within Macedonia, Muslims (mostly but by no means only Albanians), Greeks and Slavs were often in conflict. Grigorii Trubetskoy wrote that the great majority of Macedonian Slavs were currently neither truly Bulgarian nor truly Serbian. Which direction their identity took would depend on whether the Bulgarian or the Serbian government and intelligentsia came to control the region. This gave an added twist to the rivalry of the regimes in Sofia and Belgrade. All the governments in the region were nationalist through and through. This was the source of their legitimacy and of most local politicians' sense of their own personal identity. Where governments did try to show statesmanship and moderation, however, they could rely on being denounced by wide sections of their country's intelligentsia. Worst of all, the officer corps of all states in the region were shot through with extreme and

---

<sup>522</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, pp. 191-192

aggressive nationalist assumptions and loyalties. The monarchs of Greece, Romania, and Bulgaria were foreigners: they were especially vulnerable to accusations of betraying the national cause. But even in Serbia and Turkey, two countries with native dynasties, monarchs were overthrown by military coups in these years..."<sup>523</sup>

The Russians were prepared to support a defensive alliance among the Balkan states in order to prevent an Austrian advance towards Salonica. But they were not prepared to support an offensive alliance that would finally destroy the Ottoman empire and lead, in all probability, to a general European war. The problem was, as Macmillan writes, that "politicians who had ridden to power by playing on nationalism and with promises of national glory found that they were in the grip of forces they could not always control. Secret societies, modelling themselves on an eclectic mix which included Freemasonry, the underground Carbonari, who had worked for Italian unity, the terrorists who more recently had frightened much of Europe, and old-style banditry, proliferated throughout the Balkans, weaving their way into civilian and military institutions of the states. The Internal Macedonian Revolutionary Organisation (IMRO) talked about Macedonia for the Macedonians but was widely suspected of working with Bulgarian nationalists for a great Bulgaria which would include Macedonia. In Serbia, the government and the army were riddled with supporters of *Narodna Odbrana* (National Defence), which had been set up during the Bosnian crisis, and its even more extreme offshoot the Black Hand. In the First Balkan War, officers disobeyed their own government on several occasions, seizing, for example, the town of Monastir (which Serbia had promised to Bulgaria in a secret treaty) in the hopes that it would then be impossible to hand it over...."<sup>524</sup>

Now not only the Balkan Orthodox, but also the Muslim Albanians, stirred by similar nationalist dreams, were in more or less open rebellion against the Turks. In August, 1912 20,000 Albanian troops occupied Skopje, and the Turks were forced to grant autonomy to this mainly Albanian-occupied region. Nor did any of the larger Balkan powers pay much attention to the Great Powers. "Balkan leaders complained openly that they could no longer trust the great powers to protect the Christians under Ottoman rule and hinted that they might have to take action. Why maintain the status quo in the Balkans, a leading politician in Serbia asked Trotsky. 'Where was the status quo when Austria annexed Bosnia and Herzegovina? Why didn't the powers defend the status quo when Italy seized Tripoli?' And why should the Balkan states be treated as though they were somehow not European but like Morocco? There was the chance, the Foreign Minister of Serbia admitted to the British ambassador in Belgrade, that Austria-Hungary would intervene if any of the Balkan nations moved to seize Ottoman territory but, as far as he, Milovan Milovanović, was concerned, it was better for Serbia to die fighting. If Austria-

---

<sup>523</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame. Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 241.

<sup>524</sup> Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, pp. 439-440.

Hungary itself expanded further southwards into the Balkans, Serbia was finished anyway as an independent kingdom..."<sup>525</sup>

Many in Russia were calling for war in support of the Balkan Slavs. One of the few who preached the opposite was Rasputin... Douglas Smith writes: "That Rasputin kept Russia from going to war in the Balkans has become part of his mythology, and although it is beyond any doubt that Rasputin was against the war and let everyone know he was – a fact much to his credit – it is less clear that his was the determining voice for peace. Indeed, other, more powerful figures were saying the same thing. Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, for example, who was not entirely blameless in the war's outbreak, was adamant that it remain a local, Balkan matter and that neither Russia nor Austria permit themselves to be dragged into it. Even more importantly, Nicholas had told his ambassador in Bulgaria in early 1911 never to forget for an instant that Russia would not be ready for war for at least another five or six years..."<sup>526</sup>

On October 8, 1912, the Tsar persuaded all the European Great Powers to send a warning to the Balkan States and Turkey that if war should break out, the Powers would not agree to any change in the territorial *status quo*. But as if cocking a snook at all the Great Powers, tiny Montenegro under her warmongering King Nikolai declared war on Turkey the very next day! The Montenegrins invaded Albania, and besieged the fortress of Shkodra (Scutari). Edvard Radzinsky writes: "The tsar understood how that impudent disruption of the status quo in the Balkans would ignite an explosion of indignation among the great powers. The minister of foreign affairs was instructed to persuade Montenegro to end its occupation of the fortress. But [King Nikolai] knew of the bellicose mood in Petersburg and of the support of [his son-in-law] Grand Duke Nikolai, the 'dread uncle', and he callously continued the siege of Scutari."<sup>527</sup>

On October 18, Serbia and Bulgaria entered the war against Turkey; Greece joined them on October 19. The Orthodox forces outnumbered the Turks, and were soon, contrary to expert military opinion, advancing on all fronts. The Greeks got to Salonika before the Bulgarians (on October 26, the feast of the patron of the city, St. Demetrius), but Bulgarian forces were approaching Constantinople...

There was wild rejoicing in Russia; the age-old dream that "Constantinople will be ours" appeared close to fulfilment. There were calls for Russia to enter the war, including from M.V. Rodzianko, the president of the Fourth Duma. On November 10 Grand Duke Nicholas reported excitedly to the tsar in Spala in Russian Poland (where the Tsarevich Alexei was gravely ill). On November 12, Prince Gregory Trubetskoy, head of the Near Eastern department in the

---

<sup>525</sup> Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 441.

<sup>526</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 303.

<sup>527</sup> Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar*, London: Hodder, 1992, p. 188.



Foreign Ministry, issued a detailed memorandum explaining why Russia should take control of Constantinople and the Straits. However, the head of the Navy, Admiral Lieven, rejected Trubetskoy's arguments in a counter-memorandum dated December 8.<sup>528</sup>

But it was the Bulgars, not the Russians, who were now at the gates of Constantinople – and Russia was determined to stop Bulgaria gaining too much. For, as Alexander Bokhanov writes, she was worried “that Bulgaria, whose ruling classes supported a pro-German orientation [King Ferdinand had been an Austrian officer], should take control of Stambul and the Black Sea straits. Petersburg demanded from Sophia in harsh expressions that she stop her advance. Austria and Germany, which stood behind her, refused to be reconciled with Serbia's increased strength, and Austrian armies began to concentrate on the frontier...”<sup>529</sup>

The Serbs, too, were making great gains – but also at great cost to their moral reputation. Misha Glenny writes: “As the Serb soldiery moved to Skopje and beyond, they visited destruction and murder on the local Albanian population. Fired by tales of atrocities committed on Christian peasants during the unrest in the Albanian territories, the Serbs unleashed the full force of nationalist hatred against defenceless villages. A Serb Social Democrat, serving as a reservist, described how ‘the horrors actually began as soon as we crossed the old frontier. By five p.m. we were approaching Kumanovo. The sun had set, it was starting to get dark. But the darker the sky became, the more brightly the fearful illumination of the fires stood out against it. Burning was going on all around us. Entire Albanian villages had been turned into pillars of fire... In all its fiery monotony this picture was repeated the whole way to Skopje... For two days before my arrival in Skopje the inhabitants had woken up in the morning to the sight, under the principal bridge over the Vardar – that is, in the very centre of the town – of heaps of Albanian corpses with severed heads. Some said that these were local Albanians, killed by the *komitadjis* [četniks], others that the corpses had been brought down to the bridge by the waters of the Vardar. What was clear was that these headless men had not been killed in battle.’ In Skopje, the chief instigator of the massacres was the Black Hand, which set up its headquarters close to the Russian consulate in a building soon known as the Black House. The Black Hand, with its network of agents, had escaped the control of the military authorities and was increasingly assuming the role of an informal government of ‘liberated Old Serbia’. After several weeks, the government in Belgrade started to appoint civilian administrators to these territories, but those who refused to submit to the demands of the Black Hand and the *četniks* were scared. Branislav Nušić, the writer who had welcomed the war with such enthusiasm, resigned as governor of Bitola in fear and disgust at the activities of these units.”<sup>530</sup>

---

<sup>528</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, pp. 253-256.

<sup>529</sup> Bokhanov, *Imperator Nikolaj II*, Moscow, 1998, pp. 319-320.

<sup>530</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 233-234.

In mid-November the Bulgarians were halted in their march on Tsargrad by desperate Turkish resistance and dysentery in their own ranks. "The battle for Adrianople," writes Misha Glenny, "which fell to the allies after five months' heroic defence by the Turks on 26 March 1913, was the crowning misery of the Balkan Wars. The figures for those who died during the siege have never been properly collated, and estimates vary between 40,000 and 60,000." 531

"The point of crisis," writes Lieven, now "shifted to the Albanian provinces on the Adriatic coast that the Serbs (and Montenegrins) were determined to seize. In the typical language of pre-war Europe, the Serbian premier, Nikola Pašić, claimed that without an Adriatic coastline 'the country's existence is unthinkable'. The Austrians, on the other hand, were determined to establish a client Albanian state in their own strategic backyard and to block further Serbian expansion. Some circles in Vienna still hoped to turn Serbia into an economic dependency and saw Serb possession of an Adriatic port as a fatal blow to this goal. The fear existed that a Serbian port might one day become a Russian naval base. If failure to acquire an Adriatic port encouraged the Serbs to demand more territory in Macedonia and thereby come into conflict with the Bulgarians, Vienna could only rejoice in having helped to split the hated Balkan League. Fairly enough, the Austrians took delight in pointing out the fact that Serbian and Montenegrin demands to swallow the Albanian-speaking territories flew in the face of their proclaimed allegiance to the ethno-nationalist principle. Because Serb and Montenegrin troops were committing widely reported and numerous atrocities against Albanian civilians as they marched toward the Adriatic coast, pious claims that the two countries' constitutions guaranteed the rights of minorities were greeted throughout Europe with what might politely be described as scepticism. The retort by Nikolai Hartwig, the Russian ambassador in Belgrade, that the Serbs were behaving no worse than the Greeks and the Bulgarians was probably true but did not help matters.

"Initially, Sazonov backed the Serbian claim at least for a small stretch of the Adriatic coast and a port. Once he realised that not just the Austrians but also the Italians and the Germans flatly opposed this, he changed tack and allowed that secure commercial access through Albanian territory would suffice. In support of his more moderate line, the foreign minister submitted a memorandum to Nicholas II on November 12 pointing out that all members of the Triple Alliance were determined to create an autonomous Albanian polity controlling the whole Adriatic coastline and were willing 'to defend their point of view by extreme methods'...

"Unfortunately, Nicholas II did not agree, writing on the memorandum, 'I am against an autonomous Albania'. This goes far to explain why Sazonov's support for Serbia then stiffened once again, much to the alarm of Austrian and other diplomats. Only when further efforts to secure a compromise more favourable to the Serbs had failed and the danger of war loomed increasingly

---

531 Glenny, *The Balkans, 1804-1999*, London: Granta, 2000, p. 244.

large did Sazonov revert to his earlier line and attempt again to bring Belgrade to order. Inevitably, his attempts to do so were not aided by his zigzags..."<sup>532</sup>

On November 12, writes Glenny, Austria and Italy "issued Belgrade and Cetinje (the old Montenegrin capital) with demarches insisting on a withdrawal from Albania and an end to Montenegro's siege of Skutari. Vienna and Rome both argued quite reasonably that Serbia and Montenegro had no business in the region because it was inhabited almost exclusively by Albanians. Belgrade and Cetinje asked why, since this principle applied neither in Bosnia nor in Tripolitania, territories annexed by Austro-Hungary and Italy respectively, it should apply to Albania.

"States or nationalist ideologues could conjure up a territorial claim in an instant. But the key to realizing these claims lay in a mixture of astute politics and naked force. The most effective political weapon the Balkan states could employ was that of divide and rule. Both Serbia and Montenegro incited the Albanians of Kosovo and northern Albania to rebel against the Turks on the eve of the Balkan Wars, thus setting current and future enemies against each other. When Montenegro invaded northern Albania, its armies were initially supported by the Mallasori, a tribe of Albanian Catholics. King Nikola had persuaded the Mallasori that their rights and traditions would be better protected under the wing of a Christian, albeit Orthodox and Slav, ruler than under Muslim Albanians, but it did not take the Mallasori long to realize they had made a mistake..."<sup>533</sup>

On November 20, Austria-Hungary increased its war readiness in Bosnia and Dalmatia, and also on the border with Russia in Galicia. On November 22 Tsar Nicholas responded by ordering mobilization in the Kiev district and preparations for mobilization in the Odessa and Warsaw districts. The next day Kokovtsov and Sazonov persuaded him to shelve these plans, but the number of active troops was increased...

As for the Germans, writes Hew Strachan, they "saw it as a war fought by Russia by proxy, and on 2 December 1912 Bethmann-Hollweg announced in the Reichstag that, if Austria-Hungary was attacked by a third party while pursuing its interests, Germany would support Austria-Hungary and fight to maintain its own position in Europe. The British responded on the following day, warning the Germans that if war broke out between France and Germany they would not accept a French defeat. The Kaiser was furious, and summoned a "war council" of his military and naval chiefs on 8 December. He said that, if Russia came to Serbia's aid, Germany would fight. He assumed that in such a war Bulgaria, Romania, Albania and Turkey would all side with the Triple Alliance [Germany, Austria and Italy], and take the main role against Serbia, so leaving Austria-Hungary to concentrate against Russia..."<sup>534</sup>

---

<sup>532</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, pp. 256-258.

<sup>533</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 240-241.

<sup>534</sup> Strachan, *The First World War*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, p. 42.

According to Fromkin, "the Kaiser and Moltke wanted immediate war. Tirpitz, speaking for the navy, agreed in part but wanted 'postponement of the great fight for one and a half years'<sup>535</sup> - which, coincidentally, was exactly what happened! The fact was: the German navy was not ready to challenge the Royal Navy, and would not be ready for the foreseeable future, so unassailable was Britain's lead.

So the Germans switched to increasing funding for the army: the German army bill for 1913 was the largest in history. According to Fromkin, "The only thing that could justify military expenditures at the 1913 level was to go to war in the immediate future. But German public opinion was not ready for it. Moltke wrote to Conrad, chief of the Austrian general staff, in February 1913 that it would be hard to find a rallying cry that would persuade the German public to go to war - yet..."<sup>536</sup>

However, German military spending was not excessive by European standards. "In 1913 - after two major army bills - the Reich was spending 3.9 per cent of net national product on defence, more than her own ally Austria and more than Britain (3.2 per cent) but significantly less than France (9.8 per cent) and Russia (5.1 per cent)."<sup>537</sup>

Meanwhile, on December 3, an armistice between the Balkan states and Turkey was agreed; but the situation remained very tense. The British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey organized a conference of ambassadors in London, which continued until August, 1913. The main result was to legitimize the substantial territorial gains made by the Balkan Orthodox; the Serbs gave up their claim for an Adriatic port, while the Turks remained in control of a small corner of Europe close to Constantinople. On December 20, the Great Powers, under Austrian pressure, agreed to create an independent principality of Albania. The Russians accepted this only reluctantly, and in exchange secured most of Kosovo and its mixed Serb and Albanian population for Serbia.

But the Montenegrins were refusing to give up their corner of Albania - which placed the whole agreement in jeopardy. "And then," writes Radzinsky, "the tsar suddenly demonstrated character: he resolutely moved against public opinion. He demanded that the minister of foreign affairs put pressure on Montenegro. And on 21 April 1913 the Montenegrin king, after many hours of persuasion, consented to withdraw from Scutari in return for monetary indemnification [six million francs]. And the Russian foreign minister, Sergei Sazonov, announced with relief, 'King Nikola was going to set the world on fire to cook his own little omelette.' This was in reply to the constant reproaches that Russia had once again betrayed its Balkan brothers."<sup>538</sup>

---

<sup>535</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 92.

<sup>536</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

<sup>537</sup> Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 111.

<sup>538</sup> Radzinsky, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

Radzinsky attributes the tsar's firmness to the fact that Rasputin and the Empress were against the war: "And the tsar was forced to submit." A more likely cause was Sazonov's tenacious peace-making efforts in the face of a rabidly belligerent press, for which he was rewarded on June 18, 1913, "when an unprecedented official statement by Tsar Nicholas praised Sazonov and stressed the tsar's grateful public recognition of his minister's sterling work throughout the Balkan crisis, as well as Nicholas's strong support for solving all disputes through peaceful compromise with the European great powers."<sup>539</sup> In any case, whatever the views and influence of ministers and diplomats, the final decision rested with the tsar, whose final decision in favour of peace – in spite of partial mobilization on the Galician border – was consistent with his expressed belief that it was not in Russia's interests to go to war to defend the territorial ambitions of the Balkan Slavs. Only in 1914 would he be forced to submit to the call for war. But the situation then, as we shall see, was different: Russia was not called to help the Serbs in some madcap aggression, but to *defend* them from annihilation...

There was another problem... While the Bulgarians had been advancing on Constantinople, the Serbs had taken large areas in Macedonia, including Bitola (Monastir), that had been reserved for the Bulgarians in the secret treaty of 1912. When the Bulgarians asked for these territories back, the Serbs refused. On June 30, 1913, on the initiative of King Ferdinand, Bulgaria suddenly attacked Greece and Serbia without declaring war and "just as all sides had agreed to hold negotiations under the chairmanship of Tsar Nicholas".<sup>540</sup>

This led to the outbreak of the Second Balkan War, which "lasted only a month. Once again, the peasants of Macedonia were the unwilling martyrs. Most instructive, however, is the ease with which those directing this war could manipulate the image of the enemy in the minds of their troops. Less than a month before the outbreak of the war, Serbs and Greeks had been fighting with the Bulgarians. Now, Greeks and Serbs invited local Turks to join them in atrocities against the Bulgarian peasantry. The Greek and Serbian armies swept through the Macedonian and Thracian hinterland, murdering the defenceless...

'Nationalist violence knows no eternal enemy. The current enemy is always eternal.

"Under the terms of the Treaty of Bucharest concluded in mid-August 1913, Bulgaria was forced to surrender almost everything for which tens of thousands of its citizens had been required to sacrifice their lives. The Romanians occupied the southern Dobrudja. Large parts of Macedonia became southern Serbia. Viscount Grey, the British Foreign Secretary during the Balkan Wars, later recalled that the Treaty of Bucharest 'left Bulgaria sore, injured, and despoiled of what she believed belonged to her. Any future Balkan peace was

---

<sup>539</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 263.

<sup>540</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, p. 146.

impossible so long as the treaty of Bucharest remained. Turkey, of course, was also sore and despoiled. Thus when the great war came a year later, there were two Powers. Bulgaria and Turkey, hungering for a revanche and read to take whatever side would give them a prospect of obtaining it. This naturally was the side of Austria and Germany..."<sup>541</sup>

It has been customary to blame the Second Balkan War on the Bulgarian King Ferdinand, a wily and ambitious man<sup>542</sup>, who was heartily disliked by his allies. But these allies must take part of the blame for the desertion of the Bulgarians to the Triple Alliance in the First World War, which cost them – and especially the Serbs – dearly...

Robert Cooper writes that "while the first Balkan war was mostly a military-to-military affair, in the second the target was often the civilian population. If you could establish that a piece of territory was inhabited by your people – Serbs, Bulgarians or Greeks, – then you could claim it as a part of your national territory. This was therefore a war about people as well as territory: whether a village was Serb or Bulgarian might decide whether its inhabitants lived or died..."<sup>543</sup>

As Tim Judah, writes, "ethnic cleansing" was common during the Second Balkan War: "The Carnegie Endowment's account of the crushing of the Albanian revolt in Kosovo is also important because in 1913 as in 1941 or the 1990s it was quite clear to all involved what the purpose of ethnic cleansing was: 'Houses and whole villages are reduced to ashes, unarmed and innocent populations massacred *en masse*, incredible acts of violence, pillage and brutality of every kind – such were the means which were employed by the Serbo-Montenegrin soldiery, with a view to the entire transformation of the ethnic character of regions inhabited exclusively by Albanians.

"We thus arrive at the second characteristic feature of the Balkan wars, a feature which is the necessary correlative of the first. Since the population of the countries about to be occupied knew, by tradition, instinct and experience, what they had to expect from the armies of the enemy and from the neighbouring countries to which these armies belonged, they did not await their arrival, but fled. Thus generally speaking, the army of the enemy found on its way nothing but villages which were either half deserted or entirely abandoned. To execute the orders for extermination, it was only necessary to set fire to them. The population, warned by the glow from these fires, fled all in haste. There followed a veritable migration of peoples, for in Macedonia, as in Thrace, there was hardly a spot which was not, at a given moment, on the line of march of some army or other. The Commission everywhere encountered

---

<sup>541</sup> Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 147, 148.

<sup>542</sup> Barbara Tuchman writes that at the funeral of King Edward VII in 1910 Ferdinand had "annoyed his fellow sovereigns by calling himself Czar and kept in a chest a Byzantine Emperor's full regalia, acquired from a theatrical costumer, against the day when he should reassemble the Byzantine dominions beneath his sceptre" (*The Guns of August*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1962, 1994, p. 3).

<sup>543</sup> Cooper, "Balkan Ghosts", *New Statesman*, October 4-10, 2013, p. 31.

this second fact. All along the railways interminable trains of carts drawn by oxen followed one another; behind them came emigrant families and, in the neighbourhood of the big towns, bodies of refugees were found encamped.'

"Just as conversion had been accepted as a means to escape death in earlier times, in some places it once again became an issue. When the Montenegrins captured the village of Plav, Rebecca West, whose pro-Serbian bent somewhat undermines her otherwise masterly account of Yugoslavia in the 1930s, characteristically dismisses a major massacre as an 'unfortunate *contretemps*'. During this little misunderstanding a former Muslim cleric, now converted to Orthodoxy and a major in the Montenegrin Army, demanded that his former congregation convert. They refused and so 500 of them were shot. In another incident, some Macedonian villagers had their church surrounded by Serbian soldiers during the Sunday service. On emerging they found that a table had been set up on which was a piece of paper and a revolver. Either they could sign that they were Serbs rather than Bulgarians – or they could die. They chose the former option."<sup>544</sup>

This latter incident shows that rivalry and hatred among the Orthodox, especially in Macedonia, had by no means been removed by their alliances against the Turks. The Russian minister in Montenegro in 1912-13, Alexander Giers "once wrote to Serge Sazonov that there was little to choose between the Serbs, the Greeks, the Bulgarians and the Romanians. 'They all hate each other and show little inclination to settle the accounts accumulated between them over the centuries by means of reasonable compromises.' In April 1913 he wrote that not merely were the Balkan peoples at each other's throats as always but their attitude to Russia was entirely manipulative. They wanted the backing of Russian power but had no genuine loyalty to Russian culture or ideals, let alone any inclination to follow Russian advice. The Serbs were most dangerous because Russia was being pushed into the position of acting as the defender of the Serbian national cause. In Giers's opinion, the nationalist project of uniting all Serbs, let alone all southern Slavs, was in itself 'very doubtful', because even the Serbs in the Habsburg empire differed substantially from their co-ethnics in the Serbian kingdom. Far greater still was the gap between Belgrade and the Croats, Slovenes, and other Slav subjects of the Habsburgs. It was, however, very dangerous that 'the Serbs of the kingdom have become convinced in recent times that whatever paths their struggle with Austria might take they would find in the Russian government both sympathy and support.' With increasing frequency, Belgrade had sought to draw Russia into Serbia's struggle with Austria.

"In Giers's opinion, this was wholly contrary to Russian interests. Austria could be an important ally for Russia in achieving a tolerable compromise on the question of the Straits. Above all, Russia risked being sucked into a European war caused by the Austrian dispute with Serbia..."<sup>545</sup>

---

<sup>544</sup> Judah, *The Serbs*, pp. 85-86.

<sup>545</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 142.

Again, a Carnegie Endowment report describes the hatred between the Greeks and Bulgarians at this time:- "Day after day the Bulgarians were represented as a race of monsters, and public feeling was roused to a pitch of chauvinism which made it inevitable that war, when it should come, should be ruthless. In talk and in print one phrase summed up the general feeling of the Greeks towards the Bulgarians. '*Dhen einai anthropoi!*' (They are not human beings). In their excitement and indignation the Greeks came to think of themselves as the appointed avengers of civilization against a race which stood outside the pale of humanity.

"... Deny that your enemies are men, and presently you will treat them as vermin. Only half realizing the full meaning of what he said, a Greek officer remarked to the writer, 'When you have to deal with barbarians, you must behave like a barbarian yourself. It is the only thing they understand.' The Greek army went to war, its mind inflamed with anger and contempt. A gaudily coloured print, which we saw in the streets of Salonika and the Piraeus, eagerly bought by the Greek soldiers returning to their homes, reveals the depth of the brutality to which this race hatred had sunk them. It shows a Greek *evzone* (highlander) holding a living Bulgarian soldier with both hands, while he gnaws the face of the victim with his teeth, like some beast of prey. It is entitled *Bulgarophagos* (Bulgar-eater), and is adorned with the following verses:

*The sea of fire which boils in my breast  
And calls for vengeance with the savage waves of my soul,  
Will be quenched when the monster of Sofia is still,  
And thy life blood extinguishes my hate."*<sup>546</sup>

It is sometimes asserted that the Christian commandment to love our enemies cannot be applied in a war situation. Certainly, it is necessary to obey lawful authorities and fight the enemies of the State. At the same time, personal hatred and unnecessary cruelty are forbidden both in war and peace. Even in the Old Testament, and even in relation to non-Jews, cruelty was forbidden: "You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. If you do afflict them, and they cry out to Me, I will surely hear their cry, and My wrath will burn, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows, and your children fatherless" (Exodus 22.21-24).

In ten weeks' fighting during the two Balkan wars of 1912-13 about 200,000 soldiers were killed, together with an unknown number of civilians. This constituted a undoubted political and military victory for the Balkan Orthodox, but a major spiritual defeat for Orthodoxy, with each Orthodox nation fighting for its own power and glory, not only against the Turkish oppressors but also against the Albanians - and against each other. Russia had managed to avoid a world war while not betraying her co-religionists; but internal as well as

---

<sup>546</sup> Judah, *op. cit.*, pp. 84-85.



external factors were making it increasingly difficult for the Tsar to hold the twin monsters of revolutionary nationalism and internationalist revolution at bay.

As Bokhanov writes, "in spite of the fact that the Balkan wars did not grow into a pan-European conflict, the tension in the international arena did not abate. Germany and France had already for several years been carrying out rearmament programmes. Russia was also drawn into this world arms race. Nationalist tendencies increased. In the spring of 1913 the German chancellor Bethmann-Holweg, while arguing in the Reichstag for the necessity of new credits for the army, declared that Germany was threatened by 'a Slavic wave'. But he was only repeating his Kaiser, who declared after the First Balkan War that he thought 'a struggle between the Slavs and Germans' inevitable.

"By contrast with 'dear Willy', the Russian tsar was of another opinion and did not consider a large-scale military conflict to be inevitable. In May 1913 Nicholas II arrived in Berlin for the wedding of the Kaiser's daughter, Princess Victoria-Louise, who was marrying the duke of Braunstein. The tsar was intending to come to an agreement with William II about improving Russian-German relations. He conducted negotiations with the Kaiser and told him that Russia was ready to renounce her claims on the Black Sea straits and agreed to leave Turkey in the role of 'gate-keeper' if Germany, on her part, would keep Austria from an expansionist policy in the Balkans. There was no reaction to these suggestions in Berlin, and William confined himself only to talking about generalities..."<sup>547</sup>

\*

The Balkan Wars, writes Niall Ferguson, "had revealed both the strengths and the limits of Balkan nationalism. Its strength lay in its ferocity. Its weakness was its disunity. The violence of the fighting much impressed the young Trotsky, who witnessed it as a correspondent for the newspaper *Kievskaja mysl*. Even the peace that followed the Balkan Wars was cruel, in a novel manner that would become a recurrent feature of the twentieth century. It no longer sufficed, in the eyes of nationalists, to acquire foreign territory. Now it was peoples as well as borders that had to move. Sometimes these movements were spontaneous. Muslims fled in the direction of Salonika as the Greeks, Serbs and Bulgarians advanced in 1912; Bulgarians fled Macedonia to escape from invading Greek troops in 1913; Greeks chose to leave the Macedonian districts ceded to Bulgaria and Serbia by the Treaty of Bucharest. Sometimes populations were deliberately expelled, as the Greeks were from Western Thrace in 1913 and from parts of Eastern Thrace and Anatolia in 1914. In the wake of the Turkish defeat, there was an agreed population exchange: 48,570 Turks moved one way and 46,764 Bulgarians the other across the new Turkish-Bulgarian border. Such exchanges were designed to transform regions of ethnically mixed settlement into the homogeneous societies that so appealed to

---

<sup>547</sup> Bokhanov, *op. cit.*, p. 321.

the nationalist imagination. The effects on some regions were dramatic. Between 1912 and 1915, the Greek population of (Greek) Macedonia increased by around a third; the Muslim and Bulgarian population declined by 26 and 13 per cent respectively. The Greek population of Western Thrace fell by 80 per cent; the Muslim population of Eastern Thrace rose by a third. The implications were distinctly ominous for the many multi-ethnic communities elsewhere in Europe..."<sup>548</sup>

The major political result of the Balkan Wars was that the Balkan Orthodox states now regarded themselves as completely independent of their Russian protector. *Formally speaking*, this was certainly not envisaged by, for example, the Serbian-Bulgarian Treaty of 1912, which ascribed to Russia the role of arbiter in all disputes.<sup>549</sup> But the reality was quite different... As a French diplomat in St. Petersburg put it: "For the first time in the history of the Eastern question the small states have acquired a position of such independence of the Great Powers that they feel able to act completely without them and even to take them in tow..."<sup>550</sup>

This independence was revealed in the way in which the Serbs remained on Albanian territory for a full six months after agreeing to withdraw from it, leaving only after the Austrians issued an ultimatum on October 17.

But the new-found independence of the Balkan states came at a price – a price that was to be paid in 1914. Thus the Serbian refusal, contrary to their promise, to leave Albania, and their leaving only under the threat of war, convinced the Austrians, first, that the only way they could exert any influence over the Serbs was through ultimatums. And secondly, as Clark writes, "that Serbia would only ever ultimately understand force..."<sup>551</sup> As Max Hastings writes, "western statesmen regarded [Serbia] with impatience and suspicion. Its self-assertiveness, its popular catchphrase 'Where a Serb dwells, there is Serbia', destabilized the Balkans. Europe's chancelleries were irritated by its 'little Serbia', proud-victim culture. Serbs treated their own minority subjects, especially Muslims, with conspicuous and often murderous brutality. Every

---

<sup>548</sup> Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, pp. 76-77.

<sup>549</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 298.

<sup>550</sup> Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 444. A certain Bulgarian statesman told the journalist Leon Trotsky soon after the First Balkan War: "We must, of course, say this in all politeness to all the other diplomats from Europe, as they labour in the sweat of their brows for our happiness. 'Neither honey nor thorns,' dear sirs! We ourselves will settle with Turkey, without any interference from Europe, and all the more firmly and satisfactorily. Europe puts on an air of being afraid that we shall be excessively demanding. And this from Europe – that is to say, from Austria-Hungary, who annexed Bosnia; from Italy, who seized Tripolitania; from Russia, who never takes her eyes off Constantinople... This is the Europe that comes to us preaching moderation and restraint. Truly, a sight for the gods on Olympus!... Your diplomats are sulking. They would not be averse to freezing the Balkans for another ten years, in expectation of better days sometime. How is it that they cannot understand that less and less is it possible in our epoch to direct the destinies of the Balkans from the outside? We are growing up, gaining confidence, and becoming independent... In the very first years of our present phase of existence as a state, we told our would-be guardians: 'Bulgaria will follow her own line.'... And so Messrs. Privy Councillors of all the diplomatic chancelleries would do well to get used to the idea that the Balkan Peninsula 'will follow its own line'..." (Glenny, *op. cit.*, pp. 225-226)

<sup>551</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 288.

continental power recognised that the Serbs could achieve their ambition to enfold in their own polity two million brethren still under Habsburg rule only at the cost of bringing down Franz Joseph's empire."<sup>552</sup>

This was the fundamental problem of Balkan politics, and the reason why it was precisely in the Balkans that the fuse was lit that led to the First World War. The Balkan States of Greece, Serbia, Montenegro, Bulgaria and Romania were Orthodox, but they did not recognize the guidance of Russia, the senior and most powerful Orthodox state. (In March, 1912, the Serbs and Bulgars had agreed to accept the arbitration of the Tsar in case of territorial quarrels. But this did not happen...) In spite of the fact that Russia, over the centuries, had expended millions of lives and vast financial resources in order to protect and liberate the Balkans from the oppression of Muslim and Catholic powers, they did not feel obliged to show gratitude to "the Third Rome" or submit to her leadership in any way. They were determined to pursue their own, egotistical ends, expanding their territories regardless of the consequences for world peace or the interests of the Orthodox commonwealth as a whole, let alone the interests of the other Orthodox states in the region.

As for the Tsar, as Autocrat of the Third Rome and protector of the whole of Orthodoxy, he was bound to have the interests of the Orthodox as a whole at heart. But he was faced with a very difficult dilemma. On the one hand, he could not ignore the majority nationalist opinion in Russia, which wanted him to support the Orthodox Balkan states when they came into conflict with Ottoman Turkey or Austria-Hungary. Nor was he personally unsympathetic to this "war party", which is why he tended to support the Defence Secretary Sukhomlinov in his requests for increased military spending, and was quick to order a partial mobilization in November, 1912.<sup>553</sup> But on the other hand, he knew that defending the interests of one Balkan state risked alienating another - which is precisely what happened when he came down on the side of Serbia as against Bulgaria.<sup>554</sup> Still more serious, because of the new system of alliances in which the Entente supported Serbia while the Triple Alliance supported Bulgaria, any serious involvement on the side of Serbia threatened to ignite a wider conflict between the two alliance blocs. And this would most likely bring down Russia herself and with her the whole of the Orthodox commonwealth - which, again, is precisely what happened...

And so God allowed the *hubris* of the Balkan states to result in *nemesis* for the Orthodox world as a whole. Judgement was about to descend upon the whole European world. But it would begin at the House of God, the Orthodox Church (I Peter 4.17)...

---

<sup>552</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to War 1914*, London: William Collins, 2014, p. 17.

<sup>553</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>554</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 271-282.

## 40. ORTHODOXY IN TRANSCARPATHIA

Although Russia's conflict with Austria-Hungary centred on Serbia, there were other issues between the neighbouring empires that were perhaps even more important, if not quite so acute. After all, Serbia was an independent state with no border contiguous with Russia. But Poland and Ukraine were parts of the Russian empire and bordered on Austria-Hungary. Moreover, there were substantial minorities of Poles and Ukrainians on both sides of the border, making the area fertile ground for nationalist agitation.

Was it really conceivable that the Ukrainians would prefer to be within the German or Austrian rather than the Russian empires? The answer to this question depended partly on which part of Ukraine we are talking about. As Figes writes, "in Belorussia and the northern Ukraine there was so much ethnic and religious intermingling – in an area the size of Cambridgeshire there might be a mixture of Belorussian, Ukrainian, Russian, Polish, Jewish and Lithuanian settlements – that it was difficult for anything more than a localized form of ethnic identity to take root in the popular consciousness. One British diplomat... concluded that this was still the case as late as 1918: 'Were one to ask the average peasant in the Ukraine his nationality he would answer that he is Greek Orthodox; if pressed to say whether he is a Great Russian, a Pole, or an Ukrainian, he would probably reply that he is a peasant; and if one insisted on knowing what language he spoke, he would say that he talked 'the local tongue'..."<sup>555</sup>

"The Ukrainian problem," writes Lieven, "was greatly complicated by the fact that although three-quarters of all those whom we would nowadays define as Ukrainians lived in the Russian Empire in 1900, the remaining quarter lived in Austria-Hungary. Of the latter, 3.5 million lived in Austrian Galicia, and over 400,000 dwelled in Hungary. The Hungarian 'Ukrainians' are usually described by historians as Rusyns, though they often called themselves Russians and saw themselves as members of a single Russian community, albeit with local peculiarities. As the confusion of names suggests, there was no agreement on Ukrainian identity. The battle to define this identity went on simultaneously in three different countries, each of which had its own distinct context. Nevertheless, this battle was widely seen – not least by Russians – as a single war to determine the fate of the whole Ukrainian region. The potential stakes were therefore immense. It was largely for this reason that a nationalist member of the Duma, Count Vladimir Bobrinsky, founded the Carpatho-Russian Society and mobilized support to defend the small Hungarian Rusyn community against attempts to weaken its sense of a common Russian identity.

"Bobrinsky's support for the Rusyns caused difficulties for Austrian-Russian relations, but the group was too small for them to play a key role in the region's fate. The 3.5 million Austrian Ukrainians, at the time generally described as Ruthenes, were far more crucial because by 1914 Austrian Galicia

---

<sup>555</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, London: Pimlico, 1996, pp. 75-76.

was the centre of Ukrainian nationalism. The basic reason for this was that the Austrian authorities, unlike either their Russian or their Hungarian counterparts, put no constraints on civil society's freedom nor on the evolution of a sense of national identity among Austria's many peoples. Vienna had indeed encouraged the development of Ukrainian identity as a check both on Polish power within the monarchy and on Russian attempts to claim leadership of the Slav world. Galicia became a refuge for Ukrainian nationalist émigrés from Russia. With their help, there grew up a literary language and a national historical narrative completely divorced from Russian literature and opposed to key aspects of Russians' understanding of their country's history. After 1867, Austrian political life became increasingly democratic, with universal male suffrage introduced in 1907. Ukrainian nationalism organized itself politically and put down deep roots in Galician society. Even in Galicia, the battle over Ukrainian identity was not over in 1914: a substantial minority that still saw itself as Little Russian survived. Nevertheless, Ukrainian nationalism was clearly on top, and many of its tribunes dreamed of the day when all Ukrainians would be united in a single nation outside the Russian Empire...<sup>556</sup>

Oliver Figes confirms that Galicia's "relatively liberal rights of self-government... had allowed the Ukrainians, or 'Ruthenians' (dog-Latin for 'Russians') as they were known by the Austrians, to promote their own Ukrainian language in primary schools and public life, to publish native-language newspapers and books, and to advance the study of Ukrainian history and folk culture. Galicia became a sort of 'Ukrainian Piedmont' for the rest of the national movement in tsarist Ukraine: a forcing-house of national consciousness and an oasis of freedom for nationalist intellectuals. Lviv, its capital, also known as Lemberg (by the Germans) and as Lvov (by the Russians), was a thriving centre of Ukrainian culture. Although subjects of the Tsar, both the composer Lysenko and the historian Hrushevsky had found their nation in Galicia. The nationalist intellectuals who pioneered the Ukrainian literary language in the middle decades of the nineteenth century all borrowed terms from the Galician dialect, which they considered the most advanced, although later, as they tried to reach the peasantry with newspapers and books, they were forced to base it on the Poltavan folk idiom, which, as the dialect of the central Ukraine, was the most commonly understood. The seminal texts of this national literary renaissance were published by the Brotherhood of Saints Cyril and Methodius prior to its dissolution by the tsarist authorities in 1847. The romantic poetry of Taras Shevchenko, which played the same role as Mickiewicz's poetry in Poland in shaping the intelligentsia's national consciousness, was the most important of these. Ukrainian-language publications continued to appear, despite the legal restrictions on them. Many were published by the Kiev section of the Russian Geographical Society, whose nationalist members devoted themselves to the study of Ukrainian folk culture, language and history."<sup>557</sup>

---

<sup>556</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, pp. 52-53, 56-57.

<sup>557</sup> Figes, *A People's Tragedy*, p. 74.

Austrian Galicia was a seedbed of anti-Russian nationalist discontent, in which Orthodox were persecuted by Catholics. This was, of course, a long-running story. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the Catholics, led by the Poles and the Jesuits, had been on the offensive. But as the Russian empire expanded westwards in the nineteenth century, millions of Catholic uniates returned to the faith of their fathers. There was also a large emigration of uniates of Russia origin, Galicians and Carpatho-Russians, to the USA and Canada, where, from 1890, they encountered representatives of the Russian Orthodox Mission, which until 1907 was headed by future Patriarch of Moscow Tikhon (Bellavin). First the Minneapolis priest Fr. Alexis Toth was converted, and then, through him, about 300 Uniate parishes were united to Holy Orthodoxy.<sup>558</sup>

The Pochaev Lavra in Galicia had for centuries, since the time of St. Job of Pochaev in the seventeenth century, been a stronghold of Orthodoxy in a sea of uniatism. Now, in the early twentieth century, Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Volhynia was the main defender of Orthodoxy against the Catholic heretics both within his own diocese and also further west, in Austrian Galicia and Carpatho-Russia, where the Hungarian government and the uniates tried by all means to prevent the return of the Carpatho-Russians to their ancestral Orthodox faith.

Jurij Danilets writes: "In his account of Antony Khrapovitskii's ministry as Archbishop of Volhynia, Archbishop Nikon (Rklitskii) made note of the former's special concern for the Orthodox movement in Austria-Hungary. Understanding the complexity of the situation in the church, the Metropolitan appealed to the Patriarch of Constantinople to extend his jurisdiction to Galicia and Transcarpathia: 'For political reasons, the Russian Synod could officially not extend its influence to regions under Austro-Hungarian rule,' Archbishop Nikon noted. Further on in the text, we encounter the information that the Patriarch appointed Archbishop Antony 'Exarch of Galicia and Carpathian Ruthenia'. It is important that the Holy Synod of the Ecumenical Patriarchate did not protest against this step, and after the death of Joachim III, his successor Patriarch Germanos ratified the decision. We must agree with Archbishop Nikon that this new appointment, although symbolic in nature, provided a canonical basis for Archbishop Antony's guardianship of the Orthodox in Galicia and Transcarpathia."<sup>559</sup>

Fr. Andrew Phillips writes: "One of the first to launch the return to Orthodoxy movement in Carpatho-Russia was Archimandrite Vladimir (Terletsky) (born 1808). At first a Uniate priest, he eventually became Orthodox in Kiev in 1872 after Hungarian persecution at home. In Kiev he wrote of the national awakening in Carpatho-Russia. A second personality was the Uniate

---

<sup>558</sup> "Fr. Alexis Toth and the Return of the Emigrant Uniates to the Holy Church", *Orthodox Life*, July-August, 1973.

<sup>559</sup> Danilets, "The ROCOR and Orthodoxy in Subcarpathian Ruthenia in the 1920s", *ROCOR Studies*, November, 2021.

priest Ioann Rakovsky (+1885),... from the village of Iza near Khust (now in the Ukraine). Although he remained a Uniate until his death-bed, after him others actually joined the Orthodox Church, despite the fact that in the Austro-Hungarian Empire it was possible to join any religion – except Orthodoxy.

“Thus, when in 1903 the villagers of Iza announced their intention to become Orthodox, their Golgotha began. Once the villagers had for the first time sung the Creed without the notorious *filioque*, Iza was flooded with Hungarian police. There were house searches and liturgical books and icons were confiscated. The police stayed in their village for several months, extorting food from the villagers, oppressing them and mocking the womenfolk. Eventually, the police began arrests and put 22 men on trial.

“This trial, known as the ‘First Maramorosh-Sighet Trial’ took place in 1904. The accusation was ‘Treason’, later changed to ‘Incitement against the Hungarian Nationality’. Three peasants, Joachim Vakarov, Vasily Lazar and Vasily Kamen were sentenced to fourteen months imprisonment and had to pay a huge fine with equally huge costs. Land, homes, cattle and domestic gear were auctioned off to pay these fines. The peasants were released from prison as paupers and their families were looked after by relatives with the help of the parish of Iza. However Joachim Vakarov and his friends were not daunted. Soon the Hungarians built a police station in the village, which was only three miles from another police garrison. Joachim Vakarov was seized and tortured to death. The peasants, priestless, buried him themselves, singing the funeral hymn.

“Joachim's martyrdom only increased resistance. Several villages, Luchki, Tereblia and others, decided to return to Orthodoxy. The peasants searched for an Orthodox priest so they could be received into the Church, but at that time it was impossible for Russian priests to cross the border. It was only later that the great friend of Carpatho-Russia,... Archbishop Antony (Khrapovitsky) (1863-1936), later Metropolitan of Kiev and First Hierarch of the Russian Orthodox Church Outside Russia, managed to obtain jurisdiction in the Carpathians.

“Therefore the peasants approached the Serbian bishop in Budapest. The latter was afraid of the Hungarian authorities and refused to see the delegation.<sup>560</sup> The peasants then went to the Serbian Patriarch in Karlovtsy,

---

<sup>560</sup> In fairness to the bishop, however, he had a real problem caused by the rejection of the Austro-Hungarian monarchy by the Carpatho-Russians. A priest of Hungarian origin, a member of the True Orthodox Church of Russia, Fr. Istvan Nemeth, explains: “How is it possible that in the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy Orthodox people could freely practice their religion under the protection of the Serbian Orthodox Church and only the Russians were persecuted by the Carpathian Russians? The Hungarian authorities decided thus because these people wanted to get away from the monarchy. If some of the Russians had not behaved like this, they could have practiced their religion without any problem, just like the other Orthodox Christian citizens of the empire... We should remember the answer to the Serbian bishop of Buda when these Carpathian rebels wanted to get their own priest? The Serbian bishop of Buda refused to give them a priest and only after a long plea at the Serbian Patriarch, they sent them a priest in the person of [Fr. Alexei] Kabaliuk...” (V.M.)

since his Church cared for all Orthodox in the Austro-Hungarian Empire. Although he received them, he too was fearful of Austro-Hungarian terror. The peasants replied that if he refused, then he would have to answer for this at the [Last Judgement](#). The Patriarch decided to send a priest [Fr. Alexis Kabaliuk]. When the Uniate bishop of the nearby town of Mukachevo heard this, he rushed to Vienna to denounce it, saying that if it were allowed, then his whole diocese would go over to Orthodoxy and he would be unemployed. His denunciation was heard favourably.

“Meanwhile, the peasants of Iza began holding their own services, until they were able to cross the border secretly to Romanian Bukovina, where a priest baptized their children. The peasants built a chapel in the village, but this was demolished by the Hungarian police, who forbade them to pray together. Nevertheless, other villages began to follow Iza in the great return to Orthodoxy. It was only in 1910 that Carpatho-Russia at last received a spiritual leader in the person of Hieromonk Alexis (Kabaliuk). It was in that year that he arrived in their village secretly, in a hay cart.

“This confessor of Orthodoxy was born on 1 September 1875 in the Carpatho-Russian village of Yasinie, to the pious family of a wood-cutter, Ivan Kabaliuk and his very devout wife Hannah. The child, one of eight, was named after the holy Prince Alexander Nevsky. As a child he began parish school at the age of six and showed both piety and intelligence, reading all he could about Orthodoxy. He frequently visited the Orthodox monasteries in neighbouring Bukovina, and also the Uniate monastery of Kish-Baran. As a young man, he completed his military service only to return home and find his father on his death-bed. He then visited the Monastery of Biskad, now in Romania, to ask the clairvoyant Elder Arcadius whether he should marry or become a monk. The answer was monasticism.

“Since this sensitive soul could not accept the lie of Uniatism, in 1905 and 1906 Alexander visited the Lavras in Kiev and Pochaiev, where he met both the elderly Metropolitan of Kiev, Flavian, and the dynamic Archbishop Antony (Khrapovitsky), who was to play a vital role in Fr. Alexis’ later life. In 1908 he decided to go on pilgrimage to Mt Athos and Jerusalem. He became Orthodox in July 1908 at the Russian monastery of St. Panteleimon on Mt Athos and then returned to Russia, with the gift of an icon of the Mother of God of the Akathist, which was to accompany him for the rest of his life. In early 1910 he became a monk at the Yablochino monastery (now in Poland), took the name Alexis and undertook theological studies. On 15 August 1910, again with the support of Archbishop Antony, he was ordained hieromonk, with the name of Alexis. From there he was invited to Iza. He celebrated secretly here, also in Mukachevo and elsewhere.

“In his homeland Fr. Alexis’ first enemy, and that of Carpatho-Russian spiritual identity, was Uniatism. The Austro-Hungarian policy of divide and rule meant separating the inhabitants of the Russian borderlands (the meaning of the word ‘Ukraine’) from the Russian motherland. This meant the religious



artifice of Uniatism, which would later lead to the invention of a separate nationalist identity through 'ukrainianization'. This weapon was especially used in the west of Little Russia (now the Ukraine), known as Galicia, which had long been under Polish influence. However, the lie was given to this Austro-Hungarian invention by the Carpatho-Russian Orthodox. Their own name for themselves, 'Rusiny', clearly showed that they were not some entirely different nationality and their whole history was in fact part of Russian Orthodoxy. They are not 'Carpatho-Ukrainians', but Carpatho-Russians. This explains why the Austro-Hungarians were so frightened of Rusin Orthodoxy and tried to suppress it.

"However, nothing could stop Fr. Alexis, neither torture, nor persecution. His strong faith, zeal and desire to serve his people were such that he worked as a wood-turner, for he was unwilling to live off poor peasants. He went around all the villages that had returned to Orthodoxy, celebrating the sacraments, teaching and strengthening in the faith. In one day he baptized 200 children and gave communion to over 1,000 faithful. According to a Hungarian newspaper, in the area of Maramorosh around Iza over 14,000 people became Orthodox.

"Within two years Fr. Alexis had set up 28 Orthodox communities in various villages. He searched for help everywhere, returning again to Athos and also meeting the Patriarchs of Constantinople and Serbia. The persecutions worsened and Fr. Alexis was arrested several times. The police surrounded churches, searched homes, confiscating prayer-books, icons, crosses and religious literature. Huge fines were imposed on the peasants, the area was flooded with police and chapels were closed. Those who had become Orthodox were imprisoned. In reply, even more villages became Orthodox.

"Fr. Alexis was hunted by the Hungarian Catholic authorities like a wild animal. In mid-1912 he was forced to leave first for Yablochino, then in the spring of 1913 for Russia, finally for America, where there was a large Carpatho-Russian colony. There, together with Fr. Alexander Khotovitsky, he continued his missionary exploits and hundreds of thousands of Carpatho-Russians returned to the Orthodoxy of their forebears. From here Fr. Alexis corresponded unceasingly with his flock and the Austro-Hungarians began arresting anyone with a letter bearing an American stamp. Several hundred were imprisoned, including all of Fr. Alexis' relatives."<sup>561</sup>

---

<sup>561</sup> Phillips, "Carpatho-Russia and the Struggle for the Russian Orthodox Tradition outside Russia", <https://orthochristian.com/108811.html>. A close friend of the Tsar, General Vladimir Voeikov, wrote: "One of the symptoms for the openly aggressive politics of Austro-Hungary against Russia was the following incident: In the middle of February, 1914, Hieromonk Alexis Kabaliuk was sentenced, according to newspaper reports, by a Marmarosh-Sagetsky court to four and a half years in prison and a fine of a thousand crowns for, in the words of the sentence, spreading Russian Orthodox teaching, praising the Russian tsar and Russia and thereby inciting hatred against the Hungarian authorities, supposedly encroaching on the rights of the Hungarian king." (*So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 41)

There were even martyrdoms, such as that of the priest Maximus Sandovich, who had been ordained by Vladyka Anthony.

“Vladyka Anthony struggled with the unia and both by the printed word and in his sermons he often addressed this theme. He tried by all means to destroy the incorrect attitude towards the unia which had been established in Russia, according to which it was the same Orthodoxy, only commemorating the Pope of Rome. With profound sorrow and irritation he said: ‘They can in no way accept this simple truth, that the unia is a complete entry into the Roman Catholic church with the recognition of the Orthodox Church as a schism.., with the recognition of all the Latin saints and with a condemnation of the Orthodox saints as having been schismatics outside the true Church...’

“... Vladyka Anthony also laboured much to establish in Russian society an Orthodox attitude towards Catholicism. In educated Russian society and in ecclesiastical circles in the Synodal period of the Russian Church the opinion was widespread that Catholicism was one of the branches of Christianity which, as V.S. Soloviev taught, was bound at the end of time to unite into one Christianity with the other supposed branches – Orthodoxy and Protestantism, about which the holy Church supposedly prayed in her litanies: ‘For the prosperity of the Holy Churches of God and for the union of all’.

“The correct attitude towards Catholicism as an apostate heresy was so shaken that the Holy Synod under the influence of the Emperor Peter I and with the blessing of his favourite, the protestantising Metropolitan Theophan Prokopovich, allowed Swedish prisoners-of-war in Siberia to marry Russian girls without the obligatory conversion to Orthodoxy. Soon this uncanonical practice of mixed marriages became law and spread, especially in the western regions. In his diocese Vladyka Anthony strictly forbade the clergy to celebrate mixed marriages.

“Vladyka Anthony well knew that Catholic influence in the midst of the Russian clergy was introduced through the theological schools: ‘We have lost (an Orthodox attitude towards Catholicism) because those guides by which we studied in school and which constitute the substance of our theological, dogmatic and moral science, are borrowed from the Catholics and Protestants; we are left only with straight heterodox errors which are known to all and have been condemned by ecclesiastical authorities...’

“Seeing the abnormal situation of church life in subjugated Carpathian Rus’, Vladyka Anthony turned to the Ecumenical Patriarch Joachim III with a request to accept the Orthodox Galicians and Carpatho-Russians under his omophorion, since the Russian Synod for political reasons was unable to spread its influence there. The patriarch willingly agreed and appointed Vladyka Anthony as his exarch for Galicia and Carpathian Rus’. The Galicians, after finishing work in the fields and in spite of the great obstacles involved in crossing the border, sometimes with a direct danger to their lives, made

pilgrimages in large groups to the Pochaev Lavra. Many Carpatho-Russians and Galicians entered the Volhynia theological seminary.

“Under the influence of all these undertakings, the Orthodox movement in these areas began to grow in an elemental manner with each year that passed. This elicited repressions on the part of the Austro-Hungarian government, which tried to suppress the movement. The persecution grew and soon Vladyka was forced to speak out in defence of the persecuted Christians. In August, 1913 he published an encyclical letter in which he eloquently portrayed all the woes and persecutions of the Orthodox population of the western regions. In going through the various instances of Catholics humiliating Orthodox, he cited the following example of the firmness of the persecuted and the cruelty of the persecutors: ‘Virgins who had gathered together to save their souls in fasting and prayer were stripped in winter and driven out onto a frozen lake, like the 40 martyrs of Sebaste, after which some of them soon died. Thus do they torture our Russians in Hungary and Austria in broad daylight in our civilized age...’

“But when massive arrests and tortures of the Orthodox began, and there was a trial of 94 Orthodox in Sihet, Vladyka Anthony composed a special prayer and petitions in the litanies, which were read in all the churches of the Volhynia diocese in the whole period of the trial, which lasted for two months.

“This was the only voice raised in defence of the persecuted, not only in Russia but also throughout Europe.

“The Austro-Hungarian political circles, in agreement with the Vatican, took decisive measures to suppress the incipient mass return to Orthodoxy of the Carpatho-Russians and Galicians. It seems that they undertook diplomatic negotiations in St. Petersburg in order to remove the main cause of the movement that had arisen, Vladyka Anthony, from his Volhynian see.”<sup>562</sup>

On May 20, 1914 Archbishop Anthony was duly transferred to Kharkov...

---

<sup>562</sup> *Holy New Hieromartyr Maximus Sandovich*, Liberty, Tennessee: St. John of Kronstadt Press, 1998, pp. 48-50.

## 41. THE LAST YEARS OF PEACE

In 1912 and 1913 a number of important anniversaries were celebrated to commemorate the historical triumphs of the Romanov dynasty. The first was the centenary of the victory over Napoleon in 1812. As Lubov Millar writes, “A solemn ‘Te Deum’ was held in the presence of the Imperial Family at the Kazan Cathedral in St. Petersburg, where General Field Marshal Koutouzov, commander of the Russian forces in the 1813 Patriotic War, was buried... The Tsar was also present at Borodino, site of the decisive battle against the French. A special train was arranged for this purpose and remained standing on the railway tracks near Borodino throughout the ceremonies. The final part of the jubilee festivities was the arrival of the Tsar in Moscow from Borodino. On the day of his arrival in the ancient capital, a Divine Liturgy was celebrated in the Cathedral of Christ the Saviour, built to commemorate Russia’s victory over Napoleon.”<sup>563</sup>

In May 1913, there took place the glorification of Patriarch Hermogen of All Russia, who had been martyred by the Poles during the Time of Troubles in 1612.

If the Borodino celebration commemorated the military might of Russia, which had built up the greatest land empire in history, the glorification of St. Hermogen reminded the people that the liberation of Russia from foreign invaders both in 1612 and again in 1812, had been critically dependent on the support and spiritual leadership of the Church, without whose loyalty to the Throne the Empire would have perished a long time ago. Both lessons were very appropriate in 1912, when Russia stood on the eve of the First World War and another foreign invasion. Would the Church continue to support the Tsar in the hour of his greatest need? And would the people again remain faithful to the Tsar and the Church? These were the critical questions on which the survival of Russia depended.

“Later that same year, 1913, saw yet another significant anniversary, the Tercentenary of the House of Romanov. It was in 1612, after the Time of Troubles, that the first of the Romanovs, Michael, was elected Tsar of Russia. To mark this anniversary, the Emperor gave orders to draw up an important program of festivities throughout the land. A special jubilee coin – a silver ruble with the heads of two rulers, Michael and Nicholas II – was minted and circulated throughout the country.

“The Imperial Family visited various cities, driving through streets lined with troops, school children and enthusiastic crowds. A thanksgiving service was held in the Kazan Cathedral of St. Petersburg. In order to attend the services, Elizabeth Feodorovna left the administration of her Convent to her deputy and, entrusting its well-being to the mercy of God, took a train for St.

---

<sup>563</sup> Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Richfield Springs, N.Y.: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 1993, pp. 203, 206.

Petersburg. She joined the Imperial Family in their trips to various ancient cities, centers where national consciousness had grown: Nizhni Novgorod, Vladimir, Kostroma, Yaroslavl and Rostov...

"The tour had considerable importance. Everywhere, fitting ceremonies and religious services marked the visits of the Imperial Family. Popular enthusiasm throughout the Sovereign's trip was so spontaneous, so universal, that one would have thought that Monarchy, Orthodoxy and all the Russian people were closely united and would form an unbreakable union for many years to come. But such was not the case. Revolutionary activity was already widespread..."<sup>564</sup>

\*

The year 1913 witnessed two important events outside Russia which tended to give the false impression that all was well with the world and that world war was both mad and highly unlikely. The first was an international trade fair in Ghent in Belgium, which showed how globalized the world had become. The second, in May, was the marriage between the Kaiser's only daughter and Prince Ernst August of Cumberland, whose guests included not only the Kaiser but also King George V of England and Tsar Nicholas of Russia, together with "a galaxy of princes".

"Inevitably," writes Charles Emmerson, "the presence of the British King and Russian Tsar

"The Balkan wars of 1912-13," writes Dominic Lieven, "had greatly enlarged Serbian and Rumanian territory, together with the ambitions and self-confidence of Serbian and Rumanian nationalists. The Habsburg Monarchy contained large and discontented Serbian and Rumanian minorities. In 1914 Vienna feared that it would soon lose all its influence over the independent Balkan states, which in turn would contribute to its inability to control the Slav and Rumanian populations of the Monarchy. In more general terms, the rulers of the Habsburg state believed that a reassertion of the empire's power and vitality was essential in order to overawe its potential foreign and domestic enemies, and to contradict the widely prevalent assumption that the Monarchy was moribund and doomed to disappear in the era of nationalism and democracy."<sup>565</sup>

The problem of the persecution of Orthodox minorities in the Hungarian dominions was becoming an important source of tension. Thus the Romanians of the Romanian kingdom complained that the Romanian inhabitants of Transylvania were being maltreated by their Hungarian overlords. "Tisza, the Hungarian Prime Minister, recognised the problem and tried to appease the

---

<sup>564</sup> Millar, *op. cit.*, p. 212.

<sup>565</sup> Lieven, "Russia, Europe and World War I, in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *A Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, p. 42.

Rumanian nationalists, who were mainly concentrated in Transylvania, by offering them autonomy in such areas as religion and education but this was not enough for the Rumanians within Hungary and negotiations broke off in February 1914..."<sup>566</sup>

The other hotspot, as we have seen, was Galicia. Providentially, however, the outbreak of the First World War, and the success of the Russian offensive in Galicia in 1915, removed many of the dangers that Archbishop Anthony had warned about. Patriotic emotion and reverence for the Tsar revived, and concern for the fate of the Orthodox Christians in Serbia and Galicia made the struggle, in the minds of many, into a holy war in defence of Orthodoxy against militant Catholicism and Protestantism.

Relations between Vienna and Belgrade continued to be tense.

As Christopher Clark writes, "Austrian hostility to Belgrade's triumphant progress was reinforced from the autumn of 1913 by dark tidings from the areas conquered by Serbian forces. From Austrian Consul-General Jehlitschka in Skopje came reports in October 1913 of atrocities against the local inhabitants. One such spoke of the destruction of ten small villages whose entire population had been exterminated. The men were first forced to come out of the village and shot in lines; the houses were then set on fire, and when the women and children fled from the flames, they were killed with bayonets. In general, the consul-general reported, it was the officers who shot the men; the killing of the women and children was left to the enlisted men. Another source described the behaviour of Serbian troops after the taking of Gostivar, one of the towns in an area where there had been an Albanian uprising against the Serbian invaders. Some 300 Gostivar Muslims who had played no role in the uprising were arrested and taken out of the town during the night in groups of twenty to thirty to be beaten and stabbed to death with rifle butts and bayonets (gunshots would have woken the sleeping inhabitants of the town), before being thrown into a large open grave that had been dug beforehand for that purpose. These were not spontaneous acts of brutality, Jehlitschka concluded, but rather 'a cold-blooded and systematic elimination or annihilation operation that appeared to have been carried out on orders from above.'

"Such reports, which accord... with those of the British officials in the area, inevitably affected the mood and attitude of the political leadership in Vienna. In May 1914, the Serbian envoy in Vienna, Jovanović, reported that even the French ambassador had complained to him about the behaviour of the Serbs in the new provinces; similar complaints were forthcoming from Greek, Turkish, Bulgarian and Albanian colleagues, and it was to be feared that the damage to Serbia's reputation could have 'very bad consequences'. The glib denials of Pašić and his ministers reinforced the impression that the government was either itself behind the atrocities or unwilling to do anything to prevent or

---

<sup>566</sup> Macmillan, *The War that Ended Peace*, London: Profile, 2014, p. 506.

investigate them. The Austro-Hungarian minister in Belgrade was amused to see leader articles in the Viennese press advising the Serbian government to go easy on the minorities and win them over by a policy of conciliation. Such advice, he observed in a letter to Berchtold, might well be heeded in 'civilised states'. But Serbia was a state where 'murder and killing have been raised to a system'. The impact of these reports on Austrian policy is difficult to measure - they were hardly surprising to those in Vienna who already subscribed to a grossly stereotypical view of Serbia and its culture. At the very least, they underscored in Vienna's eyes the political illegitimacy of Serbian territorial expansion.

"Nevertheless: a war between Austria and Serbia did not appear likely in the spring and summer of 1914. The mood in Belgrade was relatively calm in the spring of that year, reflecting the exhaustion and sense of satiation that followed the Balkan Wars. The instability of the newly conquered areas and the civil-military crisis that racked Serbia during May gave grounds to suspect that the Belgrade government would be focusing mainly on tasks of domestic consolidation for the foreseeable future. In a report on 24 May 1914, the Austro-Hungarian minister in Belgrade, Baron Giesl, observed that although Serbian troop numbers along the Albanian border remained high, there seemed little reason to fear further incursions. And three weeks later, on 16 June, a dispatch from Gellinek, the military attaché in Belgrade, struck a similarly placed note. It was true that officers on holiday had been recalled, reservists asked not to leave their current addresses and the army was being kept at a heightened state of readiness. But there were no signs of aggressive intentions towards either Austro-Hungary or Albania. All was quiet on the southern front..."<sup>567</sup>

Meanwhile, on May 4/16, 1914 there took place, as N.Yu. Selishchev writes, "the signing of the document widely known in Greece as 'the Corfu protocol'. The Corfu protocol gave the Orthodox Greeks a broad autonomy and sealed their religious, civil and social rights. The international control commission of the great powers (Russia was represented by the consul-general M. Petriaev) acted as a mediator in the quarrel and became the trustee of the fulfilment of the Corfu accord. In Russia the Corfu protocol... was known as the 'Epirot-Albanian accord'. That is, the question of Epirus was not reduced to the level of an 'internal affair' of the newly created Albania, but was raised to the significance of an international agreement when the Orthodox Greek Epirots and the Muslim Albanians were recognized as parties to the agreement having equal rights. Our [Russian] press at that time - *Pravitel'stoennij Vestnik, Sankt-Peterburgskia Vedomosti* and the conservative *Novoe Vremia* - looked at the events in Epirus in precisely this way."

Later, in the spring of 1915 the government of Albania was entrusted to an International Commission of Control. They appointed the German Prince Wilhelm of Wied as ruler. But an uprising by the Muslims of Central Albania drove him out in September...

---

<sup>567</sup> Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2013, pp. 112-114.

“Unfortunately,” continues Selishchev, “to this day the protocol of Corfu has not been fulfilled and is not being fulfilled by the Albanian side, neither in the part relating to the religious, nor in the part relating to the civil and educational rights of the Greek Epirots. In this sense the unchanging character of Albanian hostility is indicative. In 1914 the Albanian prime-minister Turkhan Pasha declared to the Rome correspondent of *Berliner Tageblatt* that ‘there can be no discussion’ of the autonomy of Epirus, and ‘for us there are no longer any “Epirots”, but there are only the inhabitants of provinces united to us by the London conference.”<sup>568</sup>

\*

For the Russian aristocrats, as Douglas Smith writes, “Nineteen fourteen would prove to be society’s last season and, even if only in retrospect, its brightest. Baroness Meyendorff later recalled that she had seen many sparkling social seasons, but ‘the *last* one, in 1914, ‘was by far the most brilliant’. Princess Marie Gagarin remembered that last season as one of wild partying. ‘As if foreseeing the approach of catastrophe and striving to stifle a growing apprehension, all Petersburg nervously indulged in amusement and merrymaking.’ It was a time of ‘unprecedented luxury and eloquence’; everywhere were champagne and fresh roses, lilacs and mimosas imported from the south of France. The highlight of the season was the black and white ball at the home of Countess Betsy Shuvalov, with the officers of the Chevaliers Gardes resplendent in their uniforms. Six months later, nearly all these young men lay dead, killed in the first battles of the First World War. Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich cast these days in florid tones: ‘The gypsies cried, the glasses clinked, and the Romanian violinists, clad in red, hypnotized inebriated men and women into a daring attempt to explore the depths of vice. Hysteria reigned supreme...’<sup>569</sup>

“The atmosphere,” writes Montefiore, “was now overshadowed by a wild foreboding. The poets, playboys, dilettantes and aesthetes of the Silver Age – Blok called them ‘the children of Russia’s dreadful years’ – sensed the coming apocalypse and reacted in doom-laden carnival of reckless if morbid hedonism, seeking the essence of salvation, art and freedom in opium, Satanism and the transformative orgasm. The Symbolist poet-novelist Andrei Belyi warned ‘great will be the strife, strife the likes of which has never been seen in this world. Yellow hordes of Asiatics... will encrimson the fields of Europe in oceans of blood’, while Petersburg ‘will sink’. As strikes spread and war-clouds darkened, Blok felt the rumblings of a volcano:

*And over Russia I see a quiet  
Far-spreading fire consume all.”<sup>570</sup>*

---

568 Selishchev, “Chto neset Pravoslaviiu proekt ‘Velikoj Albanii’?”, *Pravoslavnaiia Rus’*, N 2 (1787), January 15/28, 2005, p. 11.

569 Smith, *Former People: The Last Days of the Russian Aristocracy*, London: Macmillan, 2012, p. 59.

570 Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, London: Vintage, 2016, p. 560.



The nationalists wanted war to uphold the power and glory of their nation; while some internationalists wanted it in order to overthrow the thrones of kings and introduce universal democracy. But many informed people understood that nothing good could come from the rapid growth of armaments on all sides. The mood was particularly belligerent in Berlin, from where President Woodrow Wilson's emissary, Colonel Edward House, wrote: "The situation is extraordinary. It is militarism run stark mad. Unless someone acting for you can bring about a different understanding there is some day to be an awful cataclysm..."<sup>571</sup>

Indeed, "there is no doubt," writes Clark, "that, viewed from across the Atlantic, pre-war Europe presented a curious spectacle. Senior statesmen, emperors and kings attended public occasions wearing military uniform; elaborate military reviews were an integral part of the public ceremonial of power; immense illuminated naval displays drew huge crowds and filled the pages of the illustrated journals; conscript armies grew in size until they became male microcosms of the nation; the cult of military display entered the public and the private life of even the smallest communities..."<sup>572</sup>

\*

But what were the real prospects of war?

In retrospect, the new European alliances created in 1904-07 - the Anglo-French Entente of 1904 and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 - seemed to some commentators (for example, the French diplomat Maurice Paléologue) to foreshadow and even cause the subsequent aggressiveness of the Triple Alliance and hence the cataclysm of 1914. However, as Clark writes: "It was still far from clear in 1907 that the new alliances would take Europe to war. The weakness of Russia after the disaster of 1904 obliged the policy-makers in St. Petersburg in the first instance to seek good relations with Germany, and it was widely accepted in St. Petersburg, for the time being at least, that Russia's domestic frailty ruled out any focus of international adventurism. It was hard to imagine the circumstances in which France might be willing to chance its arm for the Russians in the Balkans and even harder to imagine Russians marching to Berlin for the sake of Alsace and Lorraine. In 1909, Paris underscored its independence by signing an accord in Morocco with Germany, a 'striking instance of the crossing of lines' between the Alliance blocs. Then, in November 1910, Russian and German leaders met in Potsdam and Berlin to reconcile German and Russian interests in Turkey and Persia. There was no question of loosening the Franco-Russian bond, to be sure, but this was a significant gesture in the direction of détente. As for the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907, it may have muted the tensions between Russia and Britain but it did not remove their cause, and right through until 1914 there were voices

---

571 House, in Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 509.

572 Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 214-215.

in the Foreign Office warning of the Russian threat to Britain's far-flung empire..."573

In July, 1911 "Germany sent a gunboat, the *Panther*, to the port of Agadir, in Morocco, where the French had recently and illegally sent troops claiming they were needed to quell a local rebellion. By the terms of the Algeciras conference, Germany was entitled to compensation if the French changed the nature of their presence in Morocco. With the *Panther*... positioned threateningly on the coast, the Germany Foreign Office demanded the French hand over the whole of the French Congo, adding that if they did not respond positively Germany might be forced to extreme measures."574 The British saw this as a threat to their naval supremacy, and reacted strongly.

Eventually, the Germans backed down and were given a small part of the Congolese jungle in compensation. But the blow to their pride was considerable. "Senior German army officers sighed that the All Highest was so pusillanimous about taking supreme measures - Moltke had privately hoped for a 'reckoning with the English'. The German colonial minister resigned..."575

Germany was by now completely isolated diplomatically; she could look only to Turkey as a potential ally. Moreover, her sabre-rattling and armaments build-up had only encouraged the Entente and Russia to respond in kind. "In 1913, Britain, France and Russia spent in total more than twice as much on armaments as Germany..."576

Also in 1913, writes J.M. Roberts, "the Kaiser confided to the Austrian chief of staff that he was no longer against a great war (by which he meant one between several powers) in principle. One of his ministers even felt able to talk to members of parliament of the 'coming world War'. In an atmosphere of excited patriotism (it was the centenary of the so-called 'War of Liberation' with Napoleonic France) a special army bill was introduced that year into the Reichstag. The Russian modernization and rearmament programme (to be completed by 1917) had certainly alarmed the German soldiers. But by itself this can hardly explain the psychological deterioration in Germany that had brought about so dangerous a transformation of German policy as the acceptance of the inevitability of conflict with Russia - and therefore with France - if Germany's due weight in Europe was to be assured.

"Many Germans felt that 'encirclement' frustrated the exercise of German power, and should be broken, if only for reasons of prestige, and that such a step must involve a confrontation - though not necessarily war - with Great Britain. But this was not all that was happening in Germany in the decade before 1914. There had been a major inflammation of nationalist (and

---

573 Clark, op. cit., pp. 166-167.

574 Carter, op. cit., p. 392.

575 Carter, op. cit., p. 393.

576 Simms, op. cit., p. 294.

conservative) thinking and agitation in those years. It showed in the growth of societies and pressure-groups with different aims - safeguarding of the social hierarchy, anti-Semitism, patriotic support for armaments - but all contributing to a xenophobic and authoritarian atmosphere. Some Germans thought positively of possible territorial and material gains in the east and brooded on a supposed historic mission of Teuton to dominate over Slavs. Some were troubled by the colonial questions that had been so contentious and prickly before 1900 (yet colonies had proved disappointing and colonial rivalry played virtually no part in the final approach to war). Germany was dangerously ready psychologically for conflict, even if, when war came at last, it was to find its detonator in the South Slav lands..."<sup>577</sup>

Lieven points out that "whereas German discussions of American or British power were expressed in the coolly rational language of political economy and academic history, where Russia was concerned a much more vivid and sometimes even an apocalyptic tone was often present. This derived partly from a long-standing German sense of cultural superiority but also fear about a more primitive people who were often defined as semi-European at best. Most western Europeans shared the cultural arrogance but were less fearful than the Germans for the simple reason that Russian power lay further from their borders.

"Dislike of Russia was reinforced in the nineteenth century by liberal and socialist Germany's distaste for the tsarist regime. The German Jews had a particular dislike for the land of the pogrom, but German émigrés in Berlin from Russia's Baltic Provinces (today's Estonia and Latvia) probably had a bigger overall impact on German perceptions of Russia. They brought to Germany a vision of racial conflict between Slavs and Germans that could then be applied to struggles between the German and the Slav peoples of the Austrian monarchy as well. This played a big role in pan-German thinking but had an influence beyond their ranks. Paul Rohrbach was a key 'public intellectual' of Baltic origin who strongly influenced German opinion about international relations and Russia. He disliked both tsarism and Russians. He stressed the glaring weaknesses of the Russian economy and society and argued that an aggressive foreign policy was almost the only means for the regime to cling to its fading legitimacy. But although he expected major convulsions in the near future in Russia, he did not doubt that in the longer run the country would be a formidable world power, noting that on current projections by the second half of the twentieth century Germany would face an eastern neighbour with a population of more than 300 million..."<sup>578</sup>

In the spring of 1914 Germany's Chief of Staff Moltke held talks with the Foreign Minister, Gottlieb von Jagow. "Jagow noted that Moltke told him that in two or three years the 'military superiority of our enemies would... so great that he did not know how he could overcome them. Today we would still be a

---

<sup>577</sup> Roberts, *The Penguin History of the Twentieth Century*, London: Penguin, 2000, pp. 205-206.  
<sup>578</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 29.

match for them. In his opinion there was no alternative to making preventive war in order to defeat the enemy while there was still a chance of victory. The Chief of the General Staff therefore proposed that it should conduct of policy with the aim of provoking a war in the near future...."579

Critical here was the suicidal attitude of the Germany military, who not only saw war as inevitable, but seemed to prefer the prospect of a ruinous war to that of continuing peace. "A vein of fatalism," writes Clark, "underlay the bellicism of the German military. When they spoke of war, the German military tended to speak less of victory than of the 'twin threats of defeat and annihilation'...

"As for the Kaiser, though prone to outbursts of belligerent rhetoric, he panicked and counseled caution whenever a real conflict seemed likely, to the endless frustration of the generals. Wilhelm remained hopeful of a long-term accommodation with Britain. His remarks during 1913 suggest that he continued to regard an Anglo-German war as 'unthinkable'. He also remained confident that German military prowess would deter Russia from an armed intervention in a conflict between Austria and Serbia. This complacency prompted the hawkish General Falkenhayn, soon to become minister of war, to observe in a letter of January 1913 that the deluded faith of the political leadership - including Wilhelm - in the possibility of a lasting peace left Moltke 'standing alone' in his 'struggle' with the Kaiser for a more aggressive foreign policy."580

There was not only a certain fatalistic acceptance of the probability of war in both Germany and Russia. The Germans had been preparing to start one for a long time. Thus as early as 1905 they had already decided on the Schlieffen campaign plan, involving the violation of Belgium's neutrality, the conquest of France and then the attack on Russia.

This was in fact a very stupid plan, because the invasion of Belgium was the one event guaranteed to bring Britain into the war against Germany in defence of a country it had a specific defence treaty with. But, as Barbara Tuchman writes, "A hundred years of German philosophy went into the making of this decision in which the seed of self-destruction lay embedded, waiting for its hour. The voice was Schlieffen's, but the hand was the hand of Fichte who saw the German people chosen by Providence to occupy the supreme place in the history of the universe, of Hegel who saw them leading the world to a glorious destiny of compulsory *Kultur*, of Nietzsche who told them that Supermen were above ordinary controls, of Treitschke who set the increase of power as the highest moral duty of the state, of the whole German people, who called their temporal ruler the 'All-Highest'...

---

579 Fromkin, op. cit., p. 110.

580 Clark, op. cit., pp. 333, 334.

“[This] body of accumulated egoism... suckled the German people and created a nation fed on ‘the desperate delusion of the will that deems itself absolute’.”<sup>581</sup>

However, while many entertained such “desperate delusions”, the Germans had eminently pragmatical reasons for believing that now was the best time to fight Russia; for Russia’s programme of military reconstruction still had three years to run. Moreover, as Stolypin said some years earlier, if Russia were given just twenty years of peace she would become unrecognizable – that is, unrecognizably stronger...

Indeed, seen from Germany’s point of view, the growth in Russia’s military power was both impressive and threatening. As Hew Strachan writes, “between 1908 and 1913 [Russia’s] industrial production increased by 50 per cent, an expansion that was largely fuelled by defence-related output. Russia’s army was already the biggest in Europe. By 1917 it would be three times the size of Germany’s...”<sup>582</sup> That is why the chief of the German general staff, von Moltke, who had a healthy respect for Russia’s improving military capabilities,<sup>583</sup> was in favour of a preventive war against her. “By 1916-17, German strategists believed, the striking power of Russia would be sufficient to nullify the calculations embodied in the Schlieffen Plan.”<sup>584</sup>

In May, 1914, while the Tsar was visiting Romania, the German Kaiser met the heir to the Austrian throne, Archduke Franz Ferdinand. Colonel Vladimir Voeikov, a close friend of the Tsar, wrote: “At this meeting, the question was supposedly discussed of the necessity of beginning a war against Russia and the Entente in 1914, on the presupposition that the Russian army would grow significantly with each year and the struggle would become more difficult. They said that the only voice that sounded out against the war at that time belonged to Archduke Franz Ferdinand...”<sup>585</sup>

The Archduke was also against a war against Serbia, which made his murder by Serbian terrorists only a few weeks later both ironic and tragic. He didn’t like the Serbs, and thought that the Austrians could easily defeat them. “But what then?” he asked in 1913. “First of all Europe would fall on us and see us as disturber of the peace. And God help us if we annex Serbia...”<sup>586</sup>

\*

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 began to look fragile in the period 1912-14. On the one hand, after the Germans threw in the towel in the Naval

---

581 Tuchman, *The Guns of August*, New York: Ballantine Books, 1962, 1994, p. 26.

582 Strachan, *The Outbreak of the First World War*, Oxford University Press, 2004, p. 78.

583 Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, vol. II, p. 113.

584 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 332.

585 Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 62.

586 Macmillan, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

Arms Race, their perceived threat to the British became smaller, so some in London began to think about a possible alliance with Berlin instead of St. Petersburg. And on the other hand, the Russians began expanding their zones of influence in Persia, in Tibet and on the Russo-Chinese border, which threatened to reignite the fires of Anglo-Russian global rivalry.<sup>587</sup>

At the same time, some began to think that a more natural alliance for their country would be with their ally in the 1870s and 1880s, Germany, rather than perfidious Albion. We have seen the attitude of Alexander Giers. Still more significant was that of the interior minister Peter Nikolayevich Durnovo, who in February, 1914 sent a memorandum to the Tsar in which he feared that the face-off between the two continental blocs could well lead to a war that would certainly not benefit Russia and might well lead to revolution. He counselled an alliance with Germany instead of England, but without breaking the alliance with France.<sup>588</sup>

However, the French under their hawkish President Poincaré put pressure on the Russians to remain in the Entente, offering the tantalizing bait of generous loans to build strategic railways to the German frontier. (In 1915 the British and French added the most important promise – that of the Straits and Constantinople itself.) And although, according to Witte, 90% of Russians did not want to go to war<sup>589</sup>, the remaining 10% included most of the decision-making elites. For them, Russia was obliged to intervene on Serbia's side in any Austro-Serbian war... Durnovo and his like argued that "official policy exaggerated the importance of the Straits and Russia's supposed 'mission' to lead the Slavs at a time when its overriding priorities needed to be peace and good relations with its German and Austrian neighbours. But the options open to Russia were difficult, and there were powerful and rational arguments to justify the foreign policy adopted by Petersburg."<sup>590</sup>

So for the time being the unnatural Entente between autocratic Russia and democratic France and Britain remained in existence. The Russians sought a stronger, military alliance with their traditional enemies, France and Britain, in order to defend themselves against their traditional ally, Germany, whose boorish intervention in the Bosnian crisis was still deeply resented and who would most likely support Austria in any war between Russia and Austria over Serbia. And while the British under their canny Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey never committed themselves to the French and Russians as much as the French and Russians did to each other (Germany might never have declared war if he had), there was never any real question about whose side they were on.

---

587 Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 322-325.

588 <http://novaonline.nvcc.edu/eli/evans/his242/documents/Durnovo.pdf>. See also Professor Paul Robinson, "How Russia might have stopped World War I", *The American Conservative*, February 4, 2014, <http://www.theamericanconservative.com/articles/how-russia-might-have-stopped-world-war-i/>

589 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 355.

590 Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 366.

The Tsar himself was far from wanting war with Germany, and made several attempts to mend fences with the Emperors of Germany and Austria in the pre-war years. Thus he had a friendly meeting with the Kaiser in Estonia in 1912, and again in Berlin in May, 1913.

However, in December, 1913, the Ottomans appointed the German Lieutenant-General Liman von Sanders to oversee the whole of the training of the Ottoman army, and to be in charge of the First Army Corps, making him responsible for the defence of the Straits and of Constantinople itself. At the same time, one of Turkey's triumvirate of pashas, Enver Pasha, had ordered two new battleships from Britain that would dominate the Black Sea.

The Russians were thoroughly alarmed: free passage through the Straits was a priority of their foreign policy in view of its importance for the vital grain export trade (that trade had been seriously damaged after Italy declared war on Turkey a year earlier). For, "in the years 1903-12, 37 per cent of Russian exports passed through the Dardanelles, the figure for wheat and rye exports, both vital to Russia's cash-hungry industrializing economy, was much higher, at about 75-80 per cent."<sup>591</sup>

"But neither the French nor the British responded as the Russians had hoped to the appointment of von Sanders. For neither the French, with their huge financial investment in the Ottoman empire, nor the British with their traditional desire to control all major seaways (a British admiral was in charge of the training of the Ottoman navy), wanted to replace the Ottomans with the Russians as the masters of the Straits..."<sup>592</sup>

Although the Germans backed down over the Liman von Sanders affair, it turned out to be a significant turning point. First, it led to a conference in January, 1913 that showed a majority of Russian ministers in favour of "a sequence of increasingly coercive actions against Constantinople"<sup>593</sup>, which in turn led to the sacking of Prime Minister Kokovtsev, the most powerful member of the peace party. Secondly, it led to a hardening of the Tsar's own position and his rejection of Durnovo's arguments in favour of a more Germanophile policy.

In a conversation with [British] Ambassador Buchanan at the beginning of April 1914," writes Clark, "he observed that 'it was commonly supposed that there was nothing to keep Germany and Russia apart.' This, however, 'was not the case: there was the question of the Dardanelles,' where the Tsar feared that the Germans were working to shut Russia into the Black Sea. Should Germany attempt such a thing, it was essential that the three powers of the Entente unite together more closely to make it clear to Berlin that 'all three would fight together against German aggression.' For the Germans, on the other hand, the

---

591 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 340. As Montefiore points out, Russia "had hoped to postpone any action until it was fully rearmed, but time was running out. Enver's two battleships were about to arrive..."

592 Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 338-345.

593 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 346

ferocity of the Russian reaction to the Liman mission coupled with bitterness over the German capitulation to Russian demands created the sense that an unbridgeable gulf now separated Berlin from St. Petersburg. 'Russian-Prussian relations are dead for all time!' lamented the Kaiser. 'We have become enemies!' ...

"A forward policy in the Balkans did not by any means entail the abandonment of Russia's ultimate interest in the Straits. On the contrary, it represented a longer and more winding road to the same destination. Russian strategic thinking tended increasingly in 1912-14 to view the Balkans as the hinterland to the Straits, as the key to securing ultimate control of the Ottoman choke-point on the Bosphorus..."<sup>594</sup>

For an assault on the Straits in any other circumstances than a general war in Europe was too risky in view of likely opposition from France and Britain. This became clear at a Special Strategic Conference in February, when Foreign Minister Sazonov, War Minister Sukhomlinov and Naval Minister Zhilinsky came to accept that "the objective of securing access to or control of the Straits, though agreed to be of profound importance to Russia's economic and strategic future, would have to be subordinated to the task of prevailing in the European conflict against the central powers, not just or even primarily because of the fear that Germany might acquire a controlling interest in the Straits, but because the Entente powers were themselves as yet unready to support a direct Russian bid for the crucial strategic asset. Indeed, so diverse were the perspectives of the three Entente powers on the Straits that the Russian ministry of foreign affairs came to see a general war - which in effect meant a war begun in the Balkans - as the only context in which Russia could be sure of acting with the support of its western partners."<sup>595</sup>

In the event, it was not Russia, but Britain that attempted to take the Straits in the ill-fated Gallipoli expedition of 1915. And three years later, after the fall of the Russian empire, it was Britain that occupied the City. So Dostoyevsky's prophecy, "Constantinople shall be ours!", remained unfulfilled, as did the dream of Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) of Kharkov that the Ecumenical Patriarch should become the first-hierarchy of the Russian Church... And yet the lure of Christendom's ancient capital remains undimmed to this day. Like a magnet it draws Russian tsars and presidents to attempt to replace the crescent on Hagia Sophia with the Cross of Christ...

---

594 Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 345, 347.

595 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 353.



## 42. THE PLOT TO OVERTHROW THE TSAR

At home, the situation was beginning to become revolutionary again, although not on the scale of 1905. In 1912 there was a major strike in the Lena gold fields in Siberia; 270 workers were killed as the authorities clamped down. In October 1913 the Ministry of the Interior reported: "Sudden strikes flare up sometimes for the most trivial causes and embracing with extraordinary rapidity wide areas with tens of thousands of workers. But apart from that, the strike movement we are now experiencing has a yet more threatening social significance in that it arouses hostility and bitterness between employer and worker, unites the workers on the basis of an irreconcilable relationship to the existing state and social structure and in this way creates among the workers ready cadres to reinforce the revolutionary parties. Under the influence of agitators and the printed organs of the Social-Democratic press, with the moral and material support of different workers' circles, there has recently developed among the workers a harmony of action such as indicates their close solidarity and organized nature. The places where strikes take place are put under a boycott, those workers who approach are exposed to bitter persecution and are excluded from work. Orders at strike-bound factories and plants are also placed under a boycott and any factory that might accept them risks a strike among its own workers."<sup>596</sup>

Nevertheless, Robert Service is probably right in arguing that at this time the government, though under pressure, "was not doomed to undergo the root-and-branch revolution of 1917. What made that kind of revolution possible was the protracted, exhausting conflict of the First World War."<sup>597</sup> But the government's attempts – following Stolypin's foreign policy – to avoid war were being undermined by notable Freemasons in the Duma...

Now at the beginning of the war national loyalties proved stronger than brotherhood in Masonry in all the belligerent nations. Thus Oleg Platonov points out "that all the main Masonic orders of the warring countries were in favour of war: the Great national lodge of England, the Grand Orient of France, the Grand Orient of the nations of Russia, the Old Prussian lodges and the Great lodge of Hamburg. The latter was the foundation of the Great Serbian lodge, members of which were involved in the assassination of Archduke Ferdinand in Sarajevo."<sup>598</sup>

---

<sup>596</sup> Norman Lowe, *Mastering Twentieth-Century Russian History*, Houndmill: Palgrave, 2002, p. 60.

<sup>597</sup> Service, *The Russian Revolution, 1900-1927*, London, 1999, pp. 3-4.

<sup>598</sup> Platonov, *Ternovij Venets Rossii* (Russia's Crown of Thorns), Moscow, 1998, p. 344. "In the course of the investigation into the case of the murder of the Archduke Ferdinand it emerged that the assassins Princip and Gavrilovich were Masons. The plan of the assassination was worked out by the political organization, 'The People's Defence'. Later, already in 1926, a representative of the Masonic circles of Serbia, Lazarevich, at a masonic banquet in the House of the Serbian Guard in Belgrade, officially recognized that 'Masonry and "The People's Defence" are one and the same"' (*op. cit.*, p. 344). See also V.F. Ivanov, *Russkaia Intelligentsia i Masonstvo ot Petra I do nashikh dnei* (The Russian Intelligentsia and Masonry from Peter I to our days), Moscow, 1997, pp. 395-398.

However, whatever their personal nationalisms, the Masons of different countries were united in their desire to destroy the monarchy in its traditionally Orthodox, autocratic form. Shtormakh considers that the main Masonic plotters in Russia were A.I. Guchkov, Prince G.E. Lvov, N.V. Nekrasov and M.I. Tereshchenko. All of them became ministers in the Provisional Government.<sup>599</sup> To these we must add A.F. Kerensky, also a Mason and also a member of the Provisional Government.

\*

The leading plotter was the industrialist Alexander Ivanovich Guchkov, leader of the Octobrists, a supposedly monarchist fraction in the Duma. He had fought for the Boers against the British in the Boer, against the Chinese in the Boxer Uprising, and had been at the front in the Russo-Japanese war. Consequently, he was considered something of a military expert. This gave him access, most of whom he had successfully converted to the revolution by 1917.

Thus Lebedev writes that in 1909 “a deeply conspiratorial ‘Military lodge’ was formed headed by A.I. Guchkov, and in 1910 – the ‘Ursa Minor’ lodge for work with ‘state’ society, in which the main roles gradually came to be played by Prince G. Lvov [the Grand Master of the Russian lodges], M.V. Rodzyanko, A.F. Kerensky, N.V. Nekrasov, P.P. Ryabushinsky, M.I. Tereshchenko and A. Konovalov... Over them, that is, over the whole of Russian Masonry of this tendency, there weighed the Masonic *oath of fidelity* to the ‘Grand Orient of France’, which was given already in 1908 in the form of a special document called ‘Obligation’. This oath-obligation was kept faithfully both before and after the ‘self-liquidation’ and the emergence of a new leadership and a new structure. In 1910 this leadership declared its formal *independence* from Russian Masonry – but with the *agreement* of the French of the ‘Grand Orient’. The new leadership significantly simplified the reception of new members, it rejected (for conspiratorial reasons) many elements of Masonic symbolism and ritual, and thereby became, in the language of the Masons, ‘unlawful’. But all this was part of the conspiracy (so that in the event of something World Masonry could declare its complete ‘non-involvement’ in the conspirators and the conspiracy). In actual fact the whole course of the conspiracy was led and controlled precisely through *foreign Masons* (through the embassies of Germany, England and France in Russia). In 1910 Guchkov, a long-time member of the State Council and the Third State Duma, became the president of the Duma. However, in 1911 he voluntarily resigned from this post, which was immediately taken by his ‘brother’ Rodzyanko. In 1913 Guchkov and other ‘brothers’ created a secret ‘Supreme Council of Peoples of Russia’, which was joined by up to 400 members. But the presidents of the lodges knew only its secretaries – Nekrasov, Kerensky, Tereshchenko. Each new lodge consisted of no more than 12 members. The Council and its ‘Convent’ coordinated the actions of the ‘Military Lodge’ and the structures of ‘Ursa Minor’. At this time Guchkov headed the military committee of the State Duma, and was in charge

---

<sup>599</sup> <http://rushistory.3dn.ru/forum/4-86-1>

of defence questions. 'In accordance with service obligations', he was linked with the General Staff, and the most prominent military men, diplomats and industrialists. Gradually, one by one, Guchkov attracted into his 'Military Lodge' Generals N.N. Yanushkevich, A.S. Lukomsky, A.A. Polivanov, A.Z. Myshlayevsky, V.I. Gurko, Colonel Baron Korf, and then Generals A.V. Alexeyev, N.V. Ruzsky, A.M. Krymov, L.G. Kornilov, A.A. Brusilov, A.A. Manikovsky, V.F. Dzhunkovsky and many other eminent officers.

"In essence, in the years 1909-1913 Guchkov had already prepared a general plan of action, which he borrowed from the 'Young Turk' Masons in 1908 in Turkey, where he went specially to study the experience of the Turkish revolution. The essence of the plan consisted in the higher military officers, including those in the Tsar's closest entourage, being able, at the necessary moment, to *isolate* their Monarch from all the levers of administration and *force* him to whatever deed or word the conspirators needed at that moment."600

\*

"The views of Guchkov," wrote General Vladimir Voeikov, "were a secret for nobody: already in 1908 he had shown enthusiasm for the work of the Young Turks, and he found it necessary to correct the mistake of the fighters for freedom in 1905, who before their planned movement had not paid enough attention to the army, whose faithfulness at that time they had not succeeded in shaking."601

Yana Sedova writes: "Already in 1906, after a meeting with the Emperor, A.I. Guchkov came to the unexpected conclusion: 'We are in for still more violent upheavals'. Then he wanted 'simply to step aside'. But already in those years he began to talk about a 'coup d'état'.

"In the next few years Guchkov's attention was temporarily occupied by work in the State Duma. But in 1911 after the murder of Stolypin, as he later recalled, there arose in him 'an unfriendly feeling' towards the Emperor Nicholas II.

This manifested itself in his taking an important part in the campaign to discredit the Tsar and the Church for tolerating Rasputin. When the tsar tried (unsuccessfully) to silence the press, Guchkov had a letter by Michael Novoselov published in his *Voice of Moscow* on January 24, 1912, and himself made a fiery speech in the Duma the next day. "'According to gossip in Moscow, when Nicholas heard this he said, 'Hanging Guchkov is not enough'." On March 9 Guchkov went further: "the church is in danger and the state is in danger", he said in the Duma... "The speech marked the point at which

---

600 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 448-451.

601 Voeikov, *op. cit.*, p. 131.

Guchkov became a personal and not just a political enemy of the tsar and tsaritsa." 602

"At the beginning of 1913, at a meeting in his Petersburg flat, Guchkov talked about a military coup in Serbia. The discussion moved to a coup in Russia. At this point one of the participants in the meeting said that 'the party of the coup is coming into being'.

"Several months later, at a congress of his [Octobrist] party in Petersburg, Guchkov proclaimed the principle by which he was governed in the next four years: 'the defence of the monarchy against the monarch'.603

"The next year, during the 'great retreat', Guchkov created the Military-Industrial Committee, an organization whose official task was to help provide the army with ammunition. In fact, however, the committees turned out to be an instrument for the preparation of a coup.

"However, Guchkov would probably have continued to the end of his life only to 'platonically sympathize' with the coup, and do nothing himself, if once there had not appeared in his flat the leader of Russian masonry, N.V. Nekrasov.

"The two of them became the 'initiators' of a plan: 'a palace coup, as a result of which his Majesty would be forced to sign his abdication passing the throne to his lawful Heir'.

"Soon another Mason, M.I. Tereshchenko, joined the plot, and, as Guchkov recalled, 'the three of us set about a detailed working out of this plan'."604

On September 8, 1915 a "Committee of National Salvation" issued "Disposition Number 1". "It affirmed," writes N. Yakovlev, "that there were two wars going on in Russia - one against a stubborn and skilful enemy from outside and a no less stubborn and skilful enemy from inside. The attainment of victory over the external enemy was unthinkable without a prior victory over the internal enemy. By the latter they had in mind the ruling dynasty. For victory on the internal front it was necessary... immediately to appoint a supreme command staff, whose basic core consisted of Prince G.E. Lvov, A.I. Guchkov and A.F. Kerensky."605

---

602 Smith, *Rasputin*, pp. 256, 273.

603 At the conference he declared: "The attempt made by the Russian public, as represented by our party, to effect a peaceful, painless transition from the old condemned system to a new order has failed. Let those in power make no mistake about the temper of the people: never were the Russian people so profoundly revolutionized by the actions of the government, for day by day faith in the government is steadily waning, and with it is waning faith in the possibility of a peaceful issue of the crisis..." (V.M.)

604 Sedova, "Byl li masonskij zagovor protiv russkoj monarkhii?" (Was there a masonic plot against the Russian Monarchy?), *Nasha Strana*, November 24, 2006, N 2808, p. 3.

605 Yakovlev, *1 Avgusta, 1914*, Moscow, 1974, p. 13. Tereshchenko, according to Yakobi, was "a colourless young man from the Kievan sugar barons, eaten up with vainglory, who had previously bought for himself, so they said, a ministerial portfolio in the future revolutionary government for his contribution of five million rubles" (*op. cit.*, p. 133).

“Armis”, a pseudonym for a Duma delegate and a former friend of Guchkov, wrote: “Already in 1909, in the Commission of State Defence, its president, the well-known political and social activist Guchkov declared that it was necessary to prepare by all means for a future war with Germany.

“In order to characterize this activist it is necessary to say that in order to achieve his ends he was never particularly squeamish about methods and means. In the destruction of Russia he undoubtedly played one of the chief roles.

“In the following year, 1910, the newspaper *Novoe Vremia* became a joint-stock company, and a little later Guchkov was chosen as president of its editorial committee. From this moment there began on the columns of *Novoe Vremia* a special campaign against the Germans and the preparation of public opinion for war with Germany.

“Guchkov wrote to the workers of *Novoe Vremia*, *Golos Moskvy* and *Golos Pravdy*, which were unfailingly ruled by his directives:

“‘Rattle your sabres a little more, prepare public opinion for war with the Germans. Write articles in such a way that between the lines will already be heard peals of weapon thunder.’

“People who know Guchkov well say that in his flat, together with the well-known A. Ksyunin, he composed articles of the most provocative character in relation to Germany.

“In 1912, during a reception for an English military mission, Guchkov turned to those present with the following toast:

“‘Gentlemen! I drink to the health of the English army and fleet, who are not only our friends, but also our allies.’

“And within the close circle of the members of the Commission of State Defence, he declared: ‘Today Germany has suffered a decisive defeat: war is inevitable, if only the Tsar does not stop it.’

“In March, 1914, Guchkov at one dinner warned his acquaintances that they should not go abroad in the summer, and in particular – not to Germany.

“‘I don’t advise you to go abroad. War will unfailingly break out this summer: it has been decided. Germany can turn as she wants, but she cannot turn away from war.’ And at these words Guchkov smiled.

“To the question of one of those present: who needed a war?, Guchkov replied:

“France must have Alsace-Lorraine and the Rhine; Russia – all the Slavic lands and an exit from the Black Sea; England will lap up the German colonies and take world trade into her hands.’

“To the objection that the Russian and German emperors would hardly enter such a dangerous world war, there followed Guchkov’s bold reply:

“‘We have foreseen this... and we shall arrange it so that both of them will find themselves before a *fait accompli*.

“Then it was pointed out to Guchkov that the Triple Alliance represented a formidable military power, to which Guchkov objected:

“‘Italy, in accordance with a secret agreement with England, will not be on the side of Germany and Austria, and if the war goes well can stab them in the back. The plan of the future war has already been worked out in detail by our allied staffs (English, French and Russian), and in no way will the war last for more than three months.’

“Then Guchkov was asked: ‘Tell us, Alexander Ivanovich, don’t you think that the war may be prolonged contrary to your expectations? It will require the most colossal exertion of national nerves, and very possibly it will be linked with the danger of popular discontent and a coup d’etat.’

“Smiling, Guchkov replied: ‘In the extreme case, the liquidation of the Dynasty will be the greatest benefit for Russia...’”<sup>606</sup>

The accuracy of Guchkov’s prognosis leads us to conclude that war in Europe and revolution in Russia were, if not “inevitable”, as many thought, at any rate to a large degree decided upon by the Masonic solidarity of the elites in all the combatant powers. Only one human actor, as Guchkov admitted, could have stopped the war – the Tsar. And only the one Divine Actor could have prevented it if the peoples had been worthy of it – He Who said of Himself: “I am He Who makes peace and creates wars...” (Isaiah 45.7)

---

<sup>606</sup> “Skrytaia Byl’” (A Hidden Story), *Prizyv’* (Summons), N 50, Spring, 1920; in F. Vinberg, *Krestnij Put’* (The Way of the Cross), Munich, 1920, St. Petersburg, 1997, pp. 167-168.

### 43. SARAJEVO

By the summer of 1914 the Orthodox commonwealth of nations had reached its zenith from an external, political and economic point of view. The great Russian empire, in which the majority of Orthodox Christians lived, stretched from the Baltic to the Pacific, and its influence spread more widely still, from the *de facto* protectorate it exercised over the Orthodox of the Balkans and the Middle East, to its important ecclesiastical missions in Persia, China, Japan, and the United States. It was making mighty strides economically, and was modernizing and strengthening its military capacity to a significant degree. Meanwhile, the Orthodox Balkan states had just driven the Turks out of Europe (almost), and Serbia, Romania and Greece had reached their greatest territorial extent since their foundation as states in the previous century. Serbia's population growth, in particular, was remarkable: from 2.9 million subjects before the Balkan Wars to 4.4 million after them.

However, this was a bubble that was about to burst. All the Orthodox states had very serious internal problems of both a political and a religious nature. Anti-monarchism had taken over the minds and hearts of the wealthier classes in Russia and other Orthodox countries, and western heresies, spiritualism and even atheism were making deep inroads into the Church. In the Balkans, the recent victories over the Turks caused over-confidence and an increase in militarism and nationalism, with the military establishments ascendant over the civil administrations. In Serbia, in particular, the military contested with the government over control of the newly-acquired territories in Macedonia, and "Apis" (after the pagan Egyptian god), Colonel Dragutin Dmitrijevič, the leading regicide of 1903 and inspirer of the terrorist "Black Hand" organization, was in charge of military intelligence!...

Besides taking part in the regicide of 1903, Apis confessed to participation in plots to murder King Nicetas of Montenegro, King Constantine of Greece, Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria!<sup>607</sup> That such a murderous fanatic should be in charge of Serbia's military intelligence tells us much about the influence within Serbia of the nationalist-revolutionary heresy. "In fact," as David Stevenson writes, "Serbia's army and intelligence service were out of control".<sup>608</sup>

Lieven writes: "Because Apis and the Black Hand were partly responsible for the murder of Archduke Franz Ferdinand and thereby for the First World War, the Serbian government's failure to control them was of huge significance. The Russians knew a good deal about this organization. In the winter of 1911-12, the Russian military attaché in Belgrade, Colonel Victor Artamanov, sent detailed reports back to Petersburg concerning the origins and activities of the Black Hand, as well as the newspaper associated with it called *Piedmont*. As the newspaper's name suggests, the aim of the Black Hand was to follow the

---

<sup>607</sup> West, *Black Lamb and Grey Falcon*, Edinburgh: Canongate, 2006, p. 369.

<sup>608</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*, London: Penguin, 2005, p. 12.

example of Piedmont and unite all Serbs in a kingdom ruled from Belgrade. With all the Balkan Serbs now ruled by Belgrade after the wars of 1912-13, the remaining task was to gather in the Serbs who currently lived under Habsburg rule, largely but not exclusively in Bosnia-Herzegovina. Artamanov sympathized with the patriotic ideals of the Black Hand but not with the organization itself. He believed too that its leaders were often driven by purely selfish and personal motives. He wrote that those behind the Black Hand should have set up a political party, not a secret organization partly within the army that threatened military discipline and political stability in Serbia. Artamanov reported in January, 1912 that he had been approached by the Black Hand through an intermediary, 'but of course I immediately and flatly refused the invitation to have conversations with members of a secret organization, so as not to give them the opportunity to connect Russia's name with their agitation.'

"Nevertheless, wrote Artamanov, it was not hard to discover information about the Black Hand, because many people in Belgrade were eager to talk to Russia's representatives and gain their sympathy. Artamanov's narrative of the Black Hand's activities is far too long and complex to reproduce here. He began with the military conspiracy that had murdered King Alexander Obrenović in 1903 and had brought the Karageorgevićs back to the Serbian throne in the person of King Peter. Since then, the army had been divided between 'conspirators' and 'anti-conspirators', and this division had also affected civilian political life. Military and party-political factions had become entwined but in a manner that was hard to follow because factions split and mutated over time and in response to specific issues, corruption scandals, and the everyday struggle for power and position in Belgrade's political and military worlds. Within the army, for example, matters had been complicated both by the split within the 'conspirators' over issues of promotion and corruption and by the entry into the military political arena of the young, intelligent, and ambitious crown prince Alexander. At times, Colonel Dimitriević and the Black Hand were allies of Pašić's Radical Party, at other times enemies. In January, 1912, Artamanov interpreted the current situation as reflecting the fact that the civilian government either felt itself too weak to move against the Black Hand and other ultranationalists or actually believed it could exploit Apis's support for its own purposes. A deal seemed to have been struck whereby the Black Hand stayed out of domestic politics and concentrated entirely on 'patriotic activities'." 609

However, according to David Frumkin "in May 1914, Apis persuaded the reigning monarch, King Peter, that Pašić ought to be dismissed. Then Russia intervened. As Serbia's sponsor among the Great Powers, Russia could, to some extent, lay down the law. Nicolai Hartwig, the Russian minister in Belgrade, intervened to retain Pašić as Prime Minister. Having recognized that Serbia

---

609 Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, pp. 280-281.



needed years of rest in which to recover from the Balkan wars and to consolidate its gains. It was no time for reckless adventurism..."<sup>610</sup>

According to Max Hastings, Pašić and Apis were enemies, and in 1913 there were even discussions about murdering Apis. "The prime minister and many of his colleagues regarded the colonel as a threat to the country's stability and even existence; internal affairs minister Milan Protić spoke of the Black Hand to a visitor on 14 June as 'a menace to democracy'. But in a society riven by competing interests, the civilian government lacked authority to remove or imprison Apis, who was protected by the patronage of the army chief of staff."<sup>611</sup> Although there is evidence that Pašić was trying to control the Black Hand, he had definitely not succeeded by 1914. Moreover, being himself a Great Serbian nationalist, at no point in his career did he make a determined effort to quench that nationalist-revolutionary *mentality* which ultimately led to the shots in Sarajevo.

\*

In June, 1914 the Austro-Hungarians were holding military manoeuvres in Bosnia, and Archduke Franz Ferdinand, who in addition to being heir to the Habsburg throne was also Inspector General of the Armed Forces of the Empire, came to observe them with his wife. Ironically, Franz Ferdinand was known for his pro-Slav political views; he wanted to bring the Slav peoples of the Empire into its governing structure as the third main bloc together with the Germans and the Hungarians. This idea was known as "Trialism". "His ideas," writes Simon Winder, "were well known so when he arrived in Bosnia-Herzegovina he was by a long way the most desirable imaginable candidate for assassination for any Serbian nationalist group. This was not just because any day now he could become a harsh, cold and effective Emperor but because Trialism could create a form of Slav solidarity which explicitly excluded the Kingdom of Serbia itself."<sup>612</sup> The Archduke had also opposed the annexation of Serbia. So of all the Austrian leaders, he was the least anti-Serbian. Moreover, as Fromkin writes, if he had lived, "he would have repaired the breach with Russia that dated from the last half of the nineteenth century and would once again combine with the Czar and the King of Prussia to promote the cause of monarchism and traditional values in European and world affairs, as they had, for example, in 1815 as the Holy Alliance."<sup>613</sup> But the age of "monarchism and traditional values", already gravely weakened, came to a final end with his murder...

"With overwhelming stupidity," as Noel Malcolm writes, "his visit to Sarajevo was fixed for 28 June, the anniversary of the Battle of Kosovo and

---

<sup>610</sup> Fromkin, *Europe's Last Summer*, London: Vintage, 2005, pp. 124-125.

<sup>611</sup> Hastings, *Catastrophe: Europe goes to War 1914*, London: William Collins, 2014, p. xxxv.

<sup>612</sup> Winder, *Danubia*, London: Picador, 2013, p. 481. "By 1914, however," writes Christopher Clark, "it appears he had dropped this plan in favour of a far-reaching transformation by which the empire would become a 'United States of Great Austria', comprising fifteen member states, many of which would have Slav majorities." (*Sleepwalkers: How Europe went to war in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 108) But such a plan was similar to Trialism in excluding the Kingdom of Serbia from structures of Slav solidarity.

<sup>613</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 113-114.

therefore the most sacred day in the mystical calendar of Serb nationalism.”<sup>614</sup> As Clark writes: “The commemorations across the Serb lands were set to be especially intense in 1914, because this was the first St. Vitus’s Day since the ‘liberation’ of Kosovo during the Second Balkan War in the previous year. ‘The holy flame of Kosovo, which has inspired generations [of Serbs] has now burst into a mighty fire,’ the Black Hand journal *Pijemont* announced on 28 June 1914. ‘Kosovo is free! Kosovo is avenged!’ For Serb ultra-nationalists, both in Serbia itself and across the Serbian irredentist network in Bosnia, the arrival of the heir apparent in Sarajevo on this of all days was a symbolic affront that demanded a response.”<sup>615</sup>

The terrorists were armed by Major Vojin Tankosić of the Black Hand, and according to Max Hastings were guided into Bosnia by “a Serbian government informer, who passed word about their movements, and about the bombs and pistols in their luggage, to the Interior Ministry in Belgrade. His report, which the prime minister read and summarized in his own hand, made no mention of a plot against Franz Ferdinand. Pašić commissioned an investigation, and gave orders that the movement of weapons from Serbia to Bosnia should be stopped; but he went no further. A Serbian minister later claimed that Pašić told the cabinet at the end of May or the beginning of June that some assassins were on their way to Sarajevo to kill Franz Ferdinand. Whether or not this is true – no minutes were taken of cabinet meetings – Pašić appears to have instructed Serbia’s envoy in Vienna to pass on to the Austrian authorities only a vague general warning, perhaps because he was unwilling to provide the Habsburgs with a fresh and extremely serious grievance against his country.”<sup>616</sup>

Seven assassins from *Mlada Bosna* were waiting for the Archduke and his wife. The first attempt to kill them failed, but the second, by the Nietzschean Gavrilo Princip<sup>617</sup>, was successful.

The news of the assassination was greeted with jubilation in Serbia. Nor did the Serbian government led by Pašić do anything to calm Serbian passions or reassure Austrian opinion – quite the reverse.<sup>618</sup> So whatever judgement one

---

<sup>614</sup> Malcolm, *Bosnia: A Short History*, London: Papermac, 1996, p. 155.

<sup>615</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 368-369.

<sup>616</sup> Hastings, *op. cit.*, p. xxxvi. According to Margaret Macmillan, Pašić “got wind of what was up but was either unable or unwilling to do anything. In any case it was probably too late; the conspirators had arrived safely in Sarajevo and linked up with local terrorists...” (*op. cit.*, p. 515).

<sup>617</sup> Princip “owned a small library of anarchist literature that included the works of Michail Bakunin and Peter Kropotkin. The verses of Nietzsche often were on his lips. A solitary figure, he lived among books rather than people... He rejected religion, fought with his teachers, and attended school only fitfully.” (Fromkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 120, 121) In 2014, the Serbs erected a monument to Princip in Belgrade. On the significance of that event, see Anton Grigoriev, “Stoletinij spor o tom...” (The 100-year quarrel about...), <http://anton-grigoriev.livejournal.com/1668823.html?view=17288663#t17288663>.

Elizabeth Durham wrote in *The Sarajevo Crime*: “During the trial of Archduke Ferdinand’s killer, Gavrilo Princip testified that his colleague, Ciganovity, ‘told me he was a Freemason’ and ‘on another occasion told me that the Heir Apparent had been condemned to death by a Freemason’s lodge.’ Moreover, another of the accused assassins, Chabrinovic, testified that Major Tankosic, one of the plotters, was a Freemason.”

<sup>618</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-391.

forms of the Austrian actions, there is no doubt that they were sorely provoked... Moreover, the Russians did little to rein in the Serbs' nationalist passions, and, together with the French, accepted the Serbian account of the Sarajevo assassination without argument...619

Elsewhere, the reaction was muted, even in Austria, where the archduke was not popular. Many thought that war would be averted as it had been averted several times in recent years. But it was different this time. The Kaiser, who had been a personal friend of the Archduke, and shared his pacific views, was furious, saying "Now or never. The Serbs must be disposed of and that right soon!" 620 The Austrian Foreign Minister Berchtold echoed this, speaking of the need for "a final and fundamental reckoning with Serbia.621

The Austrians, and especially the chief of staff Conrad, had wanted to do this for some years. Now they had the excuse they were looking for. 622 As Fromkin writes, "What the killings gave Vienna was not a reason, but an excuse for taking action. They provided the Austrians with grounds for destroying Serbia - a pretext that Europe would accept and believe, and with which Europe might well even sympathize. It was a justification that might bring Germany to support them and prevent Russia from opposing them. In the past two men, Franz Ferdinand and Wilhelm II, had stood in the way of mounting a crusade against Serbia, and the assassinations had, though in different ways, removed them both: the Archduke killed, and the Kaiser carried away by a desire for revenge and caught up in unthinking rage..."623

\*

The Austrians decided to issue an ultimatum to the Serbs that the Serbs would not be able to accept. The general tenor of the planned ultimatum was leaked to European governments, and on an official visit to Russia that ended on July 23, just before the ultimatum was published, President Poincaré of France had agreed with the Tsar to defend Serbia unconditionally.

---

619 Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 407-412.

620 Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 149.

621 Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 155.

622 "In October 1913," writes Dominic Lieven, "the Austro-Hungarian Common Ministerial Council had agreed that Serbia had to be destroyed as an independent state in order to restore Austria's position in the Balkans and stop the danger which South Slav nationalism's undermining Habsburg authority within the empire's borders. As Berchtold explained at that time, the key difficulty was to obtain German support for this policy. The Austrian premier, Count Karl von Stürgkh, added that the precondition for success had to be 'that we have been clearly injured by Serbia, because that can lead to a conflict which entails Serbia's execution'. Without such a pretext and without Berlin's support, military action against Serbia was impossible, which explains why in early June 1914 the Austrian Foreign Ministry's key 'strategy paper' outlining future short-term policy in the Balkans confined itself to advocating not military but purely diplomatic measures. But the circumstances surrounding Franz Ferdinand's assassination provided exactly the scenario that the October 1913 ministerial conference had desired..." (*Towards the Flame*, p. 316)

623 Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 154.

As Malcolm writes, while “many theories still circulate about Apis’s involvement and his possible political motives, ... the idea that the Serbian government itself had planned the assassination can be firmly rejected.

“Even the Austro-Hungarian government did not accuse Serbia of direct responsibility for what had happened. Their ultimatum of 23 July complained merely that the Serbian government had ‘tolerated the machinations of various societies and associations directed against the monarchy, unrestrained language on the part of the press, glorification of the perpetrators of outrages, participation of officers and officials in subversive agitation’ – all of which was essentially true.”<sup>624</sup>

“The first three points,” writes Clark, ‘focused on the suppression of irredentist organs and of the anti-Austrian propaganda they generated. Points 4, 6 and 8 addressed the need to take action against persons implicated in the Sarajevo outrage, including compromised military personnel and frontier officials and ‘accessories to the plot of 28 June who are on Serbian territory’. Point 7 was more specific: it demanded the arrest ‘without delay’ of Major Voja Tankosić and Milan Ciganović. Tankosić was, unbeknownst to the Austrians, a Black Hand operative close to Apis; it was he who had recruited the three youths who formed the core of the assassination team. Ciganović was known to the Austrians only as ‘a Serbian state employee implicated by the findings of the preliminary investigation at Sarajevo’, but he was also, according to the later testimony of Ljuba Jovanović, a member of the Black Hand who doubled as an agent working directly for Pašić. Point 9 requested that Belgrade furnish Vienna with explanations regarding the ‘unjustifiable utterances of high Serbian officials, both in Serbia and abroad, who notwithstanding their official position have not hesitated since the outrage of 28 June to express hostility towards the Austro-Hungarian monarchy. This point referred among other things to the interviews given by [Serbian Ambassador] Spakajović in St. Petersburg; it also reminds us of how deeply Austrian attitudes were affected by Serbian responses to the outrage. Point 10 simply requested official notification ‘without delay’ of the measures undertaken to meet the preceding points.

“The most controversial points were 5 and 6. Point 5 demanded that the Belgrade government ‘accept the collaboration in Serbia of organs of the Imperial and Royal Government [of Austria-Hungary] in the suppression of the subversive movement directed against the territorial integrity of the monarchy’ and point 6 stated that ‘organs delegated’ by Austria-Hungary would ‘take part in the investigations’ relating to accessories in the crime. As usual in Vienna, this text was composed by many hands, but it was Berthold who had insisted on incorporating a reference to Austrian involvement. The reason is obvious enough: Vienna did not trust the Serbian authorities to press home the investigation without some form of Austrian supervision and verification. And it must be said that nothing the Serbian government did

---

<sup>624</sup> Malcolm, *op. cit.*, pp. 156-157.

between 28 June and the presentation of the ultimatum gave them any reason to think otherwise.

“This was the demand irreconcilable with Serbian sovereignty that had already been identified in Paris, St. Petersburg and Belgrade as the prospective trigger for a broader confrontation...”<sup>625</sup>

The Serbs were given forty-eight hours to accept all the Austrians’ demands. “The Belgrade government’s reply, delivered just within the forty-eight hours deadline, accepted nearly every demand but consented to Austrian involvement in a judicial inquiry only if that inquiry was subject to Serbia’s constitution and to international law. The Austrian leaders in Vienna seized on this pretext to break off relations immediately, and on 28 July declared war. The ultimatum impressed most European governments by its draconian demands...”<sup>626</sup>

Thus the Russian foreign minister Sazonov “condemned the Austro-Hungarian ultimatum with disgust”, declaring that no state could accept such demands without “committing suicide”.<sup>627</sup>

As Stevenson admits, “the summary time limit gave the game away, as did the peremptory rejection of Belgrade’s answer. The ultimatum had been intended to start a showdown...”

“The Serbian evidence confirms that Austria-Hungary had good grounds for rigorous demands. But it also shows that the Belgrade government was anxious for a peaceful exit from the crisis whereas the Austrians meant to use it as the pretext for violence. Austria-Hungary’s joint council of ministers decided on 7 July that the ultimatum should be so stringent as to ‘make a refusal almost certain, so that the road to a radical solution by means of a military action should be opened’. On 19 July it agreed to partition Serbia with Bulgaria, Albania, and Greece, leaving only a small residual state under Habsburg economic domination. Yet previously Vienna had been less bellicose: the chief of the general staff, Franz Conrad von Hötzendorff, had pressed for war against Serbia since being appointed in 1906, but his appeals had been rejected. The Emperor Franz Joseph was a cautious and vastly experienced ruler who remembered previous defeats. He and his advisers moved to war only because they believed they faced an intolerable problem for which peaceful remedies were exhausted.”<sup>628</sup>

In the end, the Austrians went to war so as to save the honour of Austria as they understood it and destroy the main threat to their state as they saw it. As Conrad put it: they now had to fight Serbia (and probably Russia) “since an old

---

<sup>625</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 454-455.

<sup>626</sup> Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 10-11.

<sup>627</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 462. Again, Winston Churchill called it “the most insolent document of its kind ever devised”.

<sup>628</sup> Stevenson, *op. cit.*, pp. 11, 12-13.

monarchy and a glorious army must not perish without glory".<sup>629</sup> In this motivation they were not so different from that of the other Great Powers: the First World War was fought above all for the sake of honour...

However, before going to war the Austrians needed the unconditional support of Germany, which they obtained in the famous "blank cheque" given them by the Kaiser and his government on July 6. In fact, this was not the first "blank cheque" that the Austrians had received. On November 28, 1912 the German foreign minister had told parliament: "If Austria is forced, *for whatever reason*, to fight for its position as a Great Power, then we must stand by her side."<sup>630</sup>

Clark argues that the Germans' "blank cheque" of July 6 was a miscalculation based on the false assumption that the Russians would not intervene on the side of the Serbs - first of all, because they were not yet ready for war (their military programme was not due for completion until 1917), and secondly because, as the Kaiser repeatedly said, he could not imagine that the Tsar would side "with the regicides" (the Serbs had killed their king in 1903) against two monarchical powers.

The Germans blessed the Austrians to invade Serbia - but not start a general European war. This is not to deny the weighty evidence that the German military had been planning a preventive war against Russia for years. But in July, 1914, the German civilian leadership - that is, the Kaiser, the Chancellor Bethmann and the Foreign Minister Jagow - were encouraging the Austrians to deal with the Serbs and *leave it at that*. With the consent of the military, they wanted them to act *quickly* in the hope that a quick Austrian victory would present the other Great Powers with a *fait accompli* that would deter them from intervening. In other words, they wanted a *localized* war that finished quickly enough to prevent the other Great Powers from intervening, whether militarily or through diplomatic initiatives. But the Austrians dithered and delayed; the *fait* was not *accompli*. This changed the calculus; for it raised the probability of Russian military intervention. This was feared by the Austrians, but *welcomed* by the leading Germans who - with the exception of the Kaiser - had been waiting for the opportunity to have an excuse to destroy their main geopolitical rival in war. Their only proviso was that the Russians should appear to be in the wrong - that is, that they, and not the Germans, should begin the fateful process of mobilization.<sup>631</sup> They welcomed the appearance of this opportunity *now*, in the summer of 1914, because time was on the Russians' side, not the Germans' insofar as Russia's rearmament programme was not due to be completed before 1917. That being the case, thought the Germans, so be it - better that the war begin now rather than later, when the advantage would be with the Russians.<sup>632</sup>

---

<sup>629</sup> Strachan, *The First World War*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, p. 11.

<sup>630</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 90.

<sup>631</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 210, 203.

<sup>632</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 415-423.

The Germans were prepared to give their support in the *localized* war against Serbia, not so much because they wanted to destroy Serbia (that was the Austrians' goal) as because they needed the Austrians' support in any wider, *European* war against France and Russia. In particular, they needed the Austrians to hold the Russians at bay in the east while they executed the first part of the Schlieffen-Moltke plan by invading Belgium and France in the west. "If war came, Austria would have to subordinate its conflict with Serbia in order to devote itself entirely to the combat on the Russian front."<sup>633</sup>

But it was not only German leaders who welcomed the outbreak of war: important figures in both the French, the Russian and the British leadership did not want the conflict to be localized, but *wanted* the trigger to be pulled because they thought war was inevitable and/or that this was the only way to deal with the perceived threat of German domination of Europe. This was particularly the position of the French President Poincaré, who travelled to Russia in the fourth week of July in order to stiffen the resolve of the Russians. But it was also true of Russian Agriculture Minister Krivoshein and of British First Lord of the Admiralty Winston Churchill, who rejoiced on hearing that the Austrians had declared war on the Serbs on July 28.<sup>634</sup>

The fact that the Austro-Serbian conflict did not remain localized, but spread to engulf the whole of Europe was the result, according to Clark, of the structure of the alliance between Russia and France, in which an Austrian attack on Serbia was seen as a "tripwire" triggering Russian intervention on the side of Serbia and Germany on the side of Austria, followed immediately by French intervention on the side of Russia.

Britain alone was not fully committed to the tripwire scenarios. For its links with France and Russia were not as strong as those between France and Russia; they did not constitute a full military alliance. In fact, it was only at the very last minute that a majority in the British cabinet accepted the case for intervention at the end of July - and that not because of any treaty obligations to France or Russia, but because of her obligations to defend Belgium...

Russia also was not fully committed to the tripwire scenario - at least before 1914. Thus as recently as October, 1913 "St. Petersburg had been willing to leave Belgrade to its own devices... when the Austrians had issued an ultimatum demanding [the Serbs'] withdrawal from northern Albania."<sup>635</sup> However, some important personnel changes had taken place in the months since October. First, Prime Minister Kokovtsov, an opponent of intervention in the Balkans, had been forced out by the nationalists in the government.

Then, in January, 1914, the Tsar offered the vacant post to Pyotr N. Durnovo, - in Clark's words "a forceful and determined man who was adamantly

---

<sup>633</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 204.

<sup>634</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 552.

<sup>635</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

opposed to Balkan entanglements of any kind”<sup>636</sup>, declaring that “a social revolution in its most extreme form will be unavoidable if a war goes badly”. But Durnovo turned it down, and the post passed to Goremykin, an old man who did not have the strength to oppose the majority of his ministerial colleagues – and would not in any case have opposed the Tsar himself, who was moving towards the nationalist position. With this change, then, there probably also passed the last chance for the Russian government to abandon the fateful “tripwire” system.

In order to understand why Russia did go to war, it is necessary, according to Lieven, “to grasp the values and mentality of the Russian ruling elites... In old regime Europe the nobleman was brought up to defend his public reputation and honour at all costs, if necessary with sword in hand. The ethic of the duel still prevailed in aristocratic and, in particular, military circles. No crime was worse than cowardice. Kings, aristocrats and generals were not used to being pushed about or humiliated. In contemporary parlance, they had a short fuse. In pre-1914 Europe, war was still widely regarded not only as honourable and even romantic, but also as a sometimes necessary and legitimate means by which great powers could defend their interests and achieve national goals unobtainable by peaceful measures. Victory was a meaningful concept even as regards wars between great powers in a way that makes little sense in the nuclear age. The catastrophe of 1914 is incomprehensible unless these underlying realities are taken into account.”<sup>637</sup>

Russia’s rulers, writes Lieven, “did not want war. Whatever hankering Nicholas II may ever have had for military glory had been wholly dissipated by the Japanese war. That conflict had taught the whole ruling elite that war and revolution were closely linked. Though war with Germany would be more popular than conflict with Japan had been, its burdens and dangers would also be infinitely greater. Russian generals usually had a deep respect for the German army, to which on the whole they felt their own army to be inferior. Above all, Russian leaders had every reason to feel that time was on their side. In strictly military terms, there was good reason to postpone conflict until the so-called ‘Great Programme’ of armaments was completed in 1917-18. In more general terms, Russia already controlled almost one-sixth of the world’s land surface, whose hitherto largely untapped potential was now beginning to be developed at great speed. It was by no means only Petr Stolypin who believed that, given 20 years of peace, Russia would be transformed as regards its wealth, stability and power. Unfortunately for Russia, both the Germans and the Austrians were well aware of all the above facts. Both in Berlin and Vienna it was widely believed that fear of revolution would stop Russia from responding decisively to the Austro-German challenge: but it was also felt that war now was much preferable to a conflict a decade hence.

---

<sup>636</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 557.

<sup>637</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, p. 190.



“In fact, for the Russian government it was very difficult not to stand up to the Central Powers in July 1914. The regime’s legitimacy was at stake, as were the patriotism, pride and self-esteem of the key decision-makers. Still more to the point was the conviction that weakness would fatally damage Russia’s international position and her security. If Serbia became an Austrian protectorate, that would allow a very significant diversion of Habsburg troops from the southern to the Russian front in the event of a future war. If Russia tamely allowed its Serbian client to be gobbled up by Austria, no other Balkan state would trust its protection against the Central Powers. All would move into the latter’s camp, as probably would the Ottoman Empire. Even France would have doubts about the usefulness of an ally so humiliatingly unable to stand up for its prestige and its vital interests. Above all, international relations in the pre-1914 era were seen to revolve around the willingness and ability of great powers to defend their interests. In the age of imperialism, empires that failed to do this were perceived as moribund and ripe for dismemberment. In the judgement of Russian statesmen, if the Central Powers got away with the abject humiliation of Russia in 1914 their appetites would be whetted rather than assuaged. At some point in the near future vital interest would be threatened for which Russia would have to fight, in which case it made sense to risk fighting now, in the hope that this would deter Berlin and Vienna, but in the certainty that if war ensued Serbia and France would fight beside Russia, and possibly Britain and certain other states as well.”<sup>638</sup>

One could argue that the Tsar should have imposed his will on the patriots and the foreign policy establishment whether they liked it or not. But times had changed greatly since the reign of the absolutist Tsar Peter the Great. Tsar Nicholas, though far from being the weak man that western historians almost invariably make him out to be, was not in a position simply to ignore what his ministers and bureaucrats thought and impose his will on them. Like all European monarchs in this, the beginning of the age of democracy and the common man, he simply could not afford to ignore public opinion.

In any case, he was running out of wise and loyal men to place in the higher reaches of government. As Lieven points out, “he could not find a prime minister competent to do the job who would obey his orders and pursue the line he required. Talented officials were no longer willing to simply assume public responsibility for executing the tsar’s commands.”<sup>639</sup>

The Tsar did not want war, and fully understood that it might lead to revolution and destroy Russia in the end - which it did. But he was determined to defend the Serbs, come what may and whatever may have been their moral responsibility for Sarajevo.

---

<sup>638</sup> Lieven, “Russia, Europe and World War I”, in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *A Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997, pp. 42-43.

<sup>639</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 347.

Other foreign policy considerations played their part in his thinking. Turkey's order of two dreadnoughts to protect the northern Aegean islands against Greece constituted a direct threat to the Russian Black Sea fleet and the Russian export trade. The dreadnoughts were due to be received at the end of July... Since the situation in the Straits was inextricably linked with that in the Balkans, as we have seen, this was another reason why the Tsar and his cabinet decided to defend the Serbs.

Evidence that the Tsar's sincere desire to avert war by all honourable means - that is, so long as it did not involve sacrificing the Serbs to Austrian aggression - is contained in the telegrams exchanged between Tsar Nicholas and the Serbian regent, Prince Alexander, in the last days before the catastrophe. The prince, who had commanded the First Serbian Army in the Balkan wars and later became king, wrote to the Tsar on July 23: "The demands of the Austro-Hungarian note unnecessarily represent a humiliation for Serbia and are not in accord with the dignity of an independent state. In a commanding tone it demands that we officially declare in *Serbian News*, and also issue a royal command to the army, that we ourselves cut off military offensives against Austria and recognize the accusation that we have been engaging in treacherous intrigues as just. They demand that we admit Austrian officials into Serbia, so that together with ours they may conduct the investigation and control the execution of the other demands of the note. We have been given a period of 48 hours to accept everything, otherwise the Austro-Hungarian embassy will leave Belgrade. We are ready to accept the Austro-Hungarian demands that are in accord with the position of an independent state, and also those which would be suggested by Your Majesty; everyone whose participation in the murder is proven will be strictly punished by us. Certain demands cannot be carried out without changing the laws, and for that time is required. We have been given too short a period... They can attack us after the expiry of the period, since Austro-Hungarian armies have assembled on our frontier. It is impossible for us to defend ourselves, and for that reason we beseech Your Majesty to come as soon as possible to our aid..."

To this the Tsar replied on July 27: "In addressing me at such a serious moment, Your Royal Highness has not been mistaken with regard to the feelings which I nourish towards him and to my heart-felt disposition towards the Serbian people. I am studying the present situation with the most serious attention and My government is striving with all its might to overcome the present difficulties. I do not doubt that Your Highness and the royal government will make this task easier by not despising anything that could lead to a decision that would avert the horrors of a new war, while at the same time preserving the dignity of Serbia. All My efforts, as long as there is the slightest hope of averting bloodshed, will be directed to this aim. If, in spite of our most sincere desire, success is not attained, Your Highness can be assured that in no case will Russia remain indifferent to the fate of Serbia."

Although the Tsar knew that resisting popular national feeling could lead to revolution, as Sazonov warned, he also knew that an unsuccessful war would

lead to it still more surely. So the decisive factor in his decision was not popular opinion, but Russia's ties of faith with Serbia. And if one good thing came out of the First World War it was the strengthening of that religious bond. For as Prince Alexander replied to the Tsar: "Difficult times cannot fail to strengthen the bonds of deep attachment that link Serbia with Holy Slavic Rus', and the feeling of eternal gratitude for the help and defence of Your Majesty will be reverently preserved in the hearts of all Serbs."

\*

The Serbs moved fast, mobilizing on July 25. Their reply to the Austrian ultimatum was, writes Clark, "a masterpiece of diplomatic equivocation..."

"In their replies to the individual points, the drafters offered a whole cocktail of acceptances, conditional acceptances, evasions and rejections. They agreed officially to condemn all propaganda aimed at the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Empire or the annexation of its territories (though they used a modal form of the very that avoided the implication that there had actually been any such propaganda). On the question of irredentist organizations, the reply stated that the Serbian government possessed 'no proof that the Narodna Obrana or other similar societies' had as yet committed 'any criminal act' - nevertheless, they agreed to dissolve the Narodna Obrana and any other society 'that may be directing its efforts against Austria-Hungary'. Point 3 stated that the government would happily remove from Serbian public education any anti-Austrian propaganda, 'whenever the Imperial and Royal Government furnish them with facts and proofs of this propaganda'. Point 4 agreed to the removal from the military of suspect persons. But again, only once the Austro-Hungarian authorities had communicated to them 'the names and acts of these officers and functionaries'. On the question of the creation of mixed Austro-Serbian commissions of enquiry (point 5), the reply stated that the Serbia government 'did not clearly grasp the meaning or scope of the demand', but that they undertook to accept such collaboration, inasmuch as it could be shown to agree with the principle of international law, with criminal procedure and neighbourly relations'. Point 6 (on the participation of Austrian officials in the prosecution of implicated persons) was rejected outright on the grounds that this would be contrary to the Serbian constitution - this was the issue touching on Serbia's sovereignty, on which Sazonov had urged Belgrade to stand firm. As for point 7, calling for the arrest of Tankosić and Ciganović, the Serbian government stated that it had already arrested Tankosić 'on the very evening of the delivery of the note'; it had 'not yet been possible to arrest Ciganović'. Again, the Austrian government were asked to provide the 'presumptive evidence of guilt, as well as the proofs of guilt, if there were any... for the purpose of the later enquiry'. This was a somewhat devious response: as soon as the name of Ciganović had cropped up in connection with the Sarajevo enquiry, the prefecture of police in Belgrade had hustled him out of the capital on a special commission, all the while officially denying that any person by the name of Milan Ciganović existed in the city. The reply accepted without conditions points 8 and 10 regarding the prosecution of frontier

officials found guilty of illegal activity and the duty to report to the Austro-Hungarian government on the measures undertaken. But point 9, under which the Austrians had demanded an explanation of hostile public comments by Serbian officials during the days following the assassination, elicited a more equivocal response: the Serbian government would 'gladly give' such explanations, once the Austrian government had 'communicated to them the passages in question in these remarks and as soon as they have shown that the remarks were actually made by said officials'...

"This was a document fashioned for Serbia's friends, not for its enemy. It offered the Austrians little. Above all, it placed the onus on Vienna to drive ahead the process of opening up the investigation into the Serbian background of the conspiracy, without, on the other hand, conceding the king of collaboration that would have enabled an effective pursuit of the relevant leads. In this sense it represented a continuation of the policy the Serbian authorities had followed since 28 June, flatly to deny any form of involvement and to abstain from any initiative that might be taken to indicate the acknowledgement of such involvement..."<sup>640</sup>

The Austrians rejected the Serbs' reply to their ultimatum on July 25, began mobilization on the same day. Also on July 25, the Russian cabinet, having decided to support the Serbs on the previous day, decided on far-reaching pre-mobilization measures – which, however, were not put into effect until July 30. And in France, as was reported to Poincaré at Dunkirk on his return journey to Paris, "the steps had been taken which, in the event of need, would permit an immediate mobilization". The British had not yet made any decision for war, but the signs coming from Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey were that he supported Russia and France. Grey "did not inspect or weigh up the Austrian case against Serbia, indeed he showed no interest in it whatsoever, not because he believed the Serbian government was innocent of the charges against it, but because he acquiesced in the Franco-Russian view that the Austrian threat to Serbia constituted a 'pretext' as Eyre Crowe put it, for activating the alliance.

"A central feature of that scenario was that Britain accepted – or at least did not challenge – the legitimacy of a Russian strike against Austria to resolve an Austro-Serbian quarrel, and the inevitability of French support for the Russian initiative. The precise circumstances of the Austro-Serbian dispute and questions of culpability were matters of subordinate interest; what mattered was the situation that unfolded once the Russians (and the French) were involved. And defining the problem in this way naturally placed the onus on Germany, whose intervention in Austria's defence must necessarily trigger French mobilization and a continental war."<sup>641</sup>

The Germans had not yet initiated mobilization, hoping that Russia would incur the guilt of making the first move. "By 27 July it is clear that the Germans'

---

<sup>640</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 464-466.

<sup>641</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 458.

principal concern was, as Müller put it, 'to put Russia in the wrong and then not to shy away from war' – in other words, to portray the fact of Russian mobilization as evidence of an attack on Germany."<sup>642</sup>

But "as early as July 26, the Russian naval attaché in Berlin, Captain Evgenii Behrens, believed that the Germans had gone so far that that it would be impossible for them to withdraw now. Having served in Berlin throughout the Balkan Wars and the Liman von Sanders crisis, he reported that the Germans' expectation of war was far greater now than at any time in the two previous years."<sup>643</sup>

In any case, when, on July 28, the Kaiser, having just returned from a cruise, read for the first time the Serbs' reply to the Austrians' ultimatum, he considered it to be "'a capitulation of the most humiliating kind,' and as a result, 'every cause for war falls to the ground.' A few sentences later he repeated himself: 'Every cause for war has vanished.'...

"Nevertheless, the piece of paper, like its contents, can be considered as of little value so long as it is not translated into *deeds*. The Serbs are Orientals, therefore liars, tricksters, and masters of evasion.' So it should be agreed that the Austrian army would temporarily occupy a part of Serbia including Belgrade, as a hostage, until Serbia kept its word."<sup>644</sup>

But nobody in Berlin was seriously listening to the Kaiser anymore; his halt-in-Belgrade proposal was passed on to the Austrians – when it was already too late. On July 28 the Austrians declared war on Serbia, and there were skirmishes on the border at the rivers Danube and Save...

The Germans' motivation in going to war was subtly different from that of the Austrians. If the Austrians wanted to crush Serbia and/or to go down in a blaze of glory, defending their honour, the Germans were not concerned with honour, but rather the calculation, as Moltke said to Bethmann, that in the general war that must come soon, "we shall never again strike as well as we do now, with France's and Russia's expansion of their armies incomplete". "The evidence," writes Ferguson, "points... persuasively to a military 'first strike', designed to pre-empt a deterioration in Germany's military position – though this is by no means incompatible with the idea that the outcome of such a strike, if successful, would have been German hegemony in Europe. The only real question is whether or not this strategy deserves the apologetic name of 'preventive war'. It is to condescend to the German decision-makers to caricature them as irrational duelists, going to war 'in a fit of anger', for the sake of an antiquated sense of honour. The Germans did not care about losing 'face'; they cared about losing the arms race..."<sup>645</sup>

---

<sup>642</sup> Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 150.

<sup>643</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 335.

<sup>644</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

<sup>645</sup> Ferguson, *op. cit.*, p. 153.

At this point, "a telegram arrived from Rasputin who was at his village in Siberia. Rasputin advised to avoid war, because he 'foresaw' that it would result in the destruction of the autocracy. According to Gilliard, 'cunning and astute as he was, Rasputin never advised in political matters except with the most extreme caution. He always took the greatest care to be very well informed as to what was going on at Court and as to the private feelings of the Czar and his wife. As a rule, therefore, his prophecies only confirmed the secret wishes of the Czarina. In fact, it was almost impossible to doubt that it was she who inspired the 'inspired', but as here desires were interpreted by Rasputin, they seemed in her eyes to have the sanction and authority of revelation.' However, the content of this telegram angered Nicholas. He considered Rasputin's involvement in such a critical political issue to be completely inappropriate, and his displeasure was intense..."<sup>646</sup>

---

<sup>646</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 172.

## 44. THE EUROPEAN ROYAL FAMILY

Only one thing, besides Divine intervention, could have prevented world war after Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28, 1914: an agreement between the monarchs based on their family relationships. For in 1914 Europe was a family of nations united by a single dynasty and a cosmopolitan elite confessing what most considered to be a single Christianity, albeit divided into Orthodox, Catholic and Protestant varieties.<sup>647</sup> The European Royal Family, headed by the matriarch Queen Victoria, was perhaps the last force resisting the centrifugal forces that seemed to be leading the continent inexorably to war.

The idea of a family of nations linked by dynastic marriages and/or a common faith as a bulwark against war is an old one. The Byzantine emperor saw himself as the head of a network of Orthodox nations in various degrees of relationship to himself, the head of the family. Of course, there was a large element of wish-fulfilment in this idea, and there were often “black sheep” who decided to make war against other members of the family against the will of the father. Nevertheless, there was enough substance in the idea to preserve a certain stability – until the very idea of a family of nations united under a single father-emperor, mother-empress or batyushka-tsar was discredited. The idea was revived in a slightly different form by Tsar Alexander I, who in 1815, fresh from his victory over Napoleon, proposed a “Holy Alliance” of Christian monarchs (one Orthodox, one Catholic and one Protestant) against the revolution to the kings of Austria and Prussia. This alliance, though mocked by Metternich and the British, and based more on a common monarchism and anti-democratism, did manage to preserve Europe against major revolutions until the Crimean War, but then foundered when Catholic France and Protestant Britain teamed up with the Muslim Ottoman empire against Russia. Thus the most serious “breach of the peace”, the Europe-wide revolution of 1848, was brought to an end by Tsar Nicholas I, invading revolutionary Hungary in 1849. But of course no European head of state seriously thought of the tsar of Russia as the head of a European family of nations. Even the monarchs of Europe regarded him with fear rather than filial love. And when Nicholas II proposed the Hague court of justice in 1899 as an arbitration mechanism for halting the arms race and preventing war, he was politely (or in the Germans’ case, not so politely) ignored...

However, there was still the European royal family. Almost all the crowned heads of Europe were united in one family, German in origin, being made up of branches of the Saxe-Coburg dynasty.<sup>648</sup> Thus the matriarch of the family, Queen Victoria of England, once told her uncle, King Leopold of the Belgians: “My heart is so German...”<sup>649</sup> “During the Queen’s lifetime, ‘it was taken as a

---

<sup>647</sup> Tsar Nicholas II became the godfather of the future King Edward VIII at his Anglican baptism (Miranda Carter, *The Three Emperors*, London: Penguin, 2010, p. 137), and in 1904 Kaiser Wilhelm was invited to be godfather of the Tsarevich Alexis (Niall Ferguson, *The War of the World*, London: Penguin, 2007, p. 100).

<sup>648</sup> Sophie Gordon, “The Web of Royalty”, *BBC History Magazine*, February, 2012, pp. 16-18.

<sup>649</sup> Ferguson, *The War of the World*, p. 97.

matter of course that German was widely and fluently spoken in the family.”<sup>650</sup> Victoria’s son, Edward VII, reacted against this Germanism by becoming very anti-German. And the Russians and the Danes were not fans of the Germans. Nevertheless, on seeing a photo taken in 1910, after the funeral of Edward VII, in which nine reigning monarchs related to the dead Edward were present, one could be pardoned for thinking that the European Royal Family was one happy *German* royal family.<sup>651</sup>

As for the Russians, for many generations, the tsars and great princes had taken brides from German princely families; Nicholas II, though thoroughly Russian in spirit, had much more German blood than Russian in his veins; and the Tsaritsa Alexandra and her sister Grand Duchess Elizabeth were Hessian princesses with an English mother.<sup>652</sup> However, a divisive factor within the family was the fact that Alexandra and Minnie, the wives of King Edward VII of England and Tsar Alexander III of Russia, were sisters from the Danish dynasty who nurtured an intense dislike of the Prussians, who had invaded their country in 1864, and so moved their husbands, and later their sons, King George V and Tsar Nicholas II, closer to each other and further away from Germany, thereby weakening the traditional hostility that existed between Russia and England and turning them against Germany. Meanwhile, the German Kaiser Wilhelm II, a cousin of George V and Nicholas II, reacted strongly against the liberalism of his English mother, and was attracted towards the militarist and fiercely anti-English monarchism of the Prussian aristocracy. In some ways, this also attracted him to autocratic Russia; but the developing alliance between Russia, Britain and France engendered in him and his circle a fear of “encirclement” and hostility against them all. Nevertheless, in the summer of 1914 many hoped that the family links between the Kaiser and the Tsar would prevent war.<sup>653</sup> For, as the London *Standard* had observed in 1894, “the influence of the Throne in determining the relations between European Power has never been disputed by those at all familiar with modern politics, it is sometimes lost sight of or ignored by the more flippant order of Democrats...”<sup>654</sup>

As Christopher Clark writes, “The European executives were still centred on the thrones and the men or women who sat on them. Ministers in Germany, Austria-Hungary and Russia were imperial appointees. The three emperors had unlimited access to state papers. They also exercised formal authority over their respective armed forces. Dynastic institutions and networks structured

---

<sup>650</sup> Helen Rapoport, *The Race to Save the Romanovs*, London: Windmill Books, 1909, p. 11.

<sup>651</sup> The monarchs were: the British king George V; Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany; Frederick VIII of Denmark; George I of Greece; Haakon VII of Norway; Alfonso XIII of Spain, Manuel II of Portugal, Ferdinand I of Bulgaria and Albert I of Belgium. Only Nicholas II was not present for security reasons (Rapoport, *op. cit.*, p. 18).

<sup>652</sup> However, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) pointed out, the sisters were more English than German in their tastes and upbringing, taking after their English mother rather than their German father (“Homily on the Seventh Anniversary of the Martyric End of Emperor Nicholas II and the Entire Royal Family”, *Orthodox Life*, vol. 31, no. 4, July-August, 1981).

<sup>653</sup> This in spite of the remark of the Tsarina Alexandra in a letter to her sister, Princess Victoria of Battenburg: “Family ties should not influence political considerations” (3 March, 1897).

<sup>654</sup> Carter, *op. cit.*, p. 145.



the communications between states. Ambassadors presented their credentials to the sovereign in person and direct communications and meetings between monarchs continued to take place throughout the pre-war years; indeed, they acquired a heightened importance.”<sup>655</sup>

\*

Europe’s monarchs – especially cousins “Nicky”, “Willy” and “Georgie” - did believe in their mutual relationships. After all, they knew each other well, and Willie had often given Nicky the benefit of his advice. In 1905, as we have seen, the two had even agreed on a new treaty relationship between their countries until reluctantly dissuaded by their respective ministers... But Georgie and Nicky were much closer than either was to Willy: George V told Margot Asquith that Nicky was “the best, straightest, most clear and decided man I know”.<sup>656</sup>

On July 29, Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov received a message from the German chancellor via the German ambassador Pourtalès warning that if the Russians continued their military preparations the Germans themselves would be compelled to mobilize. This confirmed Sazonov in his belief that the Germans had instigated the Austrians’ attack on Serbia, so he ordered the chief of the Russian General Staff Yanushkevich to authorize a general mobilization. However, at 9.20 p.m. the Tsar received a telegram from the Kaiser pleading with him not to undertake military measures that would undermine his position as mediator with Austria. At 9.30, “saying ‘I will not be responsible for a monstrous slaughter’, the Tsar insisted that the order [for general mobilization] be cancelled. Yanushkevich reached for the phone to stay Dobrovolsky’s hand, and the messenger was sent running to the telegraph to explain that an order for partial mobilization was to be promulgated instead.”<sup>657</sup> Partial mobilization involved only the districts adjoining Austria (Odessa, Kiev, Moscow, Kazan); and, as Dominic Lieven points out, “so long as the Petersburg and Warsaw military districts were not mobilized, Russian preparations of war against Germany could not get very far.”<sup>658</sup> So by the late evening of July 29, Russia had partially mobilized against Austria, which had partially mobilized against Serbia. Germany was not yet directly involved or threatened... However, as Sazonov hastened to tell the Tsar at Peterhof the following afternoon (July 30), the reversal of the previous order was impractical for purely military and logistical reasons. Reluctantly, the Tsar agreed to revert to the order for full mobilization...

---

<sup>655</sup> Clark, *The Sleepwalkers. How Europe Went to War in 1914*, London: Penguin, 2012, p. 170.

<sup>656</sup> Helen Rapoport, *The Race to Save the Romanovs*, London: Windmill Books, 2018, p. 21.

<sup>657</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 521.

<sup>658</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame. Empire, War and the End of Tsarist Russia*, London: Allen Lane, 2015, p. 333. “Russian mobilization did not pose the deadly danger that German mobilization would. For Germany, mobilization meant war; for Russia, as its government explained to the Germans, it did not. ‘Russia’s armies,’ as an academic authority recently has pointed out, could ‘remain mobile behind their frontier almost indefinitely.’ And the German government really knew that.” (Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 131)

Before that, the Tsar had made another appeal to the Kaiser: "I foresee that very soon I shall be overwhelmed by the pressure brought upon me and forced to take extreme measures which will lead to war." But on the morning of 30 July, Nicky received a telegram from Willie reiterating the warning issued by Ambassador Pourtalès on the previous day. It was at this point, it seems, that "Nicholas II abandoned any hope that a deal between the cousins could save peace and returned to the option of general mobilization..."<sup>659</sup> As he said to Sazonov: "They [the Germans] don't want to acknowledge that Austria mobilized before we did. Now they demand that our mobilization be stopped, without mentioning that of the Austrians... He is asking the impossible... If I accepted Germany's demands now, we would be disarmed against Austria." In fact, the Austrians were not mobilized against Russia, but only against Serbia...

However, the game was not yet quite over: a final exchange took place on July 31, "after the news reached Berlin that Russia was mobilizing against Germany as well as against Austria. The Kaiser had just finished cabling the Czar that 'the peace of Europe may still be maintained by you, if Russia will agree to stop the military measures which must threaten Germany and Austro-Hungary.' He offered to continue his mediation efforts.

"The Czar replied: 'I thank you heartily for your mediation which begins to give one hope that all may yet end peacefully. It is technically impossible to stop our military preparations which were obligatory owing to Austria's mobilization. We are far from wishing for war. As long as the negotiations with Austria on Serbia's account are taking place my troops shall not make any *provocative* action. I give you my solemn word for this.'

"Meanwhile, Franz Joseph cabled the Kaiser his thanks for his mediation offer but said it came too late. Russia had already mobilized and Austrian troops already were marching on Serbia..."<sup>660</sup>

So in the last resort the avoidance of world war counted for less for the Kaiser than nationalist pride and solidarity with his military and the Austrians, and less for the Tsar than solidarity in faith and blood with the Serbs... As for the third royal cousin, the British King George V, he appealed to the Tsar to stop his mobilization on August 1. But by then it was too late: the German army had mobilized, and Churchill had mobilized the British fleet...

The Tsar has been accused of weakness of will and the Kaiser - of war-mongering. But neither accusation is just. Leaving aside their differences in faith, character and general sympathies (which were great), the Tsar and the Kaiser had this in common: they were both monarchs in a proto-democratic age when it was no longer possible, as it had been in the time of Louis XIV or Peter the Great, for one man, however authoritative or authoritarian, to impose

---

<sup>659</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 513.

<sup>660</sup> Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 235.

his will on the whole nation and the whole of its administrative machinery. And the result was profoundly tragic: the monarchs were forced to acquiesce in a war neither of them wanted that was to destroy both their kingdoms and the very foundations of European Christian civilization...

Left to themselves, the Tsar, the Kaiser and Emperor Franz Josef could probably have prevented war. But all three monarchs were pushed into war by the pressure of their subordinates, patriotic emotions and the logic of the opposing alliances to which they had willingly ascribed, at least to some degree. This logic had been built up on both sides over the course of several years, and the monarchs were neither solely responsible for it nor able on their own to free themselves from its gravitational force...

Grand Duchess Elizabeth said that the Tsar had not wanted war, but rather blamed her cousin, the Kaiser, "who disobeyed the bidding of Frederick the Great and Bismarck to live in peace and friendship with Russia."661

But the Kaiser's real tragedy was not that he disobeyed Bismarck but that he obeyed his generals... Thus on July 28 the minister of war Falkenhayn had reminded the Kaiser that he "no longer had control of the affair in his own hand". For since 1908 his position, writes Fromkin, "had been precarious. In May 1914, only two months before Falkenhayn's reminder, Edward House, President Woodrow's envoy, had reported from Berlin that 'the 'military oligarchy' were supreme, were 'determined on war' and were prepared to 'dethrone the Kaiser the moment he showed indications of taking a course that would lead to peace.' Of course, Wilhelm, whose grip on reality was fragile at best, may not have been fully alive to the perils of his position. Alternatively, House may have exaggerated.

"But there can be little doubt that much was going on of which the emperor was unaware. Indeed, among the things that Wilhelm did not know was that, the day before, [Foreign Minister] Jagow had cabled Vienna urging - indeed, practically ordering - the Austrian government to declare war on Serbia immediately. Jagow warned that the English proposal for a conference to keep the peace could not be resisted much longer. The German foreign minister neither consulted the Kaiser before sending this warning nor informed him afterwards that it had been sent.

"In Austria, too, a reluctant monarch was gotten around. Emperor Franz Joseph was hesitant about declaring war, and his ministers were obliged to obtain his assent in order to do so. Berthold obtained that assent by reporting - falsely - that Serbian troops had opened fire on Austrian forces. Actually - and it was only one isolated incident - it was Austrian troops who had fired on Serbs..."662

---

661 Abbot Seraphim, *Martyrs of Christian Duty*, Peking, 1929; quoted in Lyubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Publication Society, 1993, p. 176.

662 Fromkin, *op. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

In the past the Kaiser's bombast had always given way in the end to caution. And now, on August 1, just as the German army was mobilizing in the West, the Kaiser, on the basis of some misinterpreted telegrams from the British Foreign Secretary Sir Edward Grey, again counseled caution, calling for the troops to be halted on the promise of Anglo-French neutrality. If France was going to stay out of the war, the plan had to be changed to concentrate all of Germany's forces on Russia.

"According to Moltke, 'the Kaiser, without asking me, turned to the aide-de-camp on duty and commanded him to telegraph immediate instructions... not to march into Luxembourg. I thought my heart would break.' With England and France refusing to be drawn into the war, 'The final straw,' Moltke exploded, 'would be if Russia now also fell away.' Germany would be deprived of enemies!"<sup>663</sup>

Moltke "implored the Kaiser not to hinder the occupation of Luxembourg on the grounds that this would jeopardize German control of its railway route." Wilhelm retorted: "Use other routes!" Now Moltke became "almost hysterical. In a private aside to the Minister of War Erich von Falkenhayn, the chief of the General Staff confided, close to tears, 'that he was a totally broken man, because the decision by the Kaiser demonstrated to him that the Kaiser still hoped for peace'."

However, when Grey's real meaning became clearer through another telegram, and he saw that there was no question of British neutrality, the Kaiser finally surrendered, saying to Moltke: "Now you can do what you want..."<sup>664</sup>

So the Kaiser nearly prevented the catastrophe. But he bent his own sovereign will before that of his subject, the true war-monger, Moltke. In the end the Kaiser betrayed his own monarchist ideals - and paid for it with his own crown and his country's defeat...

As for the Tsar, he was limited, not only by the highly nationalist sympathies of the press and most of his ministers, but also by the constitution (because that is what it was) imposed on him in 1906, which he could get round temporarily by the emergency use of Article 87, but not on a regular basis. Moreover, he was the victim of what may only be called a *campaign of national disobedience*, not only from avowed revolutionaries, but also from Duma deputies and *Zemstvo* officers, Grand Dukes and generals, workers and peasants. So it was not only the family ties of the general European family that broke down in 1914: it was also the bonds of the Russian family, who disobeyed their father-tsar, and in a tide of nationalist emotion forced his hand, compelling him to join a war that destroyed him, the state and the whole of European civilization. At

---

<sup>663</sup> Frumkin, *op. cit.*, p. 240.

<sup>664</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, pp. 531, 533.

the same time, while there can be no doubt that most of the elites wanted war, it is doubtful that the majority of *the people* wanted anything other than peace...

“The emperor is sometimes accused,” writes Lieven, “of ‘caving in’ to his generals in 1914 and thereby bringing on the descent into war. This is unfair. Nicholas was forced by the united pressure not just of the generals but also of the Foreign Ministry, the de facto head of the domestic government, and the spokesmen of the Duma and public opinion. In many ways, the surprise is that the emperor held out on his own for so long...”<sup>665</sup>

It must also be remembered that the Tsar was not fighting only for Russia, but also for Serbia and for the whole of the Orthodox commonwealth of nations. For if the Germans tended to see the contest as a racial or cultural one between Teuton *Kultur* and Slavic barbarism, for the Russians who still had faith it was rather a religious one between Protestantism and Orthodoxy.

As Archbishop Anthony (Khrapovitsky) put it: “Germany and Austria declared war on us, for which the former had already been preparing for forty years, wishing to extend its control to the East. What then? Should we quietly have submitted to the Germans? Should we have imitated their cruel and coarse manners? Planted in our country in place of the holy deeds of Orthodoxy piety the worship of the stomach and the wallet? No! It would be better for the whole nation to die than to be fed with such heretical poison!

“We have swallowed enough of it since the time of Peter the Great! And without that the Germans have torn away from the Russian nation, from Russian history and the Orthodox Church its aristocracy and intelligentsia; but in the event of a total submission to the German governmental authority, at last the simple people would have been corrupted. We already have enough renegades from the simple people under the influence of the Germans and of German money. These are above all those same Protestants who so hypocritically cry out for peace. Of course, they were not all conscious traitors and betrayers of their homeland, they did not all share in those 2,000,000 marks which were established by the German government (and a half of it from the personal fortune of the Kaiser) to be spent on the propagation of Protestant chapels in Russia...”<sup>666</sup>

At the deepest level, therefore, the First World War, at any rate on the Eastern front, was a religious war whose outcome would have huge religious consequences: if Russia won, the liberation of Russian Orthodoxy from the threat of German Protestantism, which had been weighing on Russia since Peter the Great, and if she lost, her captivity not only to Protestantism but even to militant atheism through the German agent Lenin. As Archimandrite (later Archbishop and Hieromartyr) Hilarion (Troitsky), put it, the war was

---

<sup>665</sup> Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 337.

<sup>666</sup> Khrapovitsky, *The Christian Faith and War*, Jordanville, 2005, pp. 8-9.

“liberational in the broadest meaning of the word”, and called on his students to resist German influence in theology with books and words.<sup>667</sup>

“In these days of war I appeal to you. You are liberated from military service, you sit, not in the trenches, but behind desks. Therefore do not decline from the necessary enlistment in the army of Christ, in the active, and no longer small, army of theologians! The fortress of the school is ours, it is the academic section of the general front!”<sup>668</sup>

However, although this was a righteous – indeed, a supremely righteous – reason for going to war, the war did not achieve the aim of saving Russia from heterodoxy. Instead, it plunged the country into captivity, if not to German Protestantism, at any rate to other western heresies, democratism and socialism. For the people as a whole had already embraced these heresies when they rejected their God-given tsar.

\*

On July 31 the Tsar published his order for general mobilization on July 31 – the die was now cast. The Germans declared war the next day, August 1. That was the feastday inaugurated by the tsar himself commemorating the translation of the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov in 1903 – that is, the feast of the great prophet of the last times, who had foretold both the Great War and how tragically it would end for the Tsar and for Russia...

On August 1, as Lyubov Millar writes, “large patriotic crowds gathered before the Winter Palace, and when the Emperor and Empress appeared on the balcony, great and joyful ovations filled the air. When the national anthem was played, the crowds began to sing enthusiastically.

“In a sitting room behind this balcony waited Grand Duchess Elizabeth, dressed in her white habit; her face was aglow, her eyes shining. Perhaps, writes Almedingen, she was thinking, ‘What are revolutionary agents compared with these loyal crowds? They would lay down their lives for Nicky and their faith and will win in the struggle.’ In a state of exaltation she made her way from the Winter Palace to the home of Grand Duke Constantine, where his five sons – already dressed in khaki uniforms – were preparing to leave for the front. These sons piously received Holy Communion and then went to the Romanov tombs and to the grave of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg before joining their troops.”<sup>669</sup>

---

667 Troitsky, “Bogoslovie i Svoboda Tserkvi” (Theology and the Freedom of the Church), *Bogoslovskij Vestnik* (Theological Herald), September, 1915, vol. 3, Sergiev Posad; reprinted in Kaluga in 2005, p. 4.

668 Ilarion, in *Sviashchenomuchenik Ilarion (Troitsky)*, *Arkhivopisakop Verejskij. Zhitie* (Hieromartyr Ilarion (Troitsky), Archbishop of Verey. A Life), Moscow, 2006, p. 24.

669 Lyubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Publication Society, 1993, p. 171.

Moreover, there were no signs of imminent revolution. "Before the war," as Hew Strachan writes, "the incidence of strikes – which had both soared in number and become increasingly politicized – peaked in July 1914, and conservatives had warned against war for its ability to stoke revolution. The actual experience of mobilization suggested that such fears had been exaggerated: 'As if by magic the revolutionary disorders had died down at the announcement of war'. In Petrograd (as St. Petersburg had been renamed), 'patriotic fervour had gripped the workmen... They cheered us enthusiastically as we marched by their factories.' Ninety-six per cent of reservists reported for duty, a rate not far behind that of France." 670

"But, as in France, public demonstrations of enthusiasm were urban phenomena, and of all the major armies of 1914 Russia's was overwhelmingly made up of peasants... They had crops to harvest and families to feed. Mobilisation prompted rioting in 49 out of 101 provinces [*oblast*] in European and Asiatic Russia." 671

One of the great tragedies of the war was that the lofty patriotic-religious mood prevalent at least in some parts of the country at the beginning did not last, and those who rapturously applauded the Tsar in August, 1914 were baying for his blood less than three years later...

\*

According to some, a certain *pessimism* and *fatalism* seemed to overcome all the main actors in the tragedy at this time. This is most clearly evident in the German Chancellor Bethmann, an Oxford graduate, whose acquiescence to the war party Lieven finds "bewildering" .672 After all, Bethmann had successfully opposed the military's warmongering for several years. Why did he give in to the idea of a war that he considered "a leap in the dark"?

One hypothesis is that he surrendered to the *machismo* culture of the Prussian warrior class. The language of Bethmann's comment in his *Memoirs* is revealing: "To have shrunk from supporting Austria-Hungary during the crisis of 1914 would have been an act of self-castration." 673

Another is that he finally accepted Moltke's argument that it was "now or never" if Germany wanted to triumph in the inevitable war with Russia – but was still pessimistic about the outcome. "He was, he confessed in 1912, 'gravely distressed by our relative strength in case of war. One must have a good deal of trust in God and count on the Russian revolution as an ally in order to be able to sleep at all.' In June 1913 he admitted to feeling 'sick of war, the clamour for war and the eternal armaments. It is high time that the great nations quieted down again... otherwise an explosion will occur which no one deserves and

---

670 Strachan, *The First World War*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, p. 141.

671 Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

672 Lieven, *Towards the Flame*, p. 317.

673 Bethmann, in Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 359.

which will harm all.' To the National Liberal leader Bassermann, he said 'with fatalistic resignation: "If there is war with France, the last Englishman will march against us." His secretary, Kurt Riezler, recorded some of his musings in his diary for 7 July 1914: 'The Chancellor expects that a war, whatever its outcome, will result in the uprooting of everything that exists. The existing [world] very antiquated, without ideas... Thick fog over the people. The same in all Europe. The future belongs to Russia, which grows and grows and weighs upon us as an ever heavier nightmare... The Chancellor very pessimistic about the intellectual condition of Germany.' On 20 July Bethmann returned to his Russian theme: 'Russia's claims [are] growing [along with her] enormously explosive strength... In a few years no longer to be warded off, particularly when the present European constellation persists.' A week later, he told Riezler that he felt 'a fate [*Fatum*] greater than human power hanging over Europe and our own people.' The mood of near despair, sometimes attributed by cultural historians to excessive exposure to the works of Nietzsche, Wagner and Schopenhauer, becomes more intelligible when the military realities of Europe in 1914 are considered..."<sup>674</sup>

It was indeed "excessive exposure to the works of Nietzsche, Wagner and Schopenhauer", as well as his personal Theosophism, that had corrupted this most intelligent and cultured of Germans, and the whole of his highly cultured and civilized generation, to a "greater than human power", a demonic power, that was leading him and the whole of Europe like the Gadarene swine into the abyss. And even Bethmann, who saw more clearly than anyone in his nation that a war would "turn everything that exists upside down", was prepared to make this "leap in the dark"...

How different was the so-called "fatalism" of Tsar Nicholas II. The Tsar's "fatalism" should rather be called "providentialism", or simply "faith", an unwavering belief in God's omnipotence and complete control of world history. He certainly believed in the proverb: "A man's heart plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps" (Proverbs 16.9). And even more in the proverb: "The heart of the king is in the hand of the Lord. Like the rivers of water, He turns it wherever He wishes" (Proverbs 21.1). As he had prayed during his coronation: "May my heart be in Thine hand, to accomplish all that is to the profit of the people committed to my charge." It was not for him to argue with God, Who declares: "I make peace, and I create calamity: I, the Lord, do all these things" (Isaiah 45.8). For "it is not for [us] to know the times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority" (Acts 1.7).

---

<sup>674</sup> Ferguson, *op. cit.*, pp. 98-99. "Yet Bethmann," writes Fromkin, "felt that Germany had no choice. The portrait that he painted of the country's international position showed a dark and even paranoid vision, with dangers exaggerated. As he saw it, Germany was 'completely paralyzed', and its rivals, the allied powers of Russia, France and Britain, knew it. 'The future belongs to Russia which is growing and is becoming an ever-increasing nightmare to us.' Even the Dual Monarchy would ally with Russia in order to go with the winner. Germany would be alone and helpless in the world of international politics..." (*op. cit.*, p. 181)



Unlike all those around him, the Tsar had a secret, God-given knowledge, which in spite of its tragic content brought him, not despair, but peace. For he *knew* - probably from the letter he received from St. Seraphim at Sarov in 1903, which had such a shattering effect on him and the Tsarina, but also from other sources - that all his efforts to save Russia from war and catastrophe would fail, and that he himself would die in 1918. So while he struggled bravely against what was both his and Russia's tragic destiny, he knew - in 1914, as during his abdication in 1917 - that at a certain point he would have to surrender. For he knew that "there is a tide in the affairs of men", and that the tide in European politics, all over the continent, was towards war - a tide that no man could resist indefinitely.

The Tsar might have resisted the tide for a while, as he had resisted it in 1912; but it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that he felt he had no real alternative but to go to war *eventually*. The best he could do was choose a time when honour and loyalty (to his allies, to the Serbs and, above all, to Holy Orthodoxy) provided a moral justification for war, making those who died in it martyrs for Faith, Tsar and Fatherland. And that time came in July, 1914.

The Tsar sincerely wanted and strove for peace, knowing better than anyone what the terrible consequences of the war would be. But he also knew that it is God Who controls the destinies of nations. Who was he - who was any man? - to resist the will of God if He wanted to punish His people and all the nations in accordance with His inscrutable judgements?

## 45. EUROPE'S HUBRIS AND NEMESIS

"The decision for war in 1914," writes Fromkin, "was purposeful; and the war itself was not, as generations of historians have taught, meaningless. On the contrary, it was fought to decide the essential questions in international politics: who would achieve mastery in Europe, and therefore in the world, and under the banners of what faith." 675

This is an important point, especially in view of the fact that there was a tendency among several of the political and military leaders in 1914 to see their actions as in some measure determined by History or Fate, as if they were not in control of them or responsible for them. If that had been the case, then of course nobody was responsible for the enormous tragedy that unfolded in 1914, and there was no sense in attempting to ascribe war guilt, as the Conference in Versailles tried to do in 1919. And yet scholars and historians continue to "play the blame game" – and with reason. For, however difficult it may be to ascribe blame, and however nuanced and subtle and widely spread any such verdict must be, it cannot and should not be avoided as long as we accept that the peoples of Europe in 1914 were men with reason and free will and not automata. It may well be, as Christopher Clark writes, that many, if not all, of "the protagonists of 1914 were sleepwalkers, watchful but unseeing, haunted by dreams, yet blind to the reality of the horror they were about to bring into the world" 676 But this makes it all the more necessary to understand *why* Europe had reached such a somnolent state – a sleep that was truly nightmarish, a sleep unto death...

It is necessary to spread the net of responsibility both widely in space, to cover all the main actors in 1914, and deeply in time, to cover the historical processes that created the false attitudes and philosophies that propelled them to do what they did. Thus if we take the first and most obvious criminals, Gavrilo Princip and his fellow conspirators, we have to go beyond them to the men who aided and abetted their conspiracy, such as "Apis" and the Black Hand. Then we can spread the net still wider to include state actors and political leaders, together with the philosophies that motivated them, such as Nietzscheanism, nationalism, imperialism, militarism and Social Darwinism, together with "tripwire" scenarios and balance-of-power ideas and considerations of personal, national and corporate honour. This was, for example, the view of the German chancellor Bethmann Holweg: "The imperialism, nationalism, and economic materialism, which during the last generation determined the outlines of every nation's policy, set goals which could only be pursued at the cost of a general conflagration." 677

Such explanations require, however, important distinctions to be made between how these factors operated in different countries – as, for example,

---

675 Fromkin, *op. cit.*, p. 296.

676 Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 562.

677 Bethmann, in Niall Ferguson, *The Pity of War 1914-1918*, London: Penguin, 1998, p. xxxviii.

between the quality, intensity and consequences of the different nationalisms... Thus "In Austria, the story of a nation of youthful bandits and regicides endlessly provoking and goading a patient elderly neighbour got in the way of a cool-headed assessment of how to manage relations with Belgrade. In Serbia, fantasies of victimhood and oppression by a rapacious, all-powerful Habsburg Empire did the same in reverse. In Germany, a dark vision of future invasions and partitions bedeviled decision-making in the summer of 1914. And the Russian saga of repeated humiliations at the hands of the central powers had a similar impact, at once distorting the past and clarifying the present. Most important of all was the widely trafficked narrative of Austria-Hungary's historically necessary decline, which, having gradually replaced an older set of assumptions about Austria's role as a fulcrum of stability in Central and Eastern Europe, disinhibited Vienna's enemies, undermining the notion that Austria-Hungary, like every other great power, possessed interests that it had the right robustly to defend..."<sup>678</sup> Thus the German variety of nationalism was distinguished from the others by its highly philosophical content that made it more poisonous and dangerous in the long term (that is, the term that finally ended in the destruction of the German Reich in 1945). The German variety of the illness had developed over more than a century since the national humiliation suffered at the hands of Napoleon at Jena in 1806. It continued through the German victory over the French at Sedan in 1870 and into the building of the Second Reich from 1871. And it was exacerbated by Treitschke's glorification of war and Nietzsche's glorification of the Superman, not to mention Hegel's glorification of the Prussian State as the supreme expression of the World Spirit... As Colonel House wrote on June 13, 1914: "I have never seen the war spirit so nurtured and so glorified as it is there..."<sup>679</sup>

When we broaden the net still more to consider the antagonisms of whole blocks of nations, such as Slavism versus Teutonism or the Orthodox states of Eastern Europe versus the Catholic and Protestant states of Western Europe, then we are compelled to analyze the religious roots of the differences between the blocks, the part played by such major phenomena as the Renaissance and the Reformation, or, still further back, the Great Schism between the Orthodox East and the Catholic West of 1054, which constituted the "original sin" of European Christian civilization from which all the subsequent corruption proceeded.<sup>680</sup> From this long-term perspective, we can see the First World War as the culmination of many very complex processes going back at least to the Great Schism that interacted with the personal passions and beliefs of individual actors.

For example, the belief in monarchism that had been dominant throughout Europe in the year 1000, was gradually undermined over the following millenium, first by the Popes in their struggle against the Holy Roman Emperors, then by the humanist exaltation of individual freedom against

---

<sup>678</sup> Clark, *op. cit.*, p. 558.

<sup>679</sup> See Geoffrey Hodgson, "The Schrippenfest Incident", *History Today*, July, 2003, p. 47.

<sup>680</sup> Fromkin traces causal lines going even further back, to the division between the Greek- and Latin-speaking worlds in the fourth century AD (*op. cit.*, p. 9).

Divine Right monarchy, and finally by the French revolution's undermining of all hierarchy, both secular and ecclesiastical. The final result was the weakness we have discerned among all the monarchies in 1914, which enabled "that which restrains" the coming of the Antichrist, the Orthodox Autocracy, to be swept away.

Even the fatalism that we have noted in so many of the leading actors in 1914 can be attributed to a loss of faith in Divine Providence and/or personal freedom and responsibility that is a product of the apostatic processes set in motion by the Great Schism.

The Great War of 1914-18 delivered a final verdict on the Great Schism of 1054, and on the whole development of western civilization since then as it fell further and further away from its previous unity with the Orthodox East, whose roots were in a common confession of Holy Orthodoxy during the first Christian millenium. The verdict on Catholic Austria-Hungary and Protestant Imperial Germany was: *guilty as charged*, and both were destroyed. A third infidel empire, that of Ottoman Turkey, was also destroyed.

The democracies of France, Italy, Britain and the United States were counted as the victors. But theirs was a Pyrrhic victory. Having betrayed their faithful ally, Tsar Nicholas II, in 1917, there was no way they could reap the sheaves of a merited victory and a real peace. For twenty years after the end of the Great War they languished in a turbulent sea of decadence, depression and demoralization, and only with great difficulty and at the cost of terrible moral crimes (the mass bombings of innocent civilians in Germany and Japan) did they emerge triumphant from a Second World War in 1945, while a new enemy, that of militant atheism, ruled supreme over a quarter of the world's surface, from Berlin to Vladivostok. Nor could the thin gruel of the democratic ideology of free trade and human rights satisfy the hearts of a world dying from a famine of the Word of God.

However, the greatest suffering and the greatest punishment was inflicted, neither on the losers, the Germanic monarchies, nor on the victors, the western democracies, but on the Orthodox nations of Eastern Europe who lost whether they found themselves (like the Russians) or on the winning side (like the Serbs, who lost more men proportionately to their population than any other nation). This may seem paradoxical insofar as we have identified precisely these nations as being the last bearers of truth and grace in the European continent. But if we understand the workings of Divine Providence, and the extent to which the purity of the Orthodox faith had been corrupted in the Orthodox nations, we shall not accuse God of injustice, but will agree that "God is true, but every man a liar. As it is written: 'that Thou mayest be justified in Thy words, and prevail when Thou art judged'" (Romans 3.4).

For, in accordance with the principle that "to whom much is given, from him much is required", the Orthodox nations to whom had been entrusted the riches of the Orthodox faith must be considered to have borne the major share

of the responsibility for the catastrophe. It is to the Orthodox, not the heterodox, that the Lord says: "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth. *Therefore* I will punish you for all your iniquities" (Amos 3.2) For both faith and morals were in sharp decline in the Orthodox countries. The rot had penetrated the whole of society, reaching into the nobility and even the Church hierarchy. The holy prophets and elders from St. Seraphim of Sarov to St. John of Kronstadt had warned that God's wrath would not fail to fall upon the people if they did not repent - and the punishment duly began to be inflicted from 1914.

Of course, the most evil teachings of the Nietzschean Superman or the Darwinian Apeman had not yet penetrated into the Orthodox East as deeply as into the heterodox West. And yet we know that the Bosnian Serb terrorists who fired the shots at Sarajevo had been infected with Nietzscheanism, and that the mass of the Serbian people applauded their act, having already applauded the even worse crime of the regicide of 1903. Moreover, terrorism of a more openly atheist, internationalist kind, carried out very often by baptized Orthodox Christians and silently condoned by many other baptized Orthodox Christians, had already counted thousands of innocent victims in Russia. Many millions more would suffer after the revolution in the greatest persecution of the Christian faith in the history of the Church....

The outbreak of war in 1914 was a call to repentance as well as a call to arms. And if the Orthodox nations had formed a united front behind the Tsar, the emperor of the Third Rome, knowing that the defeat of Russia was bound to have catastrophic effects for the whole of the Orthodox Commonwealth, the worst might have been avoided. But the Bulgarians, who owed their independence almost entirely to the Russians, decided to join the Germans.<sup>681</sup> And the Romanians (who resented the Russian takeover of Bessarabia) and the Greeks (who had a German king and saw "pan-Slavism" everywhere) remained neutral until it was too late...

When the Tsar wrote in his diary on the day of his abdication that all around him was "cowardice, deception and betrayal" he was referring first of all, of course, to the Russian traitors. But the Orthodox world as a whole betrayed its earthly protector, whom they liked to appeal to when in trouble but whom they

---

<sup>681</sup> Tsar Nicholas wrote on October 6, 1915: "Impossible as it has seemed, but treacherously preparing from the very beginning of the war, Bulgaria has betrayed the Slav cause. The Bulgarian army has attacked Our faithful ally Serbia, [which is already] bleeding profusely in a struggle with a strong enemy. Russia and Our allied Great Powers tried to warn Ferdinand of Coburg against this fatal step. The fulfilment of an age-old aspiration of the Bulgar people - union with Macedonia - has [already] been guaranteed to Bulgaria by a means more in accord with the interests of the Slav world. But appeals by the Germans to secret ambitions and fratricidal enmity against the Serbs prevailed. Bulgaria, whose [Orthodox] faith is the same as Ours, who so recently has been liberated from Turkish slavery by the brotherly love and blood of the Russian people, openly took the side of the enemies of the Christian faith, the Slav world and of Russia. The Russian people react with bitterness to the treachery of a Bulgaria which was so close to them until recently, and draw their swords against her with heavy hearts, leaving the fate of these traitors to the Slav world to God's just retribution." (<http://www.lib.byu.edu/~rdh/wwi/1915/nickbulg.html>)

did not want to rule over them. Like Christ, he was betrayed by all except a very few of those closest to him.

For all these reasons, the judgement of God fell hardest on the Orthodox, “for judgement begins at the household of God” (I Peter 4.17). Thus the Russians, having murmured and plotted against their Tsar, were deprived of victory by revolution from within, and came to almost complete destruction afterwards; the Serbs, whose insatiably aggressive nationalism supplied the trigger (literally) for the war, suffered proportionately more than any other country, even though they were on the winning side; the Romanians were crushed by the Germans before also appearing on the winning side; and the Bulgarians, while adding to their huge losses in the Balkan Wars, still appeared on the losing side. Only the Greeks emerged from the war relatively unscathed – but their judgement would come only a few years later, in the Asia Minor catastrophe of 1922-23.

So the First World War was a judgement on the whole of European civilization, but first of all on the Orthodox nations who had allowed Westernism in all its forms gradually to corrupt their God-given inheritance, the one true faith of Orthodoxy....

\*

So were there no redeeming features for the Orthodox in this, the great watershed in modern European history? Do not “all things work together for good for those who love God” (Romans 8.28)? And were there no people who loved God at this time?

Of course there were; and many Orthodox soldiers “washed their clothes in the Blood of the Lamb”, redeeming their backsliding by their courage and faithfulness to Orthodoxy, the tsar and the homeland even unto death. For them, the war was a means to personal redemption and true glory. Moreover, the war and even more the revolution that followed closely on it forced many people to reconsider the emptiness and sensuality of the lives they had been leading and return to God. For while defeat and revolution had an enormously deleterious effect on the external position of the Church, her spiritual condition improved, and her real as opposed to formal membership swelled considerably, in the post-war period. The fruits of this were twofold: worldwide, in the spreading of Russian Orthodoxy through the Russian Church in Exile, and within Russia in the emergence of a mighty choir of holy new martyrs and confessors. At the head of this choir stands the Tsar, whose martyric life and death kept the true ideal of the Autocracy bright and untarnished. The great choir of holy new martyrs and confessors that followed the Royal Martyrs to torments and death for Christ constitute the long-term basis for hope in the resurrection of the Russian Autocracy and of Orthodox Christianity throughout the world.

## 46. THE WAR ON THE RUSSIAN FRONT

On July 31, 1914 the Tsar published his order for general mobilization – the die was now cast. The Germans declared war the next day, August 1. That was the feastday inaugurated by the tsar himself commemorating the translation of the relics of St. Seraphim of Sarov in 1903 – that is, the feast of the great prophet of the last times, who had foretold both the Great War and how tragically it would end for the Tsar and for Russia...

On August 1, as Lubov Millar writes, “large patriotic crowds gathered before the Winter Palace, and when the Emperor and Empress appeared on the balcony, great and joyful ovations filled the air. When the national anthem was played, the crowds began to sing enthusiastically.

“In a sitting room behind this balcony waited Grand Duchess Elizabeth, dressed in her white habit; her face was aglow, her eyes shining. Perhaps, writes Almedingen, she was thinking, ‘What are revolutionary agents compared with these loyal crowds? They would lay down their lives for Nicky and their faith and will win in the struggle.’ In a state of exaltation she made her way from the Winter Palace to the home of Grand Duke Constantine, where his five sons – already dressed in khaki uniforms – were preparing to leave for the front. These sons piously received Holy Communion and then went to the Romanov tombs and to the grave of Blessed Xenia of Petersburg before joining their troops.”<sup>682</sup>

“The Tsar’s declaration of war first aroused a spirit of national unity. Workers’ strikes came to a halt. Socialists united behind the defence of the fatherland. There were mass arrests of the Bolsheviks and other extremists. The Duma dissolved itself, declaring on 8 August that it did not want to burden the government with ‘unnecessary politics’ at a time of war.”<sup>683</sup>

Only Lenin, living in Switzerland, and a few other international terrorists rejected all claims by their homeland on their services and loyalty...

“Before the war,” as Hew Strachan writes, “the incidence of strikes – which had both soared in number and become increasingly politicized – peaked in July 1914, and conservatives had warned against war for its ability to stoke revolution. The actual experience of mobilization suggested that such fears had been exaggerated: ‘As if by magic the revolutionary disorders had died down at the announcement of war’. In Petrograd (as St. Petersburg had been renamed), ‘patriotic fervour had gripped the workmen... They cheered us enthusiastically as we marched by their factories.’ Ninety-six per cent of reservists reported for duty, a rate not far behind that of France.”<sup>684</sup>

---

<sup>682</sup> Lyubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Publication Society, 1993, p. 171.

<sup>683</sup> Figes, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, London: Pelican, 2014, p. 72.

<sup>684</sup> Strachan, *The First World War*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, p. 141.

“But, as in France, public demonstrations of enthusiasm were urban phenomena, and of all the major armies of 1914 Russia’s was overwhelmingly made up of peasants... They had crops to harvest and families to feed. Mobilisation prompted rioting in 49 out of 101 provinces [*oblast*] in European and Asiatic Russia.”<sup>685</sup>

One of the great tragedies of the war was that the lofty patriotic-religious mood prevalent at least in some parts of the country at the beginning did not last, and those who rapturously applauded the Tsar in August, 1914 were baying for his blood less than three years later...

\*

The war, writes S.A. Smith, “had a devastating effect on the [Russian] empire. Over 14 million men were mobilized; about 67 million people in the western provinces came under enemy occupation; over 6 million were forcibly displaced, of whom half a million were Jews expelled from front-line areas. The eastern front was less static than the western, but neither side was able to make a decisive breakthrough and offensives proved hugely costly. Perhaps 3.3 million died or were lost without trace – a higher mortality than any other belligerent power (although Germany had a higher number of counted dead) – and the total number of casualties reached over 8 million...”

“Russian soldiers fought valiantly and generally successfully against Turks and Austrians, but proved no match for the German army in matters of organization, discipline, and leadership.”<sup>686</sup>

This became clear in the very first campaign of the war... On hearing of the successful German advance into France in August, 1914, Grand-Duke Nicholas, the commander-in-chief of the Russian armies, reversed the entire Russian strategic plan and, disregarding the incomplete concentration of his armies and woeful preparations in general, ordered an advance into East Prussia. At first he was successful, and the Germans were forced to transfer troops from the West at a critical stage, with the result that Paris was saved. As the French General Cherfils remarked in *La Guerre de la Délivrance*, “The spirit in which this offensive was undertaken is something which demands the greatest attention. It was conceived as an intervention, a diversionary operation, to assist and relieve the French Front. As Russian Commander-in-Chief, the Grand Duke behaved more like an ally than a Russian and deliberately sacrificed the interests of his own country to those of France. In these circumstances his strategy can be termed as ‘anti-national’.”<sup>687</sup>

---

<sup>685</sup> Strachan, *op. cit.*, p. 141.

<sup>686</sup> Smith, *The Russian Revolution. A Very Short Introduction*, Oxford University Press, 2002, pp. 12-13.

<sup>687</sup> Cherfils, in Arsène de Goulévitch, *Czarism and Revolution*, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 184. Colonel Dupont, French chief of intelligence, asserted: “Let us render



Ivan Solonevich asserts that the advance into East Prussia was undertaken at the personal initiative of the Tsar rather than that of Grand Duke Nicholas. In any case, the Second Army was destroyed at Tannenburg with the loss of 100,000 prisoners. General Samsonov committed suicide. "But Paris was saved. Consequently Russia, too, was saved – from everything that Stalin and Hitler did to her in 1941-45. For if Paris had been taken, France would have been finished. And then Russia would have been faced by the whole of Germany, the whole of Austria and the whole of Turkey. And then, perhaps, the matter would not have ended on the Volga..."<sup>688</sup>

This was followed, in 1915, by a series of heavy defeats caused mainly by a continuing catastrophic lack of munitions. On January 31, at the battle of Bolimow, the Germans used poison gas on a large scale for the first time (three months later, they also employed it at Ypres on the Western front).<sup>689</sup> In May, the ill-equipped Russians lost the battle of Gorlice-Tarnow, south-east of Krakow in Galicia with 743,000 casualties and 895,000 soldiers taken prisoner.<sup>690</sup> Poland was lost...

However, in the East Turkey was defeated by Russia, which now stood as the defender of the Armenian, Assyrian and Greek Orthodox Christians, whom the Turks, under cover of the war, were planning to annihilate.

The Turkish policy of ethnic cleansing "was stirred up by pan-Islamism and religious fanaticism. Christians were considered infidels (*kafir*). The call to Jihad, decreed on 29 November 1914 and instigated and orchestrated for political ends, was part of the plan" to "combine and sweep over the lands of Christians and to exterminate them." "As with the Armenians, eyewitness accounts tell of the sadistic eye-gouging of Assyrians and the gang rape of their children on church altars. According to key documents, all this was part of 'an Ottoman plan to exterminate Turkey's Christians.'"<sup>691</sup>

In 1915 Tsar Nicholas ordered the Russo-Turkish frontier to be opened to let in 375,000 Armenians fleeing from the Turkish murderers. G. Ter-Markarian writes: "At the very border, in the open air, many tables were set out, at which Russian officials received the Armenian refugees without any formalities, giving each member of each family a royal rouble and a special document giving them the right for one year to set themselves up anywhere in the Russian Empire with the use of all forms of transport. Starving people were fed from field kitchens and clothing was handed out to those who needed it. Russian doctors and nurses gave out medicines and first aid to the sick, wounded and

---

to our Allies the homage that is their due, for one of the elements of our victory was their debacle" (in Tuchman, *op. cit.*, pp. 519-520).

<sup>688</sup> Solonevich, "Mif o Nikolae II" (The Myth about Nicholas II), 1949.

<sup>689</sup> [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle\\_of\\_Bolimów](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Battle_of_Bolimów)

<sup>690</sup> Tampke, *op. cit.*, p. 61.

<sup>691</sup> *Year of the Assyrian Genocide* (1917); Raymond Ibrahim, "Armenian Genocide Remembrance Day: Revisiting Islam's Greatest Slaughter of Christians", *PJ Media*, April 24, 2019.

pregnant. In all more than 350,000 Turkish Armenians were let through the frontier at that time and given asylum and salvation in Russia.”<sup>692</sup>

“On January 25 1915,” writes Sebastian Sebag Montefiore, “Nikolasha and [his chief-of-staff] Yanushkevich ordered a ‘cleansing’ of the entire theatre of operations through the expulsion of ‘all Jews and suspect individuals’... The Jews, who spoke the Germanic Yiddish, were suspected of treason. Nikolasha took Jewish hostages and executed suspects. Around 500,000 Jews were expelled in scenes of such desperate misery that even interior minister Maklakov complained, ‘I’m not Judaeophile but I disapprove’.”<sup>693</sup> The irony was that this took place in the Pale of Settlement, where the Jews had been confined. But now the Jews were forced to flee eastwards, to the major cities of Central Russia, where they swelled the ranks of the revolutionaries...

It was not only the Jews who suffered. The state forcibly moved “approximately a million Russian citizens of German ethnicity, along with Jews and Muslims too, nationalizing their property, and handing it over to so-called ‘favored groups’.”<sup>694</sup> In June, 1916 the army imposed labour conscription on the native population of the Caucasus and Central Asia. Until then, the Ottoman caliph’s call to all Muslims to conduct a holy war against the Allies had not elicited the feared reaction in Russia. But now there was a major rebellion of the Muslims, especially in Semirechiye, bordering on China, which was put down with severity, causing thousands of deaths and the fleeing of 300,000 Kirgiz to China.<sup>695</sup> Indeed, “By the beginning of 1917, the total number of displaced people in the Russian empire alone has been calculated at just over 6 million. Across Russia, there was, in Peter Garrell’s suggestive, resonant phrase, ‘a whole empire walking’.”<sup>696</sup>

The revolutionaries and their liberal supporters were counting on Russia losing the war and therefore stirred up defeatist sentiments in the population. This extended even into the Council of Ministers. Thus on June 16, 1915, the new Minister of War Polivanov, a protégé of Guchkov who had replaced the loyalist Sukhumlimov, said that the Homeland was in danger. Meanwhile, voluntary organizations, such as the Zemstvo Union, its partner the Union of Towns (zemgor) and Guchkov’s Military-Industrial Committee, came into existence. Led by Prince Lvov, a zemstvo activist since the 1890s, the Zemstvo Union quickly grew into a huge national infrastructure, an unofficial government, with 8,000 affiliated institutions, several hundred thousand employees, and a budget of a billion roubles, partly financed by the public and

---

<sup>692</sup> In 1990 Professor Pavel Nikolayevich Paganucci said: “75 years have passed since 23% of the whole Armenian population of Turkey was saved by his Majesty. Nobody, now or in the past, has recalled what he did for the Armenian people. For this saving deed alone he should be counted among the saints.”

<sup>693</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, London: Vintage, 2016, p. 581.

<sup>694</sup> Douglas Smith, *Rasputin*, London: Pan Books, 2016, p. 481.

<sup>695</sup> Keith Jeffery, *1916*, London: Bloomsbury, 2015, pp. 180-190.

<sup>696</sup> Jeffery, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

partly by the state.”<sup>697</sup> There was a strong suspicion that they were using the money they received from the state for anti-state purposes. Certainly, one of their aims was to “win more influence for themselves and their allies in the Duma in the wartime regulation of industry. All but three of the ministers of the First Provisional Government of 1917 (which would be led by Prince Lvov) would emerge as national leaders through Zemgor or the War Industries Committee. Through their combined initiatives, these public bodies were able to form an effective political force. They enjoyed the support of several liberal-minded ministers...”<sup>698</sup>

\*

Early in August, 1915, the Tsar announced that he was taking control of the Russian army as Supreme Commander. There were many good reasons to remove Nikolasha (he was sent to the Caucasian front), not least the military defeats in Poland and the chaos of the retreat, including the “ethnic cleansing” of the Jews. However, there was general outrage among the liberals. Many thought that this decision was due to Rasputin’s influence, but it was not: the tsar had expressed his desire to lead the army as early as July, 1914.<sup>699</sup> Even many of the tsar’s supporters, such as Prime Minister I.L. Goremykin, were unhappy, because it meant that if things went badly on the battlefield the Tsar would be blamed as being directly responsible. But “God’s will be done,” wrote the Tsar to the Tsaritsa after arriving at headquarters. “I feel so calm” – like the feeling, he said, “after Holy Communion”. He considered this his duty as Tsar, and told Goremykin that he could not forgive himself for not having placed himself at the head of the army during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>700</sup>

In the same month of August, as Yakoby writes, “at the house of A.I. Konovalov in Moscow, a conference of the leaders of the opposition took place. It was decided to take immediate decisive steps to seize power. To this end it was necessary first of all to force the Government to retire and obtain from his Majesty the appointment of a new ministry under the presidency either of Rodzianko or Prince Lvov, while giving the portfolio of foreign affairs to Milyukov, of war to Guchkov, of trade and industry to Konovalov, and of justice to Maklakov. At the same time, they would have to fight with all their powers against the decision of his Majesty to take upon himself the Supreme Command. And if the Monarch remained unbending in his decision, then it was necessary, for the sake of propaganda, to present this measure in the eyes of public opinion as unkindness and ingratitude to Great Prince Nicholas Nikolayevich, and turn him into a national hero who would be constantly contrasted with the Tsar. A strange turn in the ardent campaign that the opposition had conducted until then against the Great Prince!”<sup>701</sup>

---

<sup>697</sup> Orlando Figes, *Revolutionary Russia, 1891-1991*, London: Pelican, 2014, p. 79.

<sup>698</sup> Figes, *Revolutionary Russia*, p. 80.

<sup>699</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, pp. 429-30. He heard a voice standing in front of an icon of Christ.

<sup>700</sup> I.P. Yakoby, *Imperator Nikolaj II i Revoliutsia* (Emperor Nicholas II and the Revolution), Moscow, 2010, p. 83.

<sup>701</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, pp. 86-87.

In fact, taking advantage of the Tsar's absence at Stavka, the liberals in the Duma now formed a "progressive bloc" consisting of most of the Duma and several members of the State Council, which claimed that in order to bring the war to a successful conclusion, the authorities had to be brought into line with the demands of "society". By "society" they meant the social organizations controlled by them that had come into existence during the war – the Zemstvo Union, the Union of Cities and the Military-Industrial Committee.

On August 16 a session of the Council of Ministers under the presidency of the Tsar took place in Tsarskoye Selo, at which the Tsar, under pressure, made it clear he was not changing his mind...

The debate now heated up. Goremykin and Justice Minister A.S. Khvostov spoke against the demands of the Moscow conference. But A.D. Samarin, the over-procurator of the Holy Synod, who believed (falsely) that the Tsar's decision had been dictated by Rasputin, insisted on the government's capitulation. The leftist ministers – joined now by foreign minister Sazonov – wanted to force the Tsar to yield under the threat of the collective resignation of all the ministers. Goremykin wisely and courageously replied that this was in effect an ultimatum to the Tsar, and that the demand that Nikolasha should become Supreme Commander was simply the means to carry out a purely political intrigue against the Tsar.

Goremykin showed that he was a true monarchist, and what the attitude of all the ministers should have been by declaring: "In my conscience his Majesty the Tsar is the Anointed of God, the bearer of supreme power. He personifies Russia. He is 47 years old. It is not since yesterday that he has reigned and disposed of the destinies of the Russian people. When the will of such a person is defined and the path of action determined, his subjects must obey, whatever the consequences. Beyond that, it is the will of God. That is what I think and I will die with that conviction. I am a man of the old school, for me the command of his Majesty is law. When there is a catastrophe on the front, his Majesty considers it the sacred duty of the Russian Tsar to be with the army and either conquer with them or die. You will not by any arguments dissuade his Majesty from the step he has decided on. No intrigue or any influence has played any role in this decision. It remains for us only to bow before the will of our Tsar and help him..."

Eventually eight ministers sent a collective letter to the Tsar, demanding the recall of Nikolasha as commander-in-chief, pointing to their disagreement with Goremykin. The Bloc also put forward several political demands: a broad political amnesty and the return of all political exiles; Polish autonomy; reconciliation with Finland; the removal of repressive measures against the Ukrainians and the removal of restrictions on the Jews; equal rights for the peasants; the reform of zemstvo and city self-administration, etc.

All these were questions that the Tsar by no means despised. He considered them "important, state matters, but not vital for the present moment". He wanted all attention to be concentrated for the moment on winning the war.<sup>702</sup> A very reasonable demand - which the Duma deputies very unreasonably despised.

The Bloc's letter to the Tsar ended with the words: "Being in such conditions, we are losing faith and the possibility of serving you and the Homeland with the consciousness of being of use."

Such defeatism bordering on treason tried even the Tsar's renowned patience to the limit. On September 16 he summoned the Council of Ministers to himself at Stavka, tore up their letter in front of their eyes, and said: "This is child's play. I do not accept your resignations, and I have faith in Ivan Longinovich [Goremykin]." For a supposedly weak-willed man, this was a strong performance by the Tsar...

Already he had ordered the Prime Minister to suspend the Duma (on September 3 - it did not reconvene until February, 1916). Now he sacked the ministers who supported the Bloc. As he wrote to his wife on September 22: "The behaviour of some of the ministers continues to amaze me! After all that I told them... I thought that they understood me and the fact that I was seriously explaining what I thought. What matter? - so much the worse for them! They were afraid to close the Duma - it was done! I came away here and replaced N, in spite of their advice; the people accepted this move as a natural thing and understood it as we did. The proof - numbers of telegrams which I receive from all sides, with the most touching expressions. All this shows me clearly one thing: that the ministers, always living in town, know terribly little of what is happening in the country as a whole. Here I can judge correctly the real mood among the various classes of the people: everything must be done to bring the war to a victorious ending, and no doubts are expressed on that score. I was told this officially by all the deputations which I received some days ago, and so it is all over Russia. Petrograd and Moscow constitute the only exceptions - two minute points on the map of the fatherland."<sup>703</sup>

Paradoxically, in view of the liberals' democratic propaganda, in which they thought they were imitating Europe, no other parliament in Europe during the war made such demands on their governments. For all major decisions were taken in small war cabinets (this was the case in Britain, for example, when Lloyd George came to power in December, 1916). The tendency was towards a kind of despotism bypassing the parliamentary status. Only in Autocratic Russia did the parliamentarians demand more and more of a voice.<sup>704</sup>

---

<sup>702</sup> Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II*, Belgrade, 1939, vol. II, p. 177.

<sup>703</sup> Tsar Nicholas, in Lieven, *op. cit.*, p. 215.

<sup>704</sup> Viktor Aksiuchits, "Pervaia Mirovaia - neizbeznaia ili ne nuzhnaia?" (chast' 2), *Rodina*, August 5, 2013.

Thus the Progressive Bloc led by Guchkov now demanded “a ministry of trust” and “a government endowed with the country’s trust”. Essentially, it was an attempt to seize power from the autocrat...

Nor was it just words... In September, 1915, writes G.M. Katkov, “after the failure of its negotiations with the government, the liberals and radicals felt a sharp need for a conspiratorial organization whose members would penetrate all spheres of Russian life. And it seems we must ascribe to the beginning of September a project for a certain ‘Committee of National Salvation’. The ‘Committee of National Salvation’ signed a very remarkable document that was found, it is asserted, among the papers of Guchkov (*Krasnij Arkhiv*, XXVI). It is headed ‘Disposition No. 1’ and dated 8 September 1915.

“In this document it is asserted that two wars were being waged in Russia: one against the Germans, and the other, no less important, against ‘the inner enemy’. Victory over the Germans could not be achieved without a prior victory over the inner enemy (reactionary forces supported by the autocracy). Those who were conscious of the impossibility of any kind of compromise with the government were called to form a ‘headquarters’ in the form of ten people appointed in recognition of their ‘conscientiousness and firmness of will and faith that the struggle for the rights of the people must be waged in accordance with the rules of military centralization and discipline.’ The methods of the struggle for the rights of the people had to be peaceful, but firm and skillful. Strikes harmful for the war and for the interests of the populace and state were inadmissible. People who did not submit to the directives of the Committee of ten would be ‘boycotted’, that is, subjected to ostracism and driven out of public life. Three people were put forward as the core of the headquarters for the struggle with ‘the inner enemy’ – Prince Lvov, A.I. Guchkov, A.F. Kerensky. Guchkov was characterized in this document as the person uniting in himself the confidence of the army and Moscow – ‘from now not only the heart, but also the central will of Russia’.”<sup>705</sup>

This was clearly the liberal forerunner of Lenin’s “Democratic [in fact, Despotism] Centralism”... The revolution had begun... And not only from the “moderate”, liberal left. In August, 1915, while the liberal ministers were trying to impose their will on the Tsar, thirty-three delegates from various left socialist parties met in Zimmerwald in Switzerland in an attempt to impose their will on the whole nation. By this time the patriotic surge that had made Lenin so isolated the year before had receded and his anti-patriotic defeatism was becoming popular again. The conference manifesto declared: “*The war which has produced this chaos is the outcome of imperialism, of the attempt on the part of the capitalist classes of each nation, to foster their greed for profit by the exploitation of human labor and of the natural treasures of the entire globe.*”<sup>706</sup>

---

<sup>705</sup> Katkov, *Febral'skaia Revoliutsia* (The February Revolution), Paris: YMCA Press, 1967, 1984, pp. 175-176.

<sup>706</sup> <https://www.marxists.org/history/international/social-democracy/zimmerwald/manifesto-1915.htm>.

And so Lenin's call for immediate peace and the turning of the imperialist war into a civil one was passed, strengthening revolutionary sentiment inside Russia.

\*

"In the autumn," writes Robert Massie, "the Tsar brought his son, the eleven-year-old Tsarevich, to live with him at Army Headquarters. It was a startling move, not simply because of the boy's age but also because of his haemophilia. Yet, Nicholas did not make his decision impetuously. His reasons, laboriously weighed for months in advance, were both sentimental and shrewd.

"The Russian army, battered and retreating after a summer of terrible losses, badly needed a lift in morale. Nicholas himself made constant appearances, and his presence, embodying the cause of Holy Russia, raised tremendous enthusiasm among the men who saw him. It was his hope that the appearance of the Heir at his side, symbolizing the future, would further bolster their drooping spirits. It was a reasonable hope, and, in fact, wherever Alexis appeared he became a center of great excitement..."<sup>707</sup>

The Tsar had always been devoted to the army, and when he heard of the difficulties in getting supplies to the front, he said: "I can't get to sleep at all at night when I think that the army could be starving."<sup>708</sup>

The strain was such that the Tsar himself declined in health, becoming emaciated. "Baroness Sophie Bukshoeveden wondered whether he had problems with his kidneys. When she put the question to the [future martyr] Dr. Evgeni Botkin, he confided: 'His heart isn't in order. I'm giving His Majesty iodine, but that's between you and me.'"<sup>709</sup>

Nevertheless, under the Tsar's command, the fortunes of the Russian armies revived, and in the autumn of 1915 the Great Retreat was halted.

As Hindenburg, the German commander, wrote: "For our GHQ the end of 1915 was no occasion for the triumphal fanfare we had anticipated. The final outcome of the year's fighting was disappointing. The Russian bear had escaped from the net in which we had hoped to entrap him, bleeding profusely, but far from mortally wounded, and had slipped away after dealing us the most terrible blows."<sup>710</sup>

---

<sup>707</sup> Massie, *Nicholas and Alexandra*, London: Indigo, 2000, p. 282.

<sup>708</sup> Robert Service, *The Last of the Tsars*, London: Pan, 2015, p. 13.

<sup>709</sup> Service, *op. cit.*, p. 13.

<sup>710</sup> Hindenburg, in Goulévitch, *op. cit.*, p. 189.

The recovery continued into 1916. In May, the Tsar's armies under Brusilov launched a successful offensive against the Austrians in Galicia. The Austrians lost 600,000 killed and 400,000 captured, a shattering defeat which Hindenburg, who was hastily called to take direct command of the Habsburg forces, called "the worst crisis the eastern front has known". In his *Memoirs* Hindenburg wrote that "the only solution to relieve a desperate state of affairs" was "a policy of defence on all fronts, in the absence of some unforeseen and untoward event"<sup>711</sup> – like a revolution... This triumph "resulted not just from excellent leadership and planning, but they also testified to the improvement in Russia's munitions supply by 1916."<sup>712</sup>

It would be churlish to deny some of the credit for this rapid turn-around to the Tsar, the commander-in-chief of the Russian armies – but that is just what his enemies did...

"The consequences of this victorious operation," writes Goulévitch, "were at once manifest on the other theatres of war. To relieve the Austrians in Galicia the German High Command took over the direction of both armies and placed them under the sole control of Hindenburg. The [Austrian] offensive in Lombardy was at once abandoned and seven Austrian divisions withdrawn to face the Russians. In addition, eighteen German divisions were brought from the West, where the French and British were strongly attacking on the Somme. Further reinforcements of four divisions were drafted from the interior as well as three divisions from Salonica and two Turkish divisions, ill as the latter could be spared. Lastly, Romania threw in her lot with the Allies..."<sup>713</sup>

"The news of Romania's entry into the war, writes Adam Tooze, "'fell like a bomb. William II completely lost his head, pronounced the war finally lost and believed we must now ask for peace.' The Habsburg ambassador in Bucharest, Count Ottokar Czernin, predicted 'with mathematical certainty the complete defeat of the Central Powers and their allies if the war were continued any longer.'"<sup>714</sup>

Unfortunately, the ill-equipped and ill-led Romanian forces did not provide the fillip to the Allied cause that many had expected. After advancing into Transylvania (where there were many ethnic Romanians), the Romanians were thrust back in the west by German and Austrian forces under Falkenhayn and in the south by Bulgarian and Ottoman forces under von Mackensen. The government and the shattered remnants of the army reassembled in Moldavia, while the Germans captured Bucharest on December 6 and helped themselves to the oil and grain of the southern plains.

---

<sup>711</sup> Hindenburg, in Goulévitch, *op. cit.*, p. 194.

<sup>712</sup> Jeffery, 1916, p. 359.

<sup>713</sup> Goulévitch, *op. cit.*, pp. 192-193.

<sup>714</sup> Tooze, *The Deluge: The Great War and the Remaking of Global Order*, London: Penguin, 2015, p. 47.



Nevertheless, writes Sir Winston Churchill, "Few episodes of the Great War are more impressive than the resuscitation, re-equipment and renewed giant effort of Russia in 1916. It was the last glorious exertion of the Czar and the Russian people for victory before both were to sink into the abyss of ruin and horror. By the summer of 1916 Russia, which eighteen months before had been almost disarmed, which during 1915 had sustained an unbroken series of frightful defeats, had actually managed, by her own efforts and the resources of her allies, to place in the field - organized, armed and equipped - sixty Army Corps in place of the thirty-five with which she had begun the war. The Trans-Siberian railway had been doubled over a distance of 6,000 kilometres, as far east as Lake Baikal. A new railway 1,400 kilometres long, built through the depth of winter at the cost of unnumbered lives, linked Petrograd with the perennially ice-free waters of the Murman coast. And by both these channels munitions from the rising factories of Britain, France and Japan, or procured by British credit from the United States, were pouring into Russia in broadening streams. The domestic production of every form of war material had simultaneously been multiplied many fold.

"The mighty limbs of the giant were armed, the conceptions of his brain were clear, his heart was still true, but the nerves which could transform resolve and design into action were but partially developed or non-existent [he is referring to the enemy within, the Duma and the anti-monarchists]. This defect, irremediable at the time, fatal in its results, in no way detracts from the merit or the marvel of the Russian achievement, which will forever stand as the supreme monument and memorial of the Empire founded by Peter the Great."715

By the autumn of 1916 the Russian armies were clearly increasing in strength. Thus the British military attaché said that Russia's prospects were better in the winter of 1916-17 than a year before. This estimate was shared by Grand Duke Sergius Mikhailovich, who was at Stavka as Inspector-General of Artillery. As he said to his brother, Grand Duke Alexander: "Go back to your work and pray that the revolution will not break out this very year. The Army is in perfect condition; artillery, supplies, engineering, troops - everything is ready for a decisive offensive in the spring of 1917. This time we will defeat the Germans and Austrians; on condition, of course, that the rear will not deprive us of our freedom of action. The Germans can save themselves only if they manage to provoke revolution from behind..."716

F. Vinberg, a regimental colonel in Riga, wrote: "Already at the end of 1916 and the beginning of 1917 many knew that, insofar as it is possible to calculate the future, our victories in the spring and summer of 1917 were guaranteed. All the deficiencies in the material and technical sphere, which had told so strongly in 1914 and 1915, had been corrected. All our armies had every kind of

---

715 Churchill, *The World Crisis, 1916-1918*, vol. 1, pp. 102-103, London, 1929.

716 Grand Duke Sergei, in Lyubov Millar, *Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Redding, Ca.: Nikodemos Publication Society, 1993, p. 182.

provisions in abundance. While in the German armies the insufficiency in everything was felt more strongly every day..."<sup>717</sup>

"By 1916," writes David Stevenson, "Russia, exceptionally among the belligerents, was experiencing a regular boom, with rising growth and a bullish stock exchange: coal output was up 30 per cent on 1914, chemicals output doubled, and machinery output trebled. Armaments rode the crest of the wave: new rifle production rose from 132,844 in 1914 to 733,017 in 1915, and 1,301,433 in 1916; 76mm field guns from 354 to 1,349 to 3721 in these years; 122mm heavy guns from 78 to 361 to 637; and shell production (of all types) from 104,900 to 9,567,888 to 30,974,678. During the war Russia produced 20,000 field guns, against 5,625 imported; and by 1917 it was manufacturing all its howitzers and three-quarters of its heavy artillery. Not only was the shell shortage a thing of the past, but by spring 1917 Russia was acquiring an unprecedented superiority in men and *materiel*."<sup>718</sup>

"The price of this Herculean effort, however, was dislocation of the civilian economy and a crisis in urban food supply. The very achievement that moved the balance in the Allies' favour by summer 1916 contained the seeds of later catastrophe."<sup>719</sup>

Fr. Lev Lebedev cites figures showing that military production equalled production for the non-military economy in 1916, and exceeded it in 1917, presaging complete collapse in 1918. So if Russia were to win, she had to do it *now*, while the military supply situation was still good and the tsar still ruled...<sup>720</sup> The future of Russia and Orthodoxy depended on the tsar remaining in power – something that, tragically, the Allies understood less well than the Germans...

---

<sup>717</sup> Vinberg, *Krestnij Put'* (The Way of the Cross), Munich, 1920, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 149.

<sup>718</sup> Stevenson, *1914-1918: The History of the First World War*, London: Penguin, 2005, p. 237.

<sup>719</sup> Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 237.

<sup>720</sup> Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 465.

## 47. THE PLOTTERS GET TO WORK

As we have seen, a significant proportion of the Duma deputies were not in fact interested in carrying on the war to final victory under their Sovereign, but were engaged in plotting to overthrow him.

Some of the plotters were actually considering regicide. Thus Shtormakh writes: "'In 1915,' recounts the Mason A.F. Kerensky in his memoirs, 'speaking at a secret meeting of representatives of the liberal and moderate conservative majority in the Duma and the State Council, which was discussing the Tsar's politics, V.A. Maklakov, who was to the highest degree a conservative liberal, said that it was possible to avert catastrophe and save Russia only by repeating the events of March 11, 1801 (the assassination of Paul I).' Kerensky reasons that the difference in views between him and Maklakov came down only to timing, for Kerensky himself had come to conclude that killing the Tsar was 'a necessity' ten years earlier. 'And besides,' continues Kerensky, 'Maklakov and those who thought like him would have wanted that others do it. But I suggested that, in accepting the idea, one should assume the whole responsibility for it, and go on to execute it personally'. Kerensky continued to call for the murder of the Tsar. In his speech at the session of the State Duma in February, 1917 he called for the 'physical removal of the Tsar,' explaining that they should do to the Tsar 'what Brutus did in the time of Ancient Rome'."721

According to Guchkov, they worked out several variants of the seizure of power. One involved seizing the Tsar in Tsarskoye Selo or Peterhof. Another involved doing the same at Headquarters. This latter plan would have had to involve some generals who were members of the military lodge, such as Alexeyev or Ruzsky. However, this might lead to a schism in the army, which would undermine its capability for war. So it was decided not to initiate the generals into the plot - although, as we shall see, they played a very important role quite independently of Guchkov's band, prevented loyal military units from coming to the aid of the Tsar, and themselves demanded his abdication.<sup>722</sup>

A third plan, worked out by another Mason, Prince D.L. Vyazemsky, envisaged a military unit taking control of the Tsar's train between Military Headquarters and Tsarskoye Selo and forcing him to abdicate in favour of the Tsarevich. This was the plan eventually adopted.

---

721 <http://rushistory.3dn.ru/forum/4-86-1>.

722 Sedova, after arguing that the generals were never initiated into Guchkov's plot, goes on: "Finally, nevertheless, Guchkov revealed his plan to Ruzsky. But this took place already after the coup. On learning of the plot, Ruzsky cried out: 'Ach, Alexander Ivanovich, if you had told me about this earlier, I would have joined you.' But Guchkov said: 'My dear, if I had revealed the plan, you would have pressed a button, and an adjutant would have come and you would have said: Arrest him'." ("Ne Tsar', a Ego Poddanie Otvetsvenny za Fevral'skij Perevorot 1917 Goda" (Not the Tsar, but his Subjects were Responsible for the Coup of 1917), *Nasha Strana*, N 2864, March 14, 2009, p. 4)

Yet another plan was to seize the Tsar (on March 1) and exile him abroad. Guchkov claims that the agreement of some foreign governments to this was obtained.

The Germans got wind of these plans, and not long before February, 1917 the Bulgarian Ambassador tried to warn the Tsar about them. The Germans, according to one version of events, were looking to save the Tsar in order to establish a separate peace with him. But the Tsar, in accordance with his promise to the Allies, rejected this out of hand.

Yet another plan was worked out by Prince G.E. Lvov. He suggested forcing the Tsar to abdicate and putting Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich on the throne in his place, with Guchkov and Lvov as the powers behind the throne. The Mason A.I. Khatisov, a friend of the Grand Duke, spoke with him and his wife about this, and they were sympathetic to the idea. Sedova claims that Lvov actually offered the throne to Nikolasha...<sup>723</sup>

At a meeting between members of the Duma and some generals in the study of Rodzyanko in February, 1917 another plot to force the Tsar to abdicate was formed. The leading roles in this were to be played by Generals Krymov and Ruzsky and Colonel Rodzyanko, the Duma leader's son.

Finally, the so-called naval plot was formed, as Shulgin recounts, according to which the Tsaritsa (and perhaps also the Tsar) was to be invited onto a warship and taken to England.<sup>724</sup>

Besides the formal conspirators, there were many others who helped them by trying to undermine the resolve of the Tsar. Thus "before the February *coup*," writes Yana Sedova, "in the Russian empire there were more and more attempts on the part of individual people to 'open the eyes of his Majesty' to the internal political situation.

"This 'search for truth' assumed a particularly massive character in November, 1916, beginning on November 1, when Great Prince Nicholas Mikhailovich arrived at Stavka to have a heart-to-heart conversation with his Majesty...

"Very many considered it their duty to 'open the eyes of his Majesty': Grand Dukes Nicholas and Alexander Mikhailovich, Nicholas Nikolayevich and Paul Alexandrovich, the ministers Ignatiev and Pokrovsky, Generals Alexeyev and N.I. Ivanov, the ambassadors of allied governments Buchanan and Paléologue, the president of the Duma M. Rodzyanko, Protopresbyter of the army and navy G. Shavel'sky, the court commandant V.N. Voej'kov, the chief representative of the Red Cross P.M. Kaufmann-Turkestansky, the official A.A. Klopov, the dentist S.S. Kostritsky...

---

<sup>723</sup> Sedova, *op. cit.*

<sup>724</sup> <http://rushistory.3dn.ru/forum/4-86-1>.

“This is far from a complete list. It includes only conversations, but many addressed his Majesty in letters or tried to influence the Empress (Great Prince Alexander Mikhailovich both spoke with his Majesty and sent him a very long letter and spoke with the Empress). ‘It seemed,’ wrote Rodzyanko later, ‘that the whole of Russia was beseeching his Majesty about one and the same thing, and it was impossible not to understand and pay heed to the pleas of a land worn out by suffering’.

“But what did ‘the whole of Russia’ ask about? As a rule, about two things: the removal of ‘dark powers’ and the bestowing of ‘a ministry of confidence’. The degree to which the boundaries between these two groups was blurred is evident from the fact that the Duma deputy Protopopov at first considered himself a candidate for the ‘responsible ministry’, but when his Majesty truly appointed him a minister, the name of Protopopov immediately appeared in the ranks of the ‘dark powers’. By the ‘dark powers’ was usually understood Rasputin and his supposed protégés. Few began to think at that time that ‘the Rasputin legend’ was invented, and not invented in vain.

“It was less evident what the ‘responsible ministry’ was. For many this term had a purely practical meaning and signified the removal from the government of certain ministers who were not pleasing to the Duma and the appointment in their place of Milyukov, Rodzyanko and other members of the Duma.

“But the closer it came to the February coup, the more demands there were in favour of a really responsible ministry, that is, a government which would be formed by the Duma and would only formally be confirmed by his Majesty. That a responsible ministry was no longer a real monarchy, but the end of the Autocracy, was not understood by everyone. Nobody at that time listened to the words of Scheglovitov: ‘A monarchist who goes with a demand for a ministry of public confidence is not a monarchist’.

“As for the idea of appointed people with no administrative experience, but of the Duma, to the government in conditions of war, this was evidently thought precisely by those people. All these arguments about ‘dark forces’ and ‘a ministry of confidence’ first arose in the Duma and were proclaimed from its tribune. Evidently the beginning of the mass movements towards his Majesty in November, 1916 were linked with the opening of a Duma session at precisely that time. These conversations were hardly time to coincide with the opening of the Duma: rather, they were elicited by the Duma speeches, which were distributed at the time not only on the pages of newspapers, but also in the form of leaflets. ‘We,’ wrote Shulgin later, ‘ourselves went mad and made the whole country mad with the myth about certain geniuses, ‘endowed with public confidence’, when in fact there were none such...’

“In general, all these conversations were quite similar and usually irrelevant. Nevertheless, his Majesty always listened attentively to what was

expressed in them, although by no means all his interlocutors were easy to listen to.

“Some of them, like many of the Great Princes and Rodzyanko, strove to impose their point of view and change his political course, demanding a ministry endowed with confidence or even a responsible ministry. His Majesty listened to them in silence and thanked them for their ‘advice’.

“Others, like General Alexeyev or S.S. Kostritsky, were under the powerful impression (not to say influence) of the Duma speeches and political agitation, which the truly dark forces who had already thought up the February coup were conducting at the time. Those who gave regular reports to his Majesty and whom he trusted were subjected to particularly strong pressure. If they began a heart-to-heart conversation, his Majesty patiently explained to them in what he did not agree with them and why.

“There existed a third category which, like P.M. Kaufmann, got through to his Majesty, even though they did not have a report to give, so as to tell him ‘the whole bitter truth’. They did not clearly know what they wanted, and simply said ‘everything that had built up in their souls’. Usually they began their speeches with the question: could they speak to him openly (as if his Majesty would say no to such a question!), and then spoke on the same two subjects, about the ‘dark powers’ and the government, insofar as, by the end of 1916, the same things, generally speaking, had built up in all their souls. The speech of such a ‘truth-seeker’ usually ended in such a sad way (Kaufmann just said: ‘Allow me: I’ll go and kill Grishka!’) that his Majesty had to calm them down and assure them that ‘everything will work out’.

“One cannot say that his Majesty did not listen to his interlocutors. Some ministers had to leave their posts precisely because of the conversations. For example, on November 9, 1916 his Majesty wrote to the Empress that he was sacking [Prime Minister] Shturmer since nobody trusted that minister: ‘Every day I hear more and more about him. We have to take account of that.’ And on the same day he wrote in his diary: ‘My head is tired from all these conversations’.

“From the beginning everyone noticed his tiredness, and his interlocutors began more often to foretell revolution to him. Earlier he could say to the visitor: ‘But you’ve gone out of your mind, this is all in your dreams. And when did you dream it? Almost on the very eve of our victory?! And what are you frightened of? The rumours of corrupt Petersburg and the babblers in the Duma, who value, not Russia, but their own interests?’ (from the memoirs of Mamantov). And then the conversation came to an end. But now he had to reply to the most senseless attacks. And he replied. To the rumours of betrayal in the entourage of the Empress: ‘What, in your opinion I’m a traitor?’ To the diagnosis made by the Duma about [Interior Minister] Protopopov: ‘When did he begin to go mad? When I appointed him a minister?’ To the demand ‘to

deserve the confidence of the people': 'But is it not that my people has to deserve my confidence?' However, they did not listen to him..."<sup>725</sup>

Prince N.D. Zhevakhov, deputy Procurator of the Holy Synod, wrote: "There was nobody at Headquarters capable of understanding his Majesty's profound nature. If not everybody, then a significant majority explained his Majesty's religiosity as 'mysticism', and the people who supported his faith and feelings were out of favour... His Majesty was not only alone and had no spiritual support, but was also in danger, for he was surrounded by people of other convictions and feelings, cunning and insincere people. On the smooth and polished background of subordination, where everyone, it would seem, trembled at the name of the Tsar, and everyone bowed down and crawled in a servile manner, there was going on behind the scenes a furious battle, the more terrible in that it was taking place at the front's forward positions... There was the struggle with the Germans, here was a struggle between the 'old' and the 'new', between the age-old traditions of generations created by religion, - and the new tendencies, born from the theory of socialism; between tears and prayers, and that which found such a vivid expression in the words of Protopresbyter [George] Shavelsky spoken during a cross procession: This is no time to be occupied with trivialities.» I could tangibly feel the whole horror of the situation, the more so in that the war itself seemed to me to be unnecessary and to be, in itself, the victory of the 'new', to which all those who had incited it were striving without restraint, and behind whom were lightmindedly going all those who had renounced the old."

---

<sup>725</sup> Sedova, "Razgovory po dusham' Fevral'skikh Impotentov" ('Heart-to-heart Conversation of the February Impotents'), *Nasha Strana* (Our Country), N 2834, December 29, 2007, p. 7.

## 48. THE RASPUTIN FACTOR

In 1914, Archbishop Andrei of Ufa, the future hieromartyr, gave an important analysis in the journal *Den'* (Day) of who, or what, would be the cause of the catastrophe. He rejected a focus on external enemies, like the Jews or the Germans, or on particular internal leaders or classes, such as the Tsar or the nobility. He "insisted that the true danger was domestic and that it was coming from the most primitive elements of the Russian narod. Russia had entered a new era, he wrote, that of 'false prophets and prophecies', an era characterized by the decay of the narod itself, even if the country's leaders, who had fallen under the 'hypnosis' of these dangerous figures, had so far failed to recognize the decay. The blind were leading the blind, he warned, straight off 'a precipice'. The latest of such false prophets Andrei called 'The Traitor'. He never gave his name, but then there was no need: everyone knew who he was. Andrei wrote he had known the man a long time (since Rasputin's arrival in Kazan, in fact). He was a 'criminal', a wolf in sheep's clothing, and 'big-time charlatan'. This 'Mister Traitor' offered him a high position in the world if he would just answer correctly one simple question: 'Do you believe in me?' Andrei refused to answer. Russia was facing a 'spiritual catastrophe'. No one would escape unpunished. The coming 'dark epoch' would be marked in the pages of history, and their only hope was to pray to God it 'would not last long'."<sup>726</sup>

It was not so much that Rasputin alone would cause the catastrophe: he was rather, as a man of the people, the symbol of the people's true state - possessed, like society in Dostoyevsky's *The Devils*. It was the spiritual degradation of the people as a whole that would elicit God's wrath. Nevertheless, the man himself, on his own and shorn of any symbolic meaning, was an important factor...

\*

As of 1914, writes Douglas Smith, "Nicholas had rarely ever taken Rasputin's advice on important matters and when he did, it was restricted to religious affairs. It was not until a year later after Nicholas had assumed supreme command of the armed forces in 1915 and was away at headquarters (Stavka) that he showed any willingness, and then reluctantly and rarely to follow Rasputin's advice."<sup>727</sup> Montefiore agrees, speaking of "the great myth of Alexandra's and Rasputin's influence" on the Tsar during the great crisis of July, 1914.<sup>728</sup>

It is indeed a myth. However, there is no doubt that during the war itself, Rasputin became more influential and dangerous than before, showering the Tsar with all kinds of demands from the relatively trivial to major questions of military strategy, and senior ministerial and hierarchical appointments. Most

---

<sup>726</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, pp. 324-325.

<sup>727</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 364.

<sup>728</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 571.



of these demands were mediated through the Tsarina, who believed in his wisdom at all times and was annoyed by the Tsar's refusal to carry out all of them. Her main concern was that the Interior Ministry and police should protect Rasputin from his ever-growing numbers of enemies... But so corrupt was even the Interior Ministry that in the spring of 1916, in an unheard-of scandal, the Interior Minister A.N. Khvostov, was discovered to have attempted to *murder* the man he was supposed to protect – Rasputin! Even the Tsaritsa was forced to admit that this appointment, pushed on an unwilling Tsar by the Tsaritsa and Rasputin, had been disastrous!<sup>729</sup>

Voeikov points out that from 1914 Rasputin and the Tsaritsa's and Rasputin's friend Vyubova "began to take a greater and greater interest in questions of internal politics". The Tsaritsa and Rasputin showered the Tsar with advice. But at the same time, argues Voeikov, the number of appointments actually made by them were few...<sup>730</sup> Bakhanov calculates that there were no more than eleven... But these few included Prime Ministers, Interior Ministers and church metropolitans! It is hardly surprising, in those circumstances, that Rasputin should have been seen around the country as the real ruler of Russia while the reputation of the Royal Couple suffered because of their refusal to remove him...

Perhaps the most disastrous appointment of all, since it undermined the Tsar's long-standing and deeply felt desire to liberate the Church from the captivity imposed on it by Peter the Great and his *Spiritual Regulation* of 1721, came after the death of Metropolitan Flavian of Kiev in the autumn of 1915. The man the Tsar chose to fill the vacant post was Metropolitan Vladimir, the first hierarch of the Church a hero of the 1905 revolution and future first bishop-martyr of the Russian revolution. At the same time, he appointed a disreputable Rasputinite called Pitirim to fill the now-vacant see of the capital, Petrograd. The over-procurator Volzhin "had tried to stop Nicholas by presenting him with a report highlighting Pitirim's unacceptable behavior [he was a homosexual], but the tsar ignored it. He even overrode the established authority of the Synod to approve such decisions. Nicholas chose to thumb his nose at tradition, and so provoked the anger of the very men he relied on to uphold the sanctity of his reign. The anger was such that there was talk among the clergy in Petrograd and Moscow of breaking from the Synod's authority altogether and creating what they called a 'free Orthodox church'. Among the supporters of the idea was [the former, sacked over-procurator] Samarin, who saw it as a tragic but necessary move...

"The actions of Pitirim sent most churchmen into paroxysms of rage. He appointed a man by the name of Filaret father superior of the Alexander Nevsky Lavra in Petrograd. Filaret lived openly with his mistress and started demanding bribes to use the monastery. Pitirim threw wild parties at the monastery, some of which Rasputin attended; it was said Rasputin had women

---

<sup>729</sup> Bakhanov, *Imperator Nikolaj II*, Moscow, 1998, p. 371.

<sup>730</sup> Voeikov, *op. cit.*, pp. 50, 143.

smuggled in through the side gates for the priests' pleasure. Even more shocking to Petrograders was Pitirim's preference for in such matters. He came to the capital with a handsome young priest name Antony Guriysky, who was, like Pitirim, a homosexual, and he kept other homosexual men around him, such as Melkhizedek (Mikhail Paevsky), rector of the Tiflis Seminary, and the future bishop of Kronstadt, and Ivan Osipenko, Pitirim's lover and personal secretary. There was continuing talk of financial improprieties. Rumor had it that Piirim skimmed money of the sale of burial plots to line his pockets and pay back Rasputin for his support. The truth of such talk is difficult to ascertain."<sup>731</sup>

Difficult to verify such stories may well have been, like so much else in the Rasputin saga. However, one thing is indisputable: the Tsar was impinging on the canonical rights of the Orthodox Church in an Orthodox state – a sin that Patriarch Nikon back in the seventeenth century had declared was in essence an antichristian act. It raised the clear threat that He Who said: "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay" was about to come hard down not only on the enemies of the Romanov dynasty, like Guchkov and the Masons, but also on its supposed friends, like Rasputin, but even on the Royal Couple that had given him so much leeway to undermine the foundations of the kingdom and the Church...

\*

There was "never any military reason," writes Dominic Lieven, "for Russia to seek a separate peace between August 1914 and March 1917. Too much attention is usually paid to the defeats of Tannenberg in 1914 and Gorlice-Tarnow in 1915. Russia's military effort in the First World War amounted to much more than this. If on the whole the Russian army proved inferior to the German forces, that was usually true of the French and British as well. Moreover, during the Brusilov offensive in 1916 Russian forces had shown themselves quite capable of routing large German units. Russian armies usually showed themselves superior to Austrian forces of comparable size, and their performance against the Ottomans in 1914-16 was very much superior to that of British forces operating in Gallipoli, Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Russian defence industry performed miracles in 1916 and if there were legitimate doubts as to whether this level of production could be fully sustained in 1917, the same was true of the war economies of a number of other belligerents. It is true that Rumania's defeat necessitated a major redeployment of troops and supplies to the southern front in the weeks before the revolution and that this, together with a particularly severe winter, played havoc with railway movements on the home front. Nevertheless, in military terms there was absolutely no reason to believe that Russia had lost the war in February 1917.

"Indeed, when one raised one's eyes from the eastern front and looked at the Allies' overall position, the probability of Russian victory was very great,

---

<sup>731</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, pp. 516-517.

so long as the home front could hold. Although the British empire was potentially the most powerful of the Allied states, in 1914-16 France and Russia had carried the overwhelming burden of the war on land. Not until July 1916 on the Somme were British forces committed en masse against the Germans, and even then the British armies, though courageous to a fault, lacked proper training and were commanded by amateur officers and generals who lacked any experience of controlling masses of men. Even so, in the summer of 1916 the combined impact of the Somme, Verdun and the Brusilov offensive had brought the Central Powers within sight of collapse. A similar but better coordinated effort, with British power now peaking, held out excellent prospects for 1917. Still more to the point, by February 1917 the German campaign of unrestricted submarine warfare made American involvement in the war in the immediate future a near certainty: the Allied superiority in resources would thereby become overwhelming.

“Once stalemate set in on the battlefield in 1914, the First World War became as much as anything a contest over which belligerent’s home front would collapse first. This fate befell Russia in large part because even its upper and middle classes, let alone organized labour, were more hostile to the existing regime and less integrated into the legal political order than was the case even in Italy, let alone in France, Germany or Britain in 1914. In addition, opposition to the regime was less divided along ethnic lines than was the case in Austria-Hungary, and Russia was more geographically isolated from military and economic assistance from its allies than was the case with any of the other major belligerents. Nevertheless, unrest on the domestic front was by no means confined to Russia. The Italian home front seemed on the verge of collapse after the defeat of Caporetto in 1917 and the French army suffered major mutinies that year. In the United Kingdom the attempt to impose conscription in Ireland made that country ungovernable and led quickly to civil war. In both Germany and Austria revolution at home played a vital role in 1918, though in contrast to Russia it is true that revolution followed decisive military defeats and was set off in part by the correct sense that the war was unwinnable.

“The winter of 1916-17 was decisive not just for the outcome of the First World War but also for the history of twentieth-century Europe. Events on the domestic and military fronts were closely connected. In the winter of 1915-16 in both Germany and Austria pressure on civilian food consumption had been very severe. The winter of 1916-17 proved worse. The conviction of the German military leadership that the Central Powers’ home fronts could not sustain too much further pressure on this scale was an important factor in their decision to launch unrestricted submarine warfare in the winter of 1916-17, thereby (so they hoped) driving Britain out of the war and breaking the Allied blockade. By this supreme piece of miscalculation and folly the German leadership

brought the United States into the war at precisely the moment when the overthrow of the imperial regime was preparing Russia to leave it..." 732

Russia was therefore not defeated militarily from without, but by revolution from within, a revolution prepared by Russian and International Masonry and reinforced by the general loss of respect for, and trust in, the Tsar and his government caused especially by his failure to get rid of the influence of Rasputin on the government.

\*

Another cause – although not a decisive cause – of Russia's defeat was the massive losses sustained by Russia during the war. Russia's warrior class, the pre-revolutionary aristocracy that constituted most of her officers, was almost completely wiped out in the first two years.<sup>733</sup> And in the first year almost all the old military cadres, from privates to colonels, – that is, the best and the most loyal to the Tsar – were killed. From 1916, to fill up the losses in the ranks of the junior and middle commanders, the officer schools were forced to take 9/10ths of their entrance from non-noble estates. These new commanders were of much lower quality than their predecessors, who had been taught to die for the Faith and the Fatherland. Especially heavy losses were suffered in the same period by the military chaplains. The older generation of clergy had enjoyed considerable spiritual authority among the soldiers. But they were replaced by less experienced men enjoying less authority.<sup>734</sup>

The critical factor was not lack of armaments, as in 1915, but a loss of morale among the rank and file. In general, the appeals of the extreme socialists at the Zimmerwald conference that the workers of different countries should not fight each other had not been successful. Patriotic feelings turned out to be stronger than class loyalties. However, the terrible losses suffered in the war, the evidence of massive corruption and incompetence in arms deliveries, the propaganda against the Tsar and Tsarina over Rasputin, and the return of Bolshevik agitators – all these factors began to take their toll.

S.S. Oldenburg writes that in the autumn of 1916 "the spirit of military regulations, the spirit of the old tsarist army was strong, even the shadow of tradition turned out to be sufficient to maintain discipline in the eight-million mass of soldiers".<sup>735</sup>

---

732 Lieven, "Russia, Europe and World War I", in Edward Acton, Vladimir Cherniaev, William Rosenberg (eds.), *A Critical Companion to the Russian Revolution, 1914-1921*, Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1997.

733 Arsène de Goulévitch, *Czarism and Revolution*, Hawthorne, Ca.: Omni Publications, 1962, p. 191; Sergei Vladimirovich Volkov, "Pervaia mirovaia vojna i russkij ofiterskij korpus", *Nasha Strana*, N 2874, August 29, 2009, p. 3.

734 Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 463- 464. There were some notable exceptions, however. One was Hieromonk Alexander (Orlov) of Omsk, who was greatly admired by the men of his regiment and became a Catacomb Church Confessor, reposing in 1977.

735 Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II*, Belgrade, 1939, vol. II, p. 210.

However, more recent authorities paint a darker picture. Stephen Kotkin claims that in the autumn of 1916 “a clutch of mutinies broke out, including whole regiments, in Petrograd’s outskirts, where rear units had swelled with untrained call-ups who fraternized with workers”.<sup>736</sup> This would explain why the Petrograd garrison proved to be unfaithful to the tsar during the February revolution...

According to Stevenson, “Evidence suggests that many soldiers were convinced by 1915 that they could not beat the Germans, and that by the end of 1916 they were full of despondency and recrimination against the authorities who had sent them into war without the wherewithal to win. The evidence that victory was as remote as ever, despite Brusilov’s initial successes and another million casualties, produced a still uglier mood. Soldiers’ letters revealed a deep anxiety about the deteriorating quality and quantity of their provisions (the daily bread ration was reduced from three pounds to two, and then to one, during the winter), as well as anger about rocketing inflation and scarcities that endangered their loved ones’ welfare. Many wanted to end the war whatever the cost, and over twenty mutinies seem to have occurred in October-December 1916 (the first on this scale in any army during the war), some involving whole regiments, and in each case taking the form of a collective refusal of orders to attack or to prepare to attack.”<sup>737</sup>

This was not a situation that one man, even one at the summit of power, could reverse. For Russia was now that nation of which the prophet cried: “Alas, sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a brood of evildoers, children who are corrupters! They have forsaken the Lord, they have provoked to anger the Holy One of Israel, they have turned away backward. Why should you be stricken again? You will revolt more and more. The whole head is sick, and the whole heart faints. From the sole of the foot even to the head there is no soundness in it. But wounds and bruises and putrefying sores. They have not been closed or bound up, or soothed with ointment. Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire, strangers devour your land in your presence” (Isaiah 1.4-7).

“The whole head was sick” in Russia: to some degree the Tsar himself, insofar as he had not acted against Rasputin, but especially the Duma politicians, who considered themselves the real leaders of the country. And without their cooperation the Tsar could do little. For real one-man rule had become almost impossible by 1916. Not only had democratic sentiments spread everywhere in all the Great Powers: public opinion as expressed in the press was a force that no ruler could ignore: The sheer complexity of ruling a large, increasingly differentiated and rapidly industrializing society inevitably involved a large measure of devolution of power with a corresponding loss of control from the head if the lower members did not obey him.

---

<sup>736</sup> Kotkin, *Stalin. Paradoxes of Power. 1878-1928*, London: Penguin, 2014, p. 163.

<sup>737</sup> Stevenson, *op. cit.*, p. 218.

Now Tsar Nicholas was highly educated and intelligent, and probably as capable of coping with the vast complexity of ruling a twentieth-century empire as any man. Nor, contrary to the accepted opinion, did he lack decisiveness or courage. But it is true to say that he found it difficult to impose his will on his subordinates (with the exception of his wife). He was the most tactful and merciful of men, and the least inclined, as the Tsarina noticed, to lay down the law in a masterful fashion. And yet such masterfulness was sometimes necessary, if not sufficient, and especially at this time. For “to the lot of the emperor,” according to Baroness Sophia Buksgeveden, the Tsarina’s lady-in-waiting, “fell a task whose successful execution would have required the appearance on the throne of Napoleon and Peter the Great in one person...”<sup>738</sup> But the tsar, to his credit, did not have the ruthlessness of those tyrants. Once the head of the police promised him that there would be no revolution in Russia for a hundred years if he would permit 50,000 executions. The Tsar quickly rejected this proposal...

And yet he could manifest firmness, and was by no means as weak-willed as has been claimed. Thus once, in 1906, Admiral F.V. Dubasov asked him to have mercy on a terrorist who had tried to kill him. The Tsar replied: “Field tribunals act independently and independently of me: let them act with all the strictness of the law. With men who have become bestial there is not, and cannot be, any other means of struggle. You know me, I am not malicious: I write to you completely convinced of the rightness of my opinion. It is painful and hard, but right to say this, that ‘to our shame and gall’ [Stolypin’s words] only the execution of a few can prevent a sea of blood and has already prevented it.”<sup>739</sup>

However, it was not the execution of a few (or even 50,000) revolutionaries that was the question or the solution ten years later, in the autumn of 1916. Only in the factories of St. Petersburg was the revolution well-entrenched with its defeatist programme. The real problem was the the progressive bloc in the Duma, which professed to want the war continued to a successful end, but argued that success could be attained, in effect, only by destroying the Russian autocracy and replacing it by a constitutional monarchy in which the real power remained in their own hands. What many of them, notably Guchkov, really hoped for was the defeat of Russia followed by the fall of the monarchy, which would enable them to assume power. To this end they employed all kinds of dishonourable, lying means. They concealed from the general public the improving situation in the army; they insinuated that the Tsar was ruled by Rasputin, when he was not<sup>740</sup>; that the Tsarina was pro-German and even a

---

<sup>738</sup> Buksgeveden, *Ventsenosnitsa Muchenitsa* (The Crown-Bearing Martyr), Moscow, 2010, p. 372.

<sup>739</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 430.

<sup>740</sup> In fact, the Tsar as often as not ignored Rasputin’s advice. See Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 190-191.

German spy, which she was not<sup>741</sup>; that the Tsar's ministers with German names, such as Prime Minister Stürmer, were Germanophiles, which they were not.

The Tsar might have survived if had had the support of the Church and the army. But the Church, though loyal, was hugely discontented by his arranging the appointment of Pitirim as first-hierarch., and then of Over-Procurator Raev and of his deputy, Prince Zhevakhov.<sup>742</sup> Smith comments: "Rasputin had gained control over the Church [at its highest level, at any rate]. The defeat of his opponents was complete..."<sup>743</sup> Not only one, but both pillars of the Orthodox symphony of powers were shaking...

As for the army, it, as we shall see, had been penetrated at the highest level by the Masonic plotters against the throne...

---

741 . This slander can be refuted by many excerpts from the Empress's diary; and the French ambassador, Maurice Paléologue, wrote: "{The Empress's] education and upbringing, her mental and moral formation, are completely English;... the basis of her character is completely Russian ... She loves Russia with a burning love..." (*La Russie des Tsars pendant la Grande Guerre* (The Russia of the Tsars during the Great War), vol. V, 1, pp. 249-50.).

<sup>742</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 549.

<sup>743</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 550.

## 49. STUPIDITY OR TREASON?

In the Duma on November 1, 1916, the leader of the Cadet party, Paul Milyukov, holding a German newspaper in his hand and reading the words: "the victory of the court party grouped around the young Tsarina", uttered his famously seditious evaluation of the regime's performance: "Is it stupidity - or treason?" insinuating that the authorities wanted a separate peace with Germany. To which some in the auditorium replied: "Treason", and others: "Stupidity". Major-General V.N. Voeikov, who was with the Tsar at the time, wrote: "The most shocking thing in this most disgusting slander, unheard of in the annals of history, was that it was based on German newspapers..."

"For Germany that was at war with us it was, of course, necessary, on the eve of the possible victory of Russia and the Allies, to exert every effort and employ all means to undermine the might of Russia.

"Count P.A. Ignatiev, who was working in our counter-espionage abroad, cites the words of a German diplomat that one of his agents overheard: 'We are not at all interested to know whether the Russian emperor wants to conclude a separate peace. What is important to us is that they should believe this rumour, which weakens the position of Russia and the Allies.' And we must give them their due: in the given case both our external and our internal enemies showed no hesitation: one example is the fact that our public figures spread the rumour coming from Duma circles that supposedly on September 15, 1915 Grand Duke Ludwig of Hesse, the brother of the Empress, secretly visited Tsarskoye Selo. To those who objected to this fable they replied: if it was not the Grand Duke, in any case it was a member of his suite; the mysterious visit was attributed to the desire of Germany, with the cooperation of the Empress, to conclude a separate peace with Russia.

"At that time nobody could explain to me whether the leader of the Cadet party, Miliukov himself, was led by stupidity or treason when he ascended the tribune of the State Duma, holding in his hands a German newspaper, and what relations *he* had with the Germans..."<sup>744</sup>

Treason was certainly afoot - but among the liberals, masons and socialists, not in the Royal Family or their entourage. Every attempt by the Tsar to appoint a Prime Minister who would be able to work with the Duma - first Sturmer then Protopopov, then Trepov, then Golitsyn - was met by the deputies with a storm of abuse (they accused Protopopov of being "a Judas"<sup>745</sup>). Stirred up by the plotters, they were making government impossible.

---

<sup>744</sup> Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 137. In fact, two months after the February revolution, Miliukov revealed to his colleagues in the Provisional Government that he knew (from whom?) that the revolutionary movement was being financed by the Germans.

<sup>745</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 563.



It could therefore be argued that the Tsar should have acted against the conspirators at least as firmly in 1916-17 as he had against the revolutionaries in 1905-06.

This was precisely what the Tsaritsa argued in private letters to her husband: "Show to all, that you are the Master & your will shall be obeyed - the time of great indulgence & gentleness is over - now comes your reign of will & power, & obedience..." (December 4, 1916). And again: "Be Peter the Great, John [Ivan] the Terrible, Emperor Paul - crush them all under you." (December 14, 1916). She urged him to prorogue the Duma, remove Trepov (who had replaced Stürmer) and send Lvov, Miliukov, Guchkov and Polivanov to Siberia...

The Tsar did replace Trepov with the last Prime Minister of Russia, Prince Nikolai Golitsyn. However, even if the Tsar had had the necessary ruthlessness of character (which, as we have seen, he did not), the days were past when the banishment of a few conspirators could have saved the situation. Soon even the generals would rebel against their commander-in-chief, compelling his abdication. At this point there was nothing that the righteous tsar could do except place his beloved country in the hands of the All-Just and All-Merciful God...

"Several days later," writes I.P. Yakobi, "the former minister of the interior N.A. Maklakov delivered in the State Council a speech that was murderous for the opposition. With figures at his finger-tips, the orator demonstrated that the so renowned 'social organizations' who were supposed to have supplied the army instead of the incapable Tsarist Government had in reality done almost nothing for the war. Thus, for example, the military-industrial committee, which was ruled by Guchkov, had hardly been able to provide *one-and-a-half percent* of all the artillery orders, which had been fulfilled by state factories. 'The opposition does everything for the war,' said A.N. Maklakov, 'but for the war against order; they do everything for victory, but the victory over the Government. Here, in the rear, they are trying to deceive Russia, but we shall not betray her. We have served her, we have believed in her and with this feeling we shall fight and die for her.' "746

These were prophetic words! For twenty months later Maklakov was to suffer a martyric death at the hands of the Bolsheviks... Prophetic also was his prediction in November that the day after parliamentarism triumphed would come "social revolution... communes... the end of the monarchy and of the property-owning class and the triumph of the peasant, who will become a bandit."<sup>747</sup>

\*

---

746 Yakobi, *op. cit.*, p. 123.

747 Maklakov, in Dominic Lieven, *Nicholas II*, London: Pimlico, 1993, p. 229.

We come back to the question why the Tsar did not immediately imprison the plotters against his throne. Archpriest Lev Lebedev supposes that the Tsar, too, was tempted to deal with them “simply and speedily. We remember his words, that ‘with men who have become bestial there is not, and cannot be, any other means of struggle’ (*besides shooting them*) and that ‘only the execution of a few can prevent a sea of blood’. But there appeared before the Tsar at that time in the persons of Lvov, Rodzyanko, Guchkov, etc. not ‘bestialized’ criminal murderers like the Bolsheviks, but respectable people with good intentions! Yes, they were *in error* in thinking that by removing the Tsar from power they could rule Russia better [than he]. But this was a *sincere error*, they *thought* that they were truly *patriots*. It would have been wrong to kill *such* people! *Such* people should not even have been sent to Siberia (that is, into prison). It was necessary to *show* them that they *were mistaken*. And how better to show them than by *victory* over the external enemy, a victory which was already in their hands, and would be inevitable in four or five *months*! The tsar *did not know* that his closest generals had already prepared to arrest him and deprive him of power on February 22, 1917. And the generals did not know that they were doing this precisely in order that in four or five months’ time *there should be no victory*! That had been decided in Bnai-Brith, in other international Jewish organizations (Russia must not be ‘among the victor-countries’!). Therefore through the German General Staff (which also *did not know* all the plots, but thought only about its own salvation and the salvation of Germany), and also directly from the banks of Jacob Schiff and others (we shall name them later) huge sums of money had already gone to the *real murderers* of the Tsar and the Fatherland - the Bolsheviks. This was *the second echelon* [of plotters], it hid behind the first [the Russian Masons]. It was on them (and not on the ‘noble patriots’) that the world powers of evil placed their hopes, for they had no need at all of a transfigured Russia, even if on the western (‘their’) model. What they needed was that Russia and the Great Russian people should *not exist* as such! For they, the powers of evil, *knew Great Russia better* (incomparably better!) than *the whole* of Russian ‘society’ (especially the despised intelligentsia). Did Guchkov know about the planned murder of the whole of Great Russia? *He knew!* The Empress accurately called him ‘cattle’. Kerensky also knew, and also several *pecially initiated* Masons, who hid this from *the overwhelming majority* of all the ‘brothers’ - the other Russian Masons. The specially initiated had already for a long time had secret links (through Trotsky, M. Gorky and several others) with Lenin and the Bolsheviks, which *the overwhelming majority* of the Bolsheviks, too, *did not know!*

“And what did his Majesty know? He knew that society was eaten up by Judaeo-Masonry, that in it was *error* and cowardice and deception. But he *did not know* that at the base of the error, in its secret places, was *treason*. And he also *did not know* that treason and cowardice and deception were all around him, that is, everywhere throughout the higher *command* of the army. And what is the Tsar without an army, without troops?! Then there is the question: could the Tsar have learned in time about the treachery among the generals? Why not! Let’s take, for example, Yanushkevich, or Gurko, or Korfa (or all of them together), whom Sukhomlinov had pointed to as plotters already in 1909 (!). In

prison, *under torture* – such torture as they had with Tsars Ivan and Peter – they would have said everything, *given up all the rest...!* But then he, Nicholas II, would have needed to be truly like Ivan IV or Peter I from the beginning – that is, a *satanist* and a born murderer (psychologically), not trusting *anyone*, suspecting *everyone*, sparing *nobody*. It is significant that her Majesty joined to the names of these Tsars the name of Paul I. That means that she had in mind, not Satanism and bestiality, but only *firmness...* But she *felt* with striking perspicacity that her husband was ‘suffering for the mistakes of his royal predecessors’. Which ones?! Just as we said, first of all and mainly for the ‘mistakes’ *precisely of Ivan IV and Peter I*. Not to become like them, these predecessors, to overcome the temptation of *replying to evil with evil means* – that was the task of Nicholas II. For *not everything is allowed, not all means* are good for the attainment of what would seem to be the most important ends. *The righteousness of God* is not attained by diabolic methods. Evil is not conquered by evil! There was a time when they, including also his Majesty Nicholas II, suppressed evil by evil! But in accordance with the Providence of God *another time* had come, a time to show where the Russian Tsar could himself become a *victim of evil* – voluntarily! – and endure evil *to the end*. *Did he believe in Christ and love Him truly* in such a way as to suffer voluntarily *like Christ*? The same Divine providential *question as was posed for the whole of Great Russia!* This was the final test of faith – *through life and through death*. If one can live only by killing and making oneself *one* with evil and the devil (as those whom one has to kill), then it would be better *not to live!* That is the reply of the Tsar and of Great Russia that he headed! The more so in that it was then a matter of earthly, *historical* life. Here, in *this* life and in *this* history to die in order to live again in the eternal and new ‘history’ of the Kingdom of Heaven! For there is no other way into this Kingdom of Heaven – *the Lord* left no other. He decreed that it should be experienced only *by this* entry... That is what turned out to be His, God’s will!

“We recall that his Majesty Nicholas II took all his most important decisions after ardent prayer, having felt *the goodwill of God*. Therefore now, on considering earnestly why he then, at the end of 1916 and very beginning of 1917, did not take those measures which his wife so warmly wrote to him about, we must inescapably admit one thing: he *did not have* God’s goodwill in relation to them! Her Majesty’s thought is remarkable in itself, that the Tsar, if he had to be ruled by anyone, should be ruled only by one who was himself ruled by God! But there was no such person near the Tsar. Rasputin was *not that* person. His Majesty already understood this, but the Tsaritsa did not yet understand it. In this question he was condescending to her and delicate. But, as we see, he did not carry out the advice of their ‘Friend’, and did not even mention him in his replies to his wife. The Tsar entrusted all his heart and his thoughts to God and was forced to be ruled by Him alone.”<sup>748</sup>

There is much of value in this hypothesis of Lebedev, but it is too kind to the Masonic plotters. Yes, they were “sincere” – but so were the Bolsheviki! It

---

748 Lebedev, *Velikorossia* (Great Russia), St. Petersburg, 1999, pp. 473-475.

seems unlikely that the Tsar should have considered the Bolsheviks worthy of punishment, but the Masons not. More likely is that he thought that acting against the Masons would bring forward the revolution at precisely the moment when he wanted peace in the rear of the army. It must be remembered the Masons controlled the public organizations, like the Military-Industrial Committee, whose leader was Guchkov, and the *zemstva*, whose leader was Prince George Lvov (who also happened to be the leader of Russian Masonry). These, in spite of their disloyalty, were nevertheless making their contribution to providing *some* ammunition for the army and helping the wounded. The Emperor held the opinion that "in wartime one must not touch the public organizations".<sup>749</sup>

And so it was the war that both created the conditions that made the revolution possible, and prevented the Tsar from taking the steps that were necessary in order to crush it...

Many people and historians think that the Russian revolution was the result of an elemental movement of the masses. This is not true of the February revolution, which was a carefully hatched plot involving about three hundred Masons, whose main organizer was Guchkov. What is true is that the majority of the people, primed by many decades of anti-monarchist propaganda, accepted, and even rejoiced at, the February revolution, making themselves thereby worthy of the horrors of the October revolution...

For while the Masonic plot against the Tsar was successful, it succeeded in eventually bringing to power, not the Masonic plotters, but the Bolsheviks, who destroyed all the plotters and all their Masonic lodges, forcing the Masons themselves to flee back to their mother lodges abroad... Thus in October Kerensky and his Masonic colleagues fled to France, where they set up lodges under the aegis of the Grand Orient.<sup>750</sup>

Most of the plotters later repented of their actions. Thus "in the summer of 1917," writes F. Vinberg, "in Petrograd and Moscow there circulated from hand to hand copies of a letter of the Cadet leader Milyukov. In this letter he openly admitted that he had taken part, as had almost all the members of the State Duma, in the February coup, in spite of the fact that he understood the danger of the 'experiment' he had undertaken. 'But,' this gentleman cynically admitted in the letter, 'we knew that in the spring we were about to see the victory of the Russian Army. In such a case the prestige and attraction of the Tsar among the people would again become so strong and tenacious that all our efforts to shake and overthrow the Throne of the Autocrat would be in vain. That is why we had to resort to a very quick revolutionary explosion, so as to avert this danger. However, we hoped that we ourselves would be able to finish the war

---

749 Sedova, "Ne Tsar', a Ego Poddanie Otvetsvenny za Febral'skij Perevorot 1917 Goda" (Not the Tsar, but his Subjects were Responsible for the Coup of 1917), *Nasha Strana*, N 2864, March 14, 2009, p. 3.

750 G. Katkov, *Feval'skaia Revoliutsia* (The February Revolution), Paris, 1984, pp. 175-82.

triumphantly. It turned out that we were mistaken: all power was quickly torn out of our hands by the plebs... Our mistake turned out to be fatal for Russia' ..."<sup>751</sup>

So we must conclude that it was *both* stupidity *and* treason that manifested themselves in the actions of the February plotters. They were undoubtedly traitors in violating their oath of allegiance to the Tsar. But they were also stupid because they did not understand that the overthrow of the Tsar would lead to their own overthrow...

---

751 F. Vinberg, *Krestnij Put'* (The Way of the Cross), Munich, 1920, St. Petersburg, 1997, p. 151. Milyukov wrote: "In response to your questions, how I look at the revolution we have accomplished, I want to say that what happened, we certainly did not want. We believed that power would be concentrated and remain in the hands of the first cabinet, that we would stop the enormous devastation in the army quickly, if not with our own hands, then with the hands of the allies, we would achieve victory over Germany, we would pay for the overthrow of the tsar with only some delay in this victory. We must confess that some, even from our own party, pointed out to us the possibility of what happened next. Of course, we must acknowledge that the moral responsibility lies with us.

"You know that we made a firm decision to use the war to carry out a coup soon after the start of the war, you also know that our army had to go on the offensive, the results of which would fundamentally stop all hints of discontent and cause an explosion of patriotism in the country and jubilation. You understand now why I hesitated at the last minute to give my consent to the coup, you also understand what my inner state should be like at the present time. History will curse the leaders of the so-called proletarians, but it will also curse us, who caused the storm.

"What to do now, you ask. I don't know, that is, inside we all know that the salvation of Russia lies in the return of the monarchy, we know that all the events of the last two months clearly prove that the people were not able to accept freedom, that the mass of the population, not participating in rallies and congresses, were disposed to the monarchy, and that many, many who voted for a republic did so out of fear. All this is clear, but we cannot admit it. Recognition is the collapse of the whole business, our whole life, the collapse of the entire worldview, of which we are representatives." (*Russian Resurrection*, Paris, April 17, 1955, p. 3).

## 50. THE DEATH OF RASPUTIN

By December, 1916 respect for the throne in Russia had largely vanished, mainly because of the perceptions, both true and false, of Rasputin's influence on the Royal Couple. An air of imminent doom hung over the country. Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fyodorovna made a last attempt "to convince her sister to send Rasputin away. She felt she had to open Alexandra's eyes to the danger of the situation and the need for quick, decisive action. But Alexandra received her coldly and would not hear a word of it. Upon leaving, Ella said to her, 'Remember the fate of Louis XVI and Marie Antoinette.' The following day Alexandra sent Ella a note instructing her to return to Moscow. Ella tried to speak to Nicholas but he also refused to see her. Before she left Ella saw Yusupov. 'She drove me away like a dog!' she told him through her tears. 'Poor Nicky, poor Russia!' She never saw her sister again...

[On December 2,] "at the XIIIth Congress of the Union of United Nobility, a resolution was passed on the danger of the 'dark forces' [i.e. Rasputin] that had taken control of the highest levels of the state and the church and called for the necessity of removing these forces once and for all. Russia, the resolution noted, was passing through 'a threatening historic hour'. It called for a strong, unified government that enjoyed the confidence of the people and was willing to work together with all legislative bodies and at the same time recognize its responsibility to the emperor. The resolution was highly significant in that it was issued by one of the main pillars of the Romanov regime. Criticism from the Duma or the press was not surprising, but that the nobility, one of the most traditional, loyal institutions of the state, was now agitating against the dark forces showed the extent to which the throne had lost all support. It was difficult to imagine how much longer the monarchy could survive..."<sup>752</sup>

Rasputin was killed on December 16, 1916 at the hands of Great Prince Dmitri Pavlovich Romanov, Prince Felix Yusupov and a right-wing member of the Duma, Purishkevich. Yusupov lured him to his flat on the pretext of introducing him to his wife, the beautiful Irina, the Tsar's niece. He was shot twice, but neither bullet killed him. Finally he was shot a third time - perhaps by a British secret agent<sup>753</sup> - before being pushed under the ice of the River Neva.

---

<sup>752</sup> Douglas Smith, *Rasputin*, p. 579.

<sup>753</sup> See Douglas Smith, *Rasputin*, pp. 630-634; Michael Smith, *A History of Britain's Secret Intelligence Service*, London: Dialogue; Annabel Venning, "How Britain's First Spy Chief Ordered Rasputin's Murder", *Daily Mail*, July 22, 2010, pp. 32-33; Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, pp. 606-. It is also probable, according to Christopher Danziger, that Yusupov had contacts with the SIS through his Oxford friends, who included Oswald Rayner ("The Prince, the Spy and the Mad Monk", *Oxford Today*, Michaelmas Term, 2016, p. 33). However, John Penycate writes: "Danzinger quotes an autopsy report saying Rasputin drowned. [However,] Professor Dmitri Kosorotov of the Russian Imperial Military Medical Academy, who carried out Rasputin's autopsy, wrote that he was killed by a bullet to the forehead. You can see the bullet hole in the photograph of Rasputin's post-mortem. Kosorotov adds that the three bullets that struck Rasputin came from three different guns. Felix Yusupov and Vladimir Purishkevich, the conspirator who was a member of the Duma, described in their memoirs firing the first two

Yusupov was justified by his close friend, Grand Duchess Elizabeth Fyodorovna, who said that he had only done his patriotic duty – “you killed a demon,” she said. (To Yusupov’s parents she wrote: “May the Lord bless the patriotic exploit of your son”<sup>754</sup>). Then, as Yusupov himself writes in his *Memoirs*, “she informed me that several days after the death of Rasputin the abbesses of monasteries came to her to tell her about what had happened with them on the night of the 30th. During the all-night vigil priests had been seized by an attack of madness, had blasphemed and shouted out in a voice that was not their own. Nuns had run down the corridors crying like hysterics and tearing their dresses with indecent movements of the body...”<sup>755</sup> It is as if the demons that had possessed the body of Rasputin now chose to take up their dwelling in the bodies of his adversaries...

To the Tsar, who did not condone the murder, St. Elizabeth wrote on December 29: “Crime remains crime, but this one being of a special kind, can be counted as a duel and it is considered a patriotic act... Maybe nobody has had the courage to tell you now, that in the streets of the towns people kissed like at Easter week, sang the hymn in the theatres and all moved by one feeling – at last the black wall between us and our Emperor is removed.”<sup>756</sup>

But she was wrong. The black wall was still there and had even become thicker and darker. For it was quickly realized that if the Tsaritsa remained alive and defiant, Rasputin’s death solved nothing. She also would have to be killed – which is what one Grand Duke, Nikolai Mikhailovich, wanted to do.

The disunity of the Romanov family itself was now exposed. Most of the Romanovs rejoiced at the murder of Rasputin and were determined that his murderers, who included their relative, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, should not be punished, or even put on trial, for their crime. Prime Minister Trepov supported this view; only the Interior Minister Protopopov wanted them at least put on trial. The Tsar had been insisting that murder was murder, whether committed by a grand duke or a peasant; but in the end he resolved the problem (after a fashion) by treating the main murderers with astonishing leniency, banishing Great Prince Dmitri to the army in Persia (where he got a hero’s welcome), and Yusupov – to his estate in the country. In this way, at the cost of justice, a rebellion by the Romanovs against the Romanov tsar was avoided...

---

shots. But not the coup de grace. The former ‘C’ of MI6, Sir John Scarlett (Magdalen, 1966), assured me that he didn’t – the official line now for a century, but probably true” (“Rasputin Disputed”, *Oxford Today*, Trinity term, 2017, p. 6). Keith Jeffrey also rejects the idea that the British secret service was involved: “Rayner’s involvement, if he was present at all, can only have been as an acquaintance of Yusupov’s, and perhaps as an enthusiastic if misguided participant in the scheme to rid Russia of a turbulent priest” (1916, p. 341). However, according to a recent joint British and Russian police investigation, the gun that killed him was British...

<sup>754</sup> Yusupov, *Memuary* (Memoirs), Moscow, 1998, p. 235.

<sup>755</sup> Yusupov, *op. cit.*, p. 230.

<sup>756</sup> Alexander Bokhanov, Manfred Knodt, Vladimir Oustimenko, Zinaida Peregudova, Lyubov Tyutyunnik, *The Romanovs*, London: Leppi, 1993, p. 237.

The situation was both unresolved and unprecedented. As the Duma Deputy V.A. Maklakov said in his report on Rasputin on December 27, 1916: "Now there is taking place in the minds and souls of the Russian people the most terrible revolution that has ever happened in history. It is not a revolution – it is a catastrophe: the whole, ages-old world-view, faith in the tsar and in the righteousness of his power, in the idea of its Divine establishment. And this catastrophic revolution has been created in the hidden depths of the soul, not by any evil-intentioned revolutionaries, but by the power itself, drawn by some kind of fate.... This will not be a political revolution that could proceed in a systematic manner, but a revolution of oppression and revenge by the dark lower classes, that could not fail to be elemental, convulsive and chaotic."<sup>757</sup>

And truly: the death of Rasputin was followed, only weeks later, by the abdication of the Tsar and the revolution, as he had predicted. Was this a coincidence? Or can we discern a deeper meaning in this "coincidence" created by Divine Providence?

The murder of Rasputin, when he had already so deeply undermined the authority of the Tsar, suited the anti-tsarist plotters well. "It was truly a master stroke," according to Yakobi: "to impel a 'representative of the people' [Purishkevich] and a relative of the Royal Family [Yusupov] to the crime: counting on the impunity of the murderers, the plotters arranged a pan-national demonstration of the open rebellion by the upper classes and the helplessness of the government. "If Miliukov's speech was the first blow and the tolling of the bell for the revolution, Prince Yusupov's shot was the second blow on the bell. The third and final one had to sound out in Pskov, as a signal for the dark forces to tear apart unhappy Russia, covered in blood..."<sup>758</sup>

It could be argued that the causes of the fall of the Second and Third Romes were similar: in each case, the imperial power gained a supremacy over the ecclesiastical power that was uncanonical and harmful to both Church and State, allowing foreign enemies to conquer it. In the case of Nicholas II the issue is less simple in that his instincts were by no means tyrannical, he was a pious Orthodox Christian who wanted to reform Church-State relations at a future Sobor in the direction of increasing the independence of the Church. He cannot be compared in his relation to the Church with, say, Peter the Great or Catherine the Great or even Nicholas I. Nevertheless, in his refusal to listen to the Church's pleas to remove the false "elder" Rasputin, who was allowed to interfere with Church appointments at the highest level, he undermined the authority of both Church and State, and their mutual relations, in a manner that contributed materially to the success of the revolution.

---

<sup>757</sup> Maklakov, in D.P. Anashkin, "The Real Rasputin?: A Look at His Admirers' Revisionist History", *Orthodox Life*, May 4, 2017; Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 484.

<sup>758</sup> Yakobi, *op. cit.*, p. 128.



As we have seen, the peasant's faith in the Autocracy and the Church (for the two were closely linked in their eyes) had declined sharply from the abortive revolution of 1905; the peasant riots and manor-burnings then had shown that their religiosity and loyalty could no longer be taken for granted. It is not that the peasants suddenly became democrats or constitutional monarchists. On the contrary. At that time they believed religiously in Tsarism. But they also heard and believed the rumours about Rasputin, which offended their religious sensibilities. For they passionately believed that the Tsar, being the Anointed of God, should *rule* and should not himself be ruled by any favourite or "friend", whether he was a noble or a peasant.

The matter was made worse by the murder of Rasputin, which, according to the great singer F.I. Shaliapin, "strengthened the people's belief in the presence at the court of treason [the supposed pro-German activities of the Tsarina and Rasputin]: it had been noticed and avenged by the murder. And since that was the case – everything they said about Rasputin was true!"<sup>759</sup>

Which did not speak well for the Tsar, whose authority declined still further... As in the Time of Troubles, the people wondered whether the Tsar in power at the time was a real authority. And as for the Church authorities who told them to obey the powers that be, they were also under critical scrutiny... The Tsar's detractors were wrong in much of what they said about him, but one cannot deny that they had reason to criticize for weakness in listening to his wife and not expelling Rasputin – and then not bringing his murderers to trial. The result was the decay of tsarist power and prestige, which so weakened the restraints on violence and lawlessness that what Durnovo called "the unconscious socialism" of the peasants erupted, together with a disrespect for authorities in general.

"Rasputin," writes Radzinsky perceptively, "is a key to understanding both the soul and the brutality of the Russia that came after him. He was a precursor of the millions of peasants who, with religious consciousness in their souls, would nevertheless tear down churches, and who, with a dream of the reign of Love and Justice, would murder, rape, and flood the country with blood, in the end destroying themselves..."<sup>760</sup>

"[Deputy Minister of the Interior] Gurko," writes Douglas Smith, "wrote there were two extremes battling inside Rasputin's soul: one seeking the monastery, the other ready to burn down the village. Kokovstov said Rasputin could one minute make the sign of the cross and the next strangle his neighbor with a smile on his face."<sup>761</sup> This was of course not literally true of Rasputin – but it was close to the truth in relation to the peasantry, as the revolution was soon to show, with its millions both of God-haters and of martyrs for Christ.

---

<sup>759</sup> Firsov, *op. cit.*, p. 480.

<sup>760</sup> Radzinsky, *Rasputin*, p. 501.

<sup>761</sup> Smith, *Rasputin*, London: Pan, 2017, p. 441.

Thus Rasputin was indeed a symbol of the state of the peasantry in the last days of the empire. Though basically Orthodox and monarchist, it was infected with spiritual diseases that manifested themselves in the apostasy, lust, violence and sheer demon-possession of so many peasants and workers during the revolution. The support of the peasants kept the monarchy alive just as Rasputin kept the tsarevich alive, stopping the flow of blood that represented the ebbing spiritual strength of the dynasty. But it was not the tsar or any monarchist party or leader that the peasants supported and voted for in November, 1917, but the terrorist Bolsheviks and Social Revolutionaries...

However, while Rasputin lost grace and the majority of Russians descended into the madness of socialism and Bolshevism, it was a different story for the royal family. The Empress had put her trust in a demonized charlatan, and the Emperor, to prevent her "hysterics", as he told Stolypin, went along with the deception, thereby repeating the story of the fall of Adam and Eve in the Garden. For such sins, as was revealed to Metropolitan Makary of Moscow in a vision, they suffered exile, humiliation and deprivation in 1917, and violent death in 1918. But inwardly they had remained pure and faithful to God, and so were finally counted worthy of the crown of martyrdom. And so, while the dynasty was cut off, "the child," the Tsarevich Alexei, the future of the dynasty, "who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron" and over whom Rasputin appeared to have had such power, "was caught up to God and His throne" (Revelation 12.5)...

## 51. APOCALYPTIC VISIONS

On February 21, 1917, just before the February revolution, a 14-year-old Kievan novice, Olga Zosimovna Boiko, fell into a deep trance lasting for forty days during which many mysteries were revealed to her. She saw the following: "In blinding light on an indescribably wonderful throne sat the Saviour, and next to Him on His right hand – our sovereign, surrounded by angels. His Majesty was in full royal regalia: a radiant white robe, a crown, with a sceptre in his hand. And I heard the martyrs talking amongst themselves, rejoicing that the last times had come and that their number would be increased. They said that they would be tormented for the name of Christ and for refusing to accept the seal [of the Antichrist], and that the churches and monasteries would soon be destroyed, and those living in the monasteries would be driven out, and that not only the clergy and monastics would be tortured, but also all those who did not want to receive 'the seal' and would stand for the name of Christ, for the Faith and the Church."<sup>762</sup>

So the coming age was to be an apocalyptic struggle against the Antichrist, an age of martyrdom for Christ's sake – and the Tsar would be among the martyrs.

More was revealed a few weeks later, on March 2, the very day of the Tsar's abdication, when the Mother of God appeared to the peasant woman Eudocia Adrianovna and said to her: "Go to the village of Kolomenskoye; there you will find a big, black icon. Take it and make it beautiful, and let people pray in front of it." Eudocia found the icon at 3 o'clock, the precise hour of the abdication. Miraculously it renewed itself, and showed itself to be the "Reigning" icon of the Mother of God, the same that had led the Russian armies into war with Napoleon. On it she was depicted sitting on a royal throne dressed in a dark red robe and bearing the orb and sceptre of the Orthodox Tsars, as if to show that the sceptre of rule of the Russian land had passed from earthly rulers to the Queen of Heaven...<sup>763</sup>

So the Orthodox Autocracy, as symbolized by the orb and sceptre, had not been destroyed, but was being held "in safe keeping", as it were, by the Queen of Heaven, until the earth should again be counted worthy of it...<sup>764</sup>

---

762 Letter of Sergius Nilus, 6 August, 1917; in V. Gubanov, *Tsar' Nikolai II-ij i Novie Mucheniki* (Tsar Nicholas II and the New Martyrs), Moscow, 2000, p. 121.

763 It is also said that during the siege of the Moscow Kremlin in October, 1917, the Mother of God ordered the "Reigning" icon to be taken in procession seven times round the Kremlin, and then it would be saved. However, it was taken round only once... (Monk Epiphany (Chernov), *Tserkov' Katakombnaia na Zemle Rossijskoj* (The Catacomb Church in the Russian Land), Old Woking, 1980 (MS), <http://www.vs-radoste.narod.ru/photoalbum09.html>)

764 However, both the facts about the appearance of the icon and its theological interpretation are disputed. See M. Babkin, "2 (15) marta 1917 g.: iavlenie ikony 'Derzhavnoj' i otrechenie ot prestola imperatora Nikolaia II" (March 2/15, 1917: the appearance of the "Reigning" icon and Emperor Nicholas II's abdication from the throne), *Posev*, March, 2009, pp. 21-24.

A third vision was given in this year to Metropolitan Makary (Parvitsky) of Moscow, who alone in the Church's hierarchy had refused to accept the Provisional Government and was removed in March, 1917: "I saw a field. The Saviour was walking along a path. I went after Him, crying,

"Lord, I am following you!"

"Finally we approached an immense arch adorned with stars. At the threshold of the arch the Saviour turned to me and said again:

"Follow me!"

And He went into a wondrous garden, and I remained at the threshold and awoke. Soon I fell asleep again and saw myself standing in the same arch, and with the Saviour stood Tsar Nicholas. The Saviour said to the Tsar:

"You see in My hands two cups: one which is bitter for your people and the other sweet for you."

"The Tsar fell to his knees and for a long time begged the Lord to allow him to drink the bitter cup together with his people. The Lord did not agree for a long time, but the Tsar begged importunately. Then the Saviour drew out of the bitter cup a large glowing coal and laid it in the palm of the Tsar's hand. The Tsar began to move the coal from hand to hand and at the same time his body began to grow light, until it had become completely bright, like some radiant spirit. At this I again woke up.

"Falling asleep yet again, I saw an immense field covered with flowers. In the middle of the field stood the Tsar, surrounded by a multitude of people, and with his hands he was distributing manna to them. An invisible voice said at this moment:

"The Tsar has taken the guilt of the Russian people upon himself, and the Russian people is forgiven."

But how could the Russian people could be forgiven through the Tsar? A.Ya. Yakovitsky has expressed the following interpretation. The aim of the Provisional Government was to have elections to the Constituent Assembly, which would finally have rejected the monarchical principle. But this would also have brought the anathema of the *Zemsky Sobor* of 1613 upon the whole of Russia, because the anathema invoked a curse on the Russian land if it ever rejected Tsar Michael Romanov and his descendants. Now according to Yakovitsky, the vision of Metropolitan Makary demonstrates that through his martyric patience the Tsar obtained from the Lord that the Constituent Assembly should not come to pass (it was dissolved by the Bolsheviks in January, 1918). Moreover, his distributing manna to the people is a symbol of the distribution of the Holy Gifts of the Eucharist. So the Church hierarchy, while it wavered in its loyalty in 1917, did not finally reject monarchism, and

so did not come under anathema and was able to continue feeding the people spiritually. By taking upon himself the sin of the removal of the autocracy, the Tsar saved and redeemed his people.

However, for their betrayal of the Tsar, the people still had to suffer... Returning to the Reigning icon, Yakovitsky writes: "Through innumerable sufferings, blood and tears, and after repentance, the Russian people will be forgiven and Royal power, preserved by the Queen of Heaven herself, will undoubtedly be returned to Russia. Otherwise, why should the Most Holy Mother of God have preserved this Power?"<sup>765</sup> "With this it is impossible to disagree. The sin committed can be purified only by blood. But so that the very *possibility of redemption* should arise, some other people had to receive power over the people that had sinned, as Nebuchadnezzar received this power over the Jewish people (as witnessed by the Prophet Jeremiah), or Baty over the Russian people (the first to speak of this after the destruction was the council of bishops of the Kiev metropolia)... Otherwise, the sufferings caused by fraternal blood-letting would only deepen the wrath of God..."<sup>766</sup>

So redemption could be given to the Russian people only if they expiated their sin through the sufferings of martyrdom and repentance, and provided that they did not reject the Orthodox Autocracy *in principle*. The Tsar laid the foundation to this redemption by his petition before the throne of the Almighty. The New Martyrs built on this foundation through their martyric sufferings.

And yet redemption, as revealed in the restoration of the Orthodox Autocracy, has not yet come. And that because the third element – the repentance of the whole people – has not yet taken place.

In the same fateful year of 1917 Elder Nektary of Optina prophesied: "Now his Majesty is not his own man, he is suffering such humiliation for his mistakes. 1918 will be still worse. His Majesty and all his family will be killed, tortured. One pious girl had a vision: Jesus Christ was sitting on a throne, while around Him were the twelve apostles, and terrible torments and groans resounded from the earth. And the Apostle Peter asked Christ:

"O Lord, when will these torments cease?"

"And Jesus Christ replied: 'I give them until 1922. If the people do not repent, do not come to their senses, then they will all perish in this way.'

"Then before the throne of God there stood our Tsar wearing the crown of a great-martyr. Yes, this tsar will be a great-martyr. Recently, he has redeemed

---

765 Yakovitsky, in S. Fomin (ed.), *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 2003, p. 235.

766 Yakovitsky, "Sergianstvo: mif ili real'nost'", *Vernost'* (Fidelity), N 100, January, 2008.

his life, and if people do not turn to God, then not only Russia, but the whole of Europe will collapse..."<sup>767</sup>

Within twenty years, the whole of Europe had collapsed, as a result of the Second World War, the greatest war in human history.

\*

Having described three true, God-given visions of 1917, it will not be out of place to mention a false, satanic vision that was nevertheless to play an important role in Church life later in the century.

In 1917, on the thirteenth day of the month of May, and for six months thereafter the Virgin Mary supposedly appeared to three shepherd girls in Fatima, Portugal. The girls were entrusted with "three secrets", the second of which is the most important. This supposedly revealed that, in order to avoid terrible calamities in the world and the persecution of the Catholic Church, the Virgin will ask for the consecration of Russia to her Immaculate Heart. If her request is granted, Russia will be converted, and there will be peace. If not, then she [Russia] will spread her errors throughout the world, causing wars and persecution of the Church. "The good will be martyred, the Holy Father will have much to suffer, various nations will be annihilated. In the end, my Immaculate Heart will triumph. The Holy Father will consecrate Russia to me, and she shall be converted, and a period of peace will be granted to the world."

Now from the point of view of the Orthodox Saints and Holy Fathers, these visions and revelations are clear examples of demonic deception and not to be trusted. In May, 1917 it was not difficult to see that Russia was descending into chaos, and the devil used the opportunity to try and persuade people that the chaos could be averted only through the submission of Russia to his tool, the Catholic Church. Not surprisingly, the Vatican seized on these "revelations" and in 1930 pronounced them worthy of trust; and every Pope since then has been committed to belief in the Fatima phenomenon.

The present leadership of the Moscow Patriarchate, by its desperate attempts to unite with the Pope, thereby making possible the Vatican's centuries-old dream, supported by false prophecies, of conquering Russia, has become perhaps the main obstacle to the redemption of Russia through the restoration of the Orthodox Autocracy.

---

<sup>767</sup> I. Kontsevich, *Optina Pustyn' i ee Vremia* (Optina Desert and its Time), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1977.

## 52. KERENSKY TAKES THE LEAD

“At the end of 1916, Prince Vladimir A. Obolensky asked Guchkov about the rumours of a forthcoming coup. Obolensky wrote, ‘Guchkov began to relate to me all the facts of the conspiracy and to name its main participants... I realized I had fallen into the very nest of the conspiracy. The Chairman of the Duma, Rodzianko, Guchkov and Alexeev were at the head of it. Others such as General Ruzsky and even A.A. Stolypin, brother of Peter Arkadievich Stolypin, took part in it.’”<sup>768</sup>

The Masons began to execute their plans in January, 1917. Amidst rumours of palace coups, “the public organizations systematically boycotted all those in whom they saw supporters of the tsar, almost literally following the principles laid out in Disposition No.1 of the mysterious Committee of National Salvation...

“But the Disposition was written in 1915, when the liberals still hoped to incline the tsar to carry out the demands of the Duma and the public organizations. But now, in 1917, Prince Lvov supposed that there was nothing more to talk about. In a speech which he had intended to deliver at the December (1916) congress of the Zemstvo Union (the congress was banned by the police), Prince Lvov wrote: ‘What we wanted to say eye-to-eye to the leader of the Russian people fifteen months ago, has not become the common cry of the whole people... Do we have to name the names of the secret sorcerers and magicians of our state administration and dwell on the feelings of annoyance, disdain and hatred? It is not these feelings that point the way to our salvation. Let us leave that which is despised and hated. The fatherland is in peril. From the State Council and the State Duma to last hut, all feelings are identical... The old state ulcer of dissension between the authorities and society has covered, as with leprosy, the whole country without sparing the tsar’s palaces, while the country prays for healing and suffers...’

“At the end Prince Lvov gave practical instructions to his supporters: ‘Abandon any further attempts to carry out cooperative work with the present authorities! They are doomed to failure, they will only distance us from our aim. Do not entertain illusions! Turn away from figments of the imagination! There is no authority... The country needs a monarch protected by a government that is responsible before the country and the Duma.’...

‘The refusal of the leader of the public organizations to make any attempt to come to an agreement with the government led to rumours of a palace coup being spread aloud in the army and throughout the country. They were to take hold of the minds of society, and especially the intelligentsia and semi-intelligentsia. Even among the members of the Royal Family patriotism no longer meant faithfulness to the ruling monarch. Murder, rebellion and trampling on the emperor and his wife was glorified throughout the country

---

<sup>768</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 215.

as an exploit, an act of patriotic self-sacrifice comparable to the miracle of the dragon, the exploit of St. George, when he liberated the country from a shameful slavery...

"As the end of the prerogatives of the Fourth Duma approached, Rodzyanko started a campaign to put off the proroguing of the Duma until the end of the war, referring to the order established in the Allied countries whereby elections were generally put off until the end of military operations."<sup>769</sup>

\*

On January 19, there began in Petrograd an Allied Conference including 50 representatives of England, France and Italy (the English delegation was led by Lord Milner, now in the war cabinet), who had made the long journey from London via Murmansk to plan a combined Allied strategy for the coming year.<sup>770</sup> The senior British soldier at the conference, Henry Wilson, "learned that there was much talk of revolution, even, as he noted in his diary, to the extent of Russian officials speaking openly about 'the advisability of murdering the Tsar & the Empress or the Empress alone & so on. An extraordinary state of affairs...'"<sup>771</sup> Indeed; and after meeting with Guchkov, who was president of the Military-Industrial Committee, Prince George Lvov, president of the State Duma Rodzyanko, General Polivanov (who had been dismissed from his post as Minister of War in March), Sazonov, the English ambassador Buchanan, the Cadet leader P.N. Miliukov and others, the mission was emboldened to present the following demands to the Tsar:

- (i) The introduction into the Staff of the Supreme Commander of allied representatives with the right of a deciding vote.
- (ii) The renewal of the command staff of all the armies on the indications of the heads of the Entente.
- (iii) The introduction of a constitution with a responsible ministry.

The Tsar replied to these demands, which amounted to a demand that he renounce both his autocratic powers and his powers as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian armies, as follows:

- (i) "The introduction of allied representatives is unnecessary, for I am not suggesting the introduction of my representatives into the allied armies with the right of a deciding vote."
- (ii) "Also unnecessary. My armies are fighting with greater success than the armies of my allies."
- (iii) "The act of internal administration belongs to the discretion of the Monarch and does not require the indications of the allies."

---

<sup>769</sup> Katkov, *Fevral'skaia Revoliutsia*, pp. 224-225, 227.

<sup>770</sup> Gubanov, *Nikolaj II i Novie Mucheniki*, Moscow, 2000, p. 802.

<sup>771</sup> Keith Jeffrey, *1916*, London: Pimlico, 2017, p. 356.



When this truthful and courageous reply was made known to the plotters, they assembled in the English Embassy and decided: "To abandon the lawful path and step out on the path of revolution".

As Miliukov explained: "We knew that in the spring there would be victories for the Russian Army. In that case the prestige and glamour of the Tsar among the people would become so strong that all our efforts to shake and overthrow the Throne of the Autocrat would be in vain. That is why we had to resort to a very speedy revolutionary explosion, so as to avert this danger." 772

Thus "the English Embassy," wrote Princess Paley, "on the orders of Lloyd George, became a nest of propaganda. The liberals, and Prince Lvov, Miliukov, Rodzyanko, Maklakov, etc., used to meet there constantly. It was in the English embassy that the decision was taken to abandon legal paths and step out on the path of revolution." 773

The English ambassador was "devoted" personally to the Tsar. But, as Great Duke Alexander Mikhailovich wrote, he was with the plotters: "The most grievous thing that I got to know was that the British ambassador at the Imperial Court, Sir George Buchanan, had countenanced the plotters: he fancied that such conduct would be the best way to protect the Allies' interests and that the succeeding Russian liberal government would lead Russia from victory to victory. He realized his mistake no longer than twenty-four hours after the triumph of the revolution..." 774

On January 27, on the basis of reports from the Petrograd Okhrana, the members of a working group of Guchkov's Military-Industrial Committee that served as a link with the revolutionary workers' organizations, were arrested. The documents seized left no doubt about the revolutionary character of the working committee... But the new Prime Minister, Prince Golitsyn, softened the sentences of the plotters. 775

And so "the sessions of the workers in the Committee continued. However, the Okhrana department lost its informers from the workers' group." 776

At the beginning of February the Tsar summoned N.A. Maklakov and entrusted him with composing a manifesto for the prorogation of the Duma – in case it should step out on the path of open revolution. 777

---

772 Miliukov, in Tatyana Groyan, *Tsariu Nebesnomu i Zemnomu Vernij* (Faithful to the Heavenly and Earthly King), Moscow, 1996, p. XCIV. Cf. Armis (a Duma delegate), "Skrytaia Byl'" (The Hidden Story), *Prizyo'* (Summons), N 50, Spring, 1920; in Vinberg, *op. cit.*, pp. 165-166.

773 Paley, *Souvenir de Russie, 1916-1919*, p. 33.

774 Alexander Bokhanov, Manfred Knodt, Vladimir Oustimenko, Zinaida Peregudova, Lyobov Tyutyunnik, *The Romanovs*, London: Leppi Publications, 1993, p.282.

775 Oldenburg, *Tsarstvoovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II*, Belgrade, 1939, vol. II, p. 233.

776 Sedova, "Ne Tsar..." , p. 3.

777 Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, vol. II, p. 233. On February 10, in his last report to the Duma, Rodzyanko said that "the country had finally lost faith in the present government".

For, as he said to the former governor of Mogilev in early February: "I know that the situation is very alarming, and I have been advised to dissolve the State Duma... But I can't do this... In the military respect we are stronger than ever before. Soon, in the spring, will come the offensive and I believe that God will give us victory, and then moods will change..."<sup>778</sup>

\*

The real leader of the disturbances in Petrograd in February was Alexander Kerensky, whose real name was Aaron Kirbits.<sup>779</sup> "Kerensky was very familiar with the many different layers of revolutionary and opposition movements. As early as 1915, the Okhrana mentioned Kerensky as a man leader of the revolutionary underground, 'recently beginning to play a dominant role', as well as being a leader of the Social Revolutionary Party. He also played a leading role in the Petrograd Bolshevik organizations. Kerensky was one of the loudest enemies of the monarchy and Nicholas II, and travelled across Russia meeting with revolutionaries, teaching them that 'a criminal and inept government cannot fight an external enemy,' victory only being possible after the establishment of a Constituent Assembly.

"In January 1917, Kerensky stated that 'We need a revolution, even if it means defeat at the front'."<sup>780</sup>

When the State Duma reassembled on February 14/27, Kerensky proclaimed his aim openly: "The historical task of the Russian people at the present time is the task of annihilating the medieval regime immediately, at whatever cost... How is it possible to fight by lawful means against those whom the law itself has turned into a weapon of mockery against the people?... There is only one way with the violators of the law - their physical removal."<sup>781</sup>

Unlike most of the bourgeois plotters, Kerensky envisioned the complete destruction of the monarchy, not a replacement of the autocracy with a constitutional monarchy. On this same day, the Bolsheviks called on the workers of St. Petersburg to protest against the State Duma, the failure of which reassured the authorities that the opposition and revolutionaries were not capable of a powerful performance.

"The following day, however, Kerensky began an aggressive campaign in the Duma, calling for the overthrow of the monarchy, signaling to the revolutionary forces that it is 'now or never'. So the protagonist of the revolution at the start of the unrest in Petrograd was Kerensky rather than the Progressive Bloc. In this way, the workers and residents of St. Petersburg did not go out with slogans of protecting the Duma or of revolution, but rather

---

<sup>778</sup> Lieven, *Nicholas II*, p. 231.

<sup>779</sup> Voeikov, *So Tsarem i Bez Tsaria* (With and Without the Tsar), Moscow, 1995, p. 260.

<sup>780</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, pp. 221-222.

<sup>781</sup> Kerensky, in *Voprosy Istorii* (Questions of History), 1990, N 10, p. 144.

under the banner of hunger, with the revolutionary underground directed by Kerensky.

“Using the slogan ‘Bread’ was a strong move by the conspirators, since marching with revolutionary slogans would have meant immediate dispersal by troops. However, it was a much more difficult matter to require troops to disperse ‘hungry’ women and children asking for bread.

“The Social Democrats ensured a supply of flour to the garrison soldiers to prevent their taking part in a suppression of the insurrection. Social Democrat B.V. Avilov recalled that in those eventful February days they had several thousand pounds of bread and scores of wagon-cars worth of flour.

“The Bolsheviks and Kerensky cooperated for the organization of a strike by the Putilov factory, which was to be the catalyst for the events in St. Petersburg. On 22 February, a group of workers from the Putilov factory came to Kerensky letting him know a political movement was beginning at the factory, which would have far reaching consequences. On that same day, the Vyborg district Bolsheviks came out in support of the Putilovites and decided to organize a strike on the 23<sup>rd</sup> in the Narva and Vyborg districts, in solidarity with the Putilovites.

“Historian S.V. Kolyaev writes that the Bolsheviks ‘at the very least initiated the outpouring of workers into the streets.’ It should be noted that in February 1917, the Putilov factory was administered by the [Masonic] Chief Artillery Directorate General A.A. Manikovsky, who after the October Revolution joined the Red Army, making its connection with the Bolsheviks in February 1917 something that can be considered almost proved. At the same time, Manikovsky was in very close relations with Guchkov and Kerensky. This all, taken together, suggests joint actions on behalf of Kerensky and the Bolsheviks in the organization of the riots, carried out through an intermediary, General Manikovsky. In this way, Guchkov and Kerensky, in spite of their external difference, shared a general plan for a coup d’état, calling for the overthrow of the throne of Emperor Nicholas II.”<sup>782</sup>

And yet loyal patriots still existed. Thus on February 21, two days before the start of the revolution, Bishop Agapit of Yekaterinoslav together with members of the Yekaterinoslav section of the Union of the Russian People, headed by their president, Obraztsov, wrote to the chancellery of the Over-Procurator: “The gates of hell will not prevail over the Church of Christ, but the destiny of Orthodoxy in our fatherland is indissolubly bound up with the destiny of the Tsarist Autocracy. Remembering on the Sunday of Orthodoxy the merits of the Russian Hierarchs before the Church and the State, we in a filial spirit dare to turn to your Eminence and other first-hierarchs of the Russian Church: by your unanimous blessings and counsels in the spirit of peace and love, strengthen his Most Autocratic Majesty to defend the Sacred rights of the Autocracy,

---

<sup>782</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, pp. 222-223.

entrusted to him by God through the voice of the people and the blessing of the Church, against which those same rebels who are encroaching against our Holy Orthodox Church are now encroaching.”<sup>783</sup>

---

<sup>783</sup> Tatyana Groyan, *Tsariu Nebesnomu i Zemnomu Vernij* (Faithful to the Heavenly and Earthly King), Moscow, 1996, pp. CXX-CXXI.

## 53. THE FEBRUARY REVOLUTION

The Tsar stayed in Tsarskoye Selo until February 22, when he was summoned urgently to Stavka by General Alexeyev. This surprised the Tsar, who did not see the need for it and wanted to stay close to the capital. It was clearly part of the plot – as Baroness Sophia Bukshoeveden points out, it was precisely in the next eight days, when the Tsar was away at the front, that the revolution took place...<sup>784</sup>

“In the middle of 1916,” writes Fr. Lev Lebedev, “the Masons had designated *February 22, 1917* for the revolution in Russia. But on this day his Majesty was still at Tsarksoye Selo, having arrived there more than a month before from Headquarters, and only at 2 o’clock on the 22nd did he leave again for Mogilev. Therefore everything had to be put back for one day and begin on *February 23*.<sup>785</sup> By that time special trains loaded with provisions had been *deliberately* stopped on the approaches to Petrograd on the excuse of heavy snow drifts, which immediately elicited a severe shortage of bread, an increase in prices and the famous ‘tails’ – long queues for bread. The population began to worry, provocateurs strengthened the anxiety with rumours about the approach of inevitable famine, catastrophe, etc. But it turned out that the military authorities had reserves of food... that would allow Petrograd to hold out until the end of the snow falls.<sup>786</sup> Therefore into the affair at this moment there stepped a second very important factor in the plot – the soldiers of the reserve formations, who were in the capital waiting to be sent off to the front. There were about 200,000 of them, and they since the end of 1916 had been receiving 25 roubles a day (a substantial boost to the revolutionary agitation that had been constantly carried out among them) from a secret ‘revolutionary fund’. Most important of all, they did not want to be sent to the front. They were reservists, family men, who had earlier received a postponement of their

---

<sup>784</sup> Buxhoeveden, *Ventsenosnitsa Muchenitsa* (The Crown-Bearing Martyr), Moscow, 2011, p. 390.

<sup>785</sup> There is conflicting evidence on this point. Sedova writes: “Later Guchkov said that the coup was planned for March-April, 1917. However his comrades in the plot were more sincere. In Yekaterinoslav, where Rodzyanko’s estate was situated, there came rumours from his, Rodzyanko’s house that the abdication of the Tsar was appointed for December 6, 1917. At the beginning of 1917 Tereshchenko declared in Kiev that the coup, during which the abdication was supposed to take place, was appointed for February 8” (Sedova, “Ne Tsar’ ..”, p. 3). (V.M.)

<sup>786</sup> On February 24 the Petrograd commandant Khabalov posted notices on the walls (with glue that didn’t work) saying there was no need to worry: there was more than half a million pounds of flour in the city, enough to feed it for twelve days, and deliveries were continuing without interruption (I.P. Yakoby, *Imperator Nikolaj II i Revoliutsia* (Emperor Nicholas II and the Revolution), Moscow, 2010, p. 151). As Voeikov wrote: “From February 25 the city’s public administration had begun to appoint its representatives to take part in the distribution of food products and to oversee the baking of bread. It became clear that in Petrograd at that time there were enough reserves of flour: in the warehouses of Kalashnikov Birzh there were over 450,000 pounds of flour, so that fears about a lack of bread were completely unfounded” (*op. cit.*, p. 161). However, already in November, 1917 Prince Vladimir Mikhailovich Volkonsky, former vice-president of the Duma and assistant to the Minister of the Interior Protopopov had told Baroness Sophia Bukshoeveden that the administration of the transport of food was so bad that there could be hunger riots in the city (Buxhoeveden, *op. cit.*, pp. 387-388). And Lubov Millar writes: “While bread lines in Petrograd got longer, trainloads of wheat and rye stood rotting all along the Great Siberian Railway line; the same was true in the southwestern part of Russia. Even so, there was enough bread to feed the capital” (*Grand Duchess Elizabeth of Russia*, Richfield, N.Y.: Nikodemos Orthodox Publication Society, 2009, p. 35). (V.M.).

call-up, as well as new recruits from the workers, who had been under the influence of propaganda for a long time. His Majesty had long ago been informed of the unreliability of the soldiers of the Petrograd garrison and had ordered General Alexeyev to introduce guards units, including cavalry, into the capital. However, Alexeyev *had not carried out the order*, referring to the fact that, according to the information supplied by the commandant of the Petrograd garrison General Khabalov, all the barracks in the capital were filled to overflowing, and there was nowhere to put the guardsmen!... In sum, against 200,000 unreliable reservists who were ready to rebel, the capital of the Empire could hardly number 10,000 soldiers – mainly junkers and cadets from other military schools – who were faithful to his Majesty. The only Cossack regiment from the reserves was by that time also on the side of the revolution. The plotters were also successful in gaining the appointment of General Khabalov to the post of commandant of the capital and district. He was an inexperienced and extremely indecisive man. Had Generals Khan-Hussein of Nakhichevan or Count Keller been in his place, everything might have turned out differently.”<sup>787</sup>

\*

While men had their reasons for transferring the starting date of the revolution to February 23, Divine Providence, which is over all, ordained this date in order to point to three highly significant “coincidences”. The first was the coincidence of the beginning of the revolution with the first new feast of the godless socialists, International Women’s Day. The second was its coincidence with the beginning of Diocletian’s Great Persecution of 303, the greatest persecution in Christian history. And the third was its coincidence with the Jewish feast of Purim.

“‘International Women’s Day’ – the revolutionary feast of the women-internationalists – was established on March 8, 1910 on the initiative of Clara Tsetkin at a socialist conference in Copenhagen. At first it was conceived as the feast of the woman revolutionary, and not simply of women. Therefore it was a feast specifically of the revolution against the Tsar.

“In the afternoon,” writes Orlando Figes, “the mood began to change as female textile workers from the Vyborg side of the city came out on strike in protest against shortages of bread. Joined by their menfolk, they swelled the crowds on the Nevsky, where there were calls of ‘Bread!’ and ‘Down with the tsar!’ By the end of the afternoon, 100,000 workers had come out on strike, and there were clashes with police as the workers tried to cross the Liteiny Bridge, connecting the Vyborg side with the city centre. Most were dispersed by the police but several thousand crossed the ice-packed river Neva (a risky thing to do at -5C) and some, angered by the fighting, began to loot the shops on their way to the Nevsky.

---

<sup>787</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 477.

“Balk’s Cossacks struggled to clear the crowds on the Nevsky. They would ride up to the demonstrators, only to stop short and retreat. Later it emerged that they were mostly young reservists who had no experience of dealing with crowds. By an oversight they had not been supplied with the whips used by Cossacks to disperse civilian crowds. This weakness emboldened the workers to come out in even greater numbers in the following days.

“On 24 February as many as 150,000 workers had taken to the streets. They marched from the industrial areas, crossed the bridges, and occupied the Nevsky, looting shops, and overturning trams and carriages. There were fights with the police and Cossacks on the bridges. By mid-afternoon the crowds on the Nevsky had been swollen by students, shopkeepers, office workers and spectators. Balk described the crowds as ‘consisting of the ordinary people’.

“Historians have long argued about whether these demonstrations were spontaneous or organised by revolutionaries. My own view is that they were more spontaneous than organised but that they had an internal organisation of their own in the form of unnamed members of the crowd who shouted out directions. Then there was the political topography of Petrograd – defined by the bridges, the Nevsky, Znamenskaya Square, the Tauride Palace, or seat of the Duma – that set the movements of the crowds.

“On 24 February Znamenskaya Square became the focus of attention, as a large rally amassed there in the afternoon. The huge equestrian statue of Alexander III – a symbol of immovable autocracy popularly nicknamed ‘the Hippopotamus’ – was conquered by revolutionary orators, who made their speeches from it, calling for the downfall of the monarchy. Few in the vast crowd could hear what they were saying, but it did not matter: the people knew what they wanted to hear and the mere sight of this act of free speech – in full view of the police – was enough to confirm in their minds that a ‘revolution’ was taking place. Later that evening, after the crowds had finally dispersed, the police found the word ‘Hippopotamus’ engraved on the plinth of the statue.”<sup>788</sup>

“On February 23,” writes Lebedev, “at a command, 30,000 (according to other data, 90,000) workers went on strike with the slogans ‘Bread!’ and ‘Down with the War!’ The police had difficulty in dispersing their demonstrations. On February 24 up to 170,000 workers poured out onto the streets of Petrograd. Their slogans were: ‘Down with the Tsarist Government!’, ‘*Long Live the Provisional Government!*’ (although it did not exist yet!) and ‘Down with the War!’. About 40,000 gathered in Nevsky Prospekt. The police and the soldiers pushed them away, but they went into the side streets, smashed shop windows, robbed the shops, stopped trams, and already sang the ‘Marseillaise’ and ‘Rise, Stand up, Working People!’ However, Protopopov reported to her Majesty in Tsarskoye that the disorders were elicited only by a lack of bread. In the opinion of many ministers, everything had begun with a chance ‘women’s rebellion’ in the queues. They did not know, or simply *were frightened to know,*

---

<sup>788</sup> Figes, “The women’s protest that sparked the Russian Revolution” *The Guardian*, March 8, 2017.

that a *previously organized* revolution had begun. The Cossacks did nothing, protecting the demonstrators. On February 25 already 250,000 people were on strike! In their hands they held a Bolshevik leaflet ('... All under the red flag of the revolution. Down with the Tsarist monarchy. Long live the Democratic Republic... Long live the Socialist International'.) At a meeting at the Moscow station the police constable Krylov hurled himself at a demonstrator in order to snatch a red flag from him, and was killed... *by a Cossack!* The crowd lifted the murderer on their shoulders. In various places they were beating, disarming and killing policemen. At the Trubochny factory Lieutenant Hesse shot an agitator, and those who had assembled, throwing away their red flags and banners, ran away. The same happened in the evening on Nevsky, where the demonstrators opened fire on the soldiers and police, and in reply the soldiers shot into the crowd (several people were immediately killed), who then ran away. The speeches of the workers, as we see, were the work of the hands of the second echelon of the revolution (the social democrats). But it is also evident that without the soldiers it would not have worked for either the first or the second echelon...

"On the evening of the same February 25, a Saturday, his Majesty sent Khabalov a personal telegram: 'I order you to stop the disturbances in the capital tomorrow, disturbances that are inadmissible in the serious time of war against Germany and Austria. Nicholas.' Khabalov panicked. Although everything indicated that there was no need to panic, decisive action even by those insignificant forces that were faithful and reliable, that is, *firing* against the rebels, could have stopped everything in its tracks. The Duma decreed that their session should stop immediately. But the deputies remained and continued to gather in the building of the Tauride palace.

"On February 26, a Sunday, it was peaceful in the morning and Khabalov *hastened* to tell his Majesty about this. What lengths does fear for themselves and for their position or career take people to!... On that day the newspapers did not come out, and at midday demonstrations began again and the Fourth company of the reserve battalion of the Pavlovsky regiment mutinied. It was suppressed, and the mutineers arrested. It was difficult to incite soldiers to rebel, even those like the Petrograd reservists. They replied to the worker-agitators: 'You'll go to your homes, but we'll get shot!...' The plotters understood that the troops could be aroused only by some kind of exceptional act, after which it would no longer be possible for them to go back. Such an act could only be a serious military crime – a murder... The heart of the Tsar sensed the disaster. On the evening of the 26th he noted in his diary: 'This morning during the service I felt a sharp pain in my chest... I could hardly stand and my forehead was covered with drops of sweat.' On that day Rodzyanko sent the Tsar a telegram in which, after describing the disorders in the capital, the clashes of military units and the firing, he affirmed: 'It is necessary immediately to entrust a person enjoying *the confidence of the country* (!) to form a *new government*. There must be no delay. Delay is like death. I beseech God that at this hour responsibility may not fall on the Crown-bearer.' A liar and a hypocrite, Rodzyanko had more than once very bombastically expressed his



'devotion' to his Majesty, while at the same time preparing a plot against him. He immediately sent copies of this telegram to the commanders of the fronts – Brusilov and Ruzsky, asking them to support his demand for a 'new government' and a 'person' with the confidence of the country before his Majesty. They replied: 'task accomplished'.<sup>789</sup>

The change in slogans from "Bread and Peace" to "New Government" was significant. For it meant a change from simply sympathizing with suffering people to a potential act of *treason*. However, it appears that the soldiers were not yet republicans... "Colonel N.I. Artabalevsky writes: 'The shooters and all the other military officials decided and approved the slogan with which they opposed the old government: "Tsar, new government, war to victory". With this, we went to the Duma. With difficulty we made our way into the Catherine Hall. Everything was jam-packed with the most disparate public. Rodzianko immediately came to us and delivered a short speech with a call to order, to which they answered, 'Hurray!' and a toast 'to the first citizen of Russia'. Having learned from me the slogan with which we came, he visibly brightened his face. I snuck into the room next to the one in which the Executive Committee of the State Duma was sitting. Then a member of the Duma approached me: tall, with a black beard, exquisitely dressed. I could not find out who it was. He told me that Emperor Nicholas II would probably be forced to hand over the throne to his son, Tsarevitch Alexei, and for his juvenile caretaker to be Empress Alexandra Fedorovna, and the regent will be Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich.

"At that moment, Milyukov intervened in the conversation. I did not think that he would make such a repulsive impression on me – a sly, two-faced fox. The eyes that ran around the pince-nez glasses did not inspire me with any confidence. Cunningly looking at me, then around, he was interested to find out from me about the attitude of the shooters towards Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovich. I answered him that I did not understand the question. If the sovereign finds it necessary to transfer his throne to another, then our duty is to serve the new sovereign. Miliukov did not answer this, and, smiling unpleasantly, withdrew from me.

"It is clear from these memoirs of Artabalevsky that the slogan with which the army took to the streets, 'Tsar, new government, war to victory' was similar to the requirements of Rodzianko and the Duma. It was the external monarchism of the latter that deceived the troops, who believed that they were in favour of the tsar and the people against the traitors in the old government. But from the same passage one can see how the Duma opposition, in this case in the person of Miliukov, was ready to change the monarchist slogans that were used to deceive the army when they were no longer needed. Rodzianko,

---

789 Lebedev, *op. cit.* This telegram, writes Yakoby, "was very cleverly written. Its jerky, emotional phrases were bound to elicit in the Tsar increasing anxiety, the fear of responsibility and a desire to transfer this responsibility on him whose name was clearly insinuated – Rodzianko himself.

"However the Duma president himself feared an open rift with legality and preferred to receive power from the hands of the Sovereign rather than 'by the will of the people'" (*op. cit.*, p. 154)

in this case, was used by conspirators in the dark. He overshadowed those oppositionists with a monarchist screen, who sought to overthrow the monarchy as such, and not specifically Nicholas II. With this 'monarchism' Rodzianko misled those who wished for the overthrow of Nicholas II and for a 'responsible ministry' but who were against the overthrow of the monarchy. It is this deception that explains the fact that the Generals of the Stavka supported Rodzianko's betrayal of the tsar with such zeal: the preservation of the throne in exchange for a 'responsible ministry'.<sup>790</sup>

Lebedev continues the story: "On the night from the 26th to the 27th in the Reserve battalion of the Light-Guards of the Volhynia regiment (the regiment itself was at the front), the under-officer of the Second Company Kirpichnikov (a student, the son of a professor) convinced the soldiers 'to rise up against the autocracy', and gained their promise to follow his orders. The whole night the same agitation was going on in other companies. By the morning, when Captain Lashkevich came into the barracks, they told him that the soldiers had decided not to fire at the people any more. Lashkevich hurled himself at under-officer Markov, who had made this declaration, and was immediately killed. After this the Volhynians under the command of Kirpichnikov went to the reserves of the Preobrazhensky regiment. There they killed the colonel. The rebels understood that now they could escape punishment (and at the same time, being sent to the front) only if they would all act *as a group, together* (there was no going back). The 'professional' revolutionaries strengthened them in their feelings. The Volhynians and Preobrazhenskys were joined on the same morning of the 27th by a company of the Lithuanian regiment, the sappers, a part of the Moscow regiment (reservists, of course). The officers saved themselves from being killed, they started firing and ran. The workers united with the soldiers. Music was playing. They stormed the police units and the 'Kresty' prison, from which they freed all those under arrest, including recently imprisoned members of the 'Working Group' of the Military-Industrial Committee [headed by Guchkov], who had fulfilled the task of being the link between the Masonic 'headquarters' and the revolutionary parties, and first of all – the Bolsheviks. They burned the building of the District Court. The appeal sounded: 'Everyone to the State Duma'. And a huge crowd rolled into the Tauride palace, sacked it, ran amok in the halls, but did not touch the Duma deputies. But the Duma delegates, having received on the same day an order from his Majesty to prorogue the Duma until April, did not disperse, but decided to form a *Provisional Committee of the State Duma* 'to instil order in the capital and to liaise with public organizations and institutions'.<sup>791</sup> The Committee was joined by the whole membership of the bureau of the 'Progressive Bloc' and Kerensky and Chkeidze (the first joining up of the first and second echelons). *Immediately*, in the Tauride palace, at the same time, only in different rooms, revolutionaries of the second echelon, crawling out of the underground and from the prisons, formed the Executive Committee of the

---

<sup>790</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, pp. 225-226.

<sup>791</sup> It was at this point, writes Yakoby, that "the Duma openly took the side of the rebellion" (*op. cit.*, p. 155) (V.M).

Soviet of Workers' Deputies (which later added 'and of Soldiers' to its name). The Soviet was headed by Alexandrovich, Sukhanov (Gimmer) and Steklov (Nakhamkes), and all the rest (97%) were Jews who had never been *either workers or soldiers*. Immediately the Executive Committee sent invitations round the factories for deputies to the Congress of Soviets, which was appointed to meet at 7 o' clock in the evening, and organized 'requisitions' of supplies from the warehouses and shops for 'the revolutionary army', so that the Tauride Palace immediately became *the provisioning point* for the rebels (the Provisional Committee of the Duma had not managed to think about that!).

"The authorities panicked. Khabalov hastily gathered a unit of 1000 men under the command of Colonel A.P. Kutepov, but with these forces he was not able to get through to the centre of the uprising. Then soldiers faithful to his Majesty, not more than 1500-2000 men (!) gathered in the evening on Palace Square in front of the Winter Palace. With them were the Minister of War Belyaev, and Generals Khabalov, Balk and Zankevich. Khabalov telegraphed the Tsar that he could not carry out his instructions. He was joined by Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich, who declared that the situation was hopeless. Then, during the night, there arrived Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, the (younger) brother of the Tsar, who said that the soldiers would have to be taken out of the Palace since he 'did not want the soldiers to fire at the people from the House of the Romanovs'. And he suggested telegraphing the Tsar to ask him to appoint Prince Lvov as the new President of the Council of Ministers...<sup>792</sup> The completely bewildered generals were moved to the Admiralty, and the soldiers began to disperse. On the afternoon of the 28th their remnants left the Admiralty at the demand of the Minister of the Navy and, laying down their weapons, dispersed. One should point out that many members of the Imperial House behaved very unworthily in those days. They even discussed a plan for a 'palace coup' (to overthrow his Majesty and 'seat'

---

<sup>792</sup> Michael arrived on the scene at 5 p.m. At 9 Rodzianko asked him to become dictator. He refused. At 10.30 he telegraphed the Tsar proposing that he make Lvov prime minister. The Tsar refused, confirming Golitsyn as head of the civil administration (Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 619).

Grand Duke Michael had "phoned Duma chairman Mikhail Rodzyanko from his residence in Gatchina on 10 March in despair about the Petrograd situation. Rodzyanko could offer him no comfort. The two of them agreed to meet in the capital for a discussion in front of witnesses, and Rodzyanko laid bare what he thought was the minimum that urgently had to be done and advised Mikhail to cable his brother and tell him that he was standing on the edge of an abyss. Nicholas had to accept the need to transfer Alexandra to his palace at Livadia by the Black Sea so that people could see that she no longer influenced public policy. At the same time he should permit the State Duma to announce the intention to form a 'responsible government'.

"Rodzyanko wrote to plead with Nicholas to get rid of his government and appoint a new one, warning that, if Protopopov remained in office, there would be trouble on the streets. Golitsyn, chairman of the Council of Ministers, gave eager support to Rodzyanko, and they both urged the emperor to recognize the urgency of the situation. A cabinet had to be formed that might command broader political backing, and the idea was proposed that either Prince Lvov or Rodzyanko himself should head it. Grand Duke Mikhail called Alexeev on the direct line, begging him to contact Golitsyn and put the same case to Nicholas. Although Alexeev was suffering from a fever at the time, he found the strength to leave his bed and seek an audience, and he pleaded with Nicholas along the lines that Rodzyanko and Golitsyn had asked. Nicholas heard him out but refused to change his position: he had made up his mind [correctly] that people were out to deceive him or were themselves deceived. He left Rodzyanko's telegram without an answer. He did, though, write to Golitsyn stating briskly that a change of government was inappropriate in the current situation..." (V.M.)

one of the Great Princes on the throne). And some of the Great Princes directly joined the revolution. There were still some members of the Council of Ministers and the State Council in the Mariinsky Palace. They advised Protopopov (who was especially hated by 'society') to say that he was ill, which he did. Prince Golitsyn telegraphed the Tsar with a request that he be retired and that he grant a 'responsible ministry'. His Majesty replied that he was appointing a new leader of the Petrograd garrison, and gave an order for the movement of troops against Petrograd. He gave Golitsyn all rights in civil administration since he considered 'changes in the personal composition (of the government) to be inadmissible in the given circumstances'. His Majesty was very far from a 'non-resistance to evil' Tolstoyan! On the same day, the 27th, he gave an order to send a whole group of military units that were brave and faithful to the Fatherland from all three fronts to Petrograd, and told everyone that on the 28th he would personally go to the capital. At the same time his Majesty ordered General N.I. Ivanov to move on Petrograd immediately with a group of 700 Georgievsky cavalrymen, which he did the next day. At that time, on February 27, the ministers and courtiers, gathering together for the last time, suddenly received the news that an armed crowd was heading for the Mariinsky Palace. They decided to disperse! They dispersed forever! The crowd came and began to sack and loot the Mariinsky.

*"It was all over with the government of Russia.* On the evening of the 27th, as has been noted, there took place the first session of the Soviet of Workers' Deputies, who elected Chkheidze as their president. They also elected a 'literary commission' and ordered the publication of the Soviet's *Izvestia*. At that point, on the night from the 27th to the 28th, the Provisional Committee of the State Duma began to try and persuade Rodzyanko 'to take power into his hands', since, in the words of Miliukov, 'the leaders of the army were in cahoots with him'. 15 minutes of tormented waiting passed. Finally, Rodzyanko agreed. The Provisional Committee proclaimed itself to be the 'power' of Russia. But..., as became clear, with the prior agreement of the Soviet's Executive Committee! From that moment all the members of the Provisional Government, that is, the first 'echelon', would be led by the leaders of the Soviet, that is, the second 'echelon' of the revolution, although few knew about that.

"On February 28th the uprising spread to the suburbs of Petrograd. In Kronstadt drunken soldiers killed Admiral Viren and tens of officers. In Tsarkoye Selo the troops who were guarding the Family of his Majesty [under the command of Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich] declared that they were 'neutral'.

"At 6 o'clock in the morning of February 28, 1917 Rodzyanko twice telegraphed General Alexeyev in Headquarters. The first telegram informed him that 'power has passed to the Provisional Committee', while the second said that this new power, 'with the support of the troops and with the

sympathy of the population' would soon instill complete order and 're-establish the activity of the government institutions'. It was all a lie!"<sup>793</sup>

A little before this, at 3 a.m., Grand Duke Michael "was driven with a military escort to the Winter Palace, only just escaping the revolutionaries by accelerating away. At the palace he found General Khabalov and a thousand loyal troops, but ordered them not to defend the palace..."<sup>794</sup>

It was during the night of February 27-28 that the February revolution reached its first climax. When the government led by Golitsyn collapsed, and as long as the Tsar and General Ivanov were still on their way to Petrograd, Rodzyanko could have seized power as being the leader of the Duma, the only other lawful organ of power in the city. But he hesitated; and while the Duma deputies wasted time on speeches, precious time was lost. Meanwhile, in room number 12 of the same building, the Tauride palace, in which the Duma was meeting, a new, completely illegal organ of power, the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' deputies, was being formed. On hearing of this, writes Yakoby, "the group of Rodzyanko and Milyukov entered into negotiations with the leaders of the Soviet, and at exactly midnight these negotiations led to the creation of an executive committee of the State Duma, on which power was temporarily conferred.

"This committee seemed quite moderate in its composition, although representatives of the rightist parties were not admitted into it, and the representatives of the leftists - Kerensky and Chkeidze - were given a very prominent role. In essence, this was the most complete capitulation of the 'bourgeois' elements of the revolution before the representatives of the proletariat. Never in their wildest dreams had Rodzyanko and those who thought like him gone further than a constitutional monarchy ruled by the highest financial circles and headed by a Sovereign playing only a decorative role. That noisy and disheveled monster that suddenly jumped from room number 12 like a demon from a box finally confused the irreconcilable opponents of 'tsarism'..."<sup>795</sup>

For at that point, continues Yakobi, "Rodzyanko suggested to the socialists of the Soviet that they take power completely themselves. A pitiful recognition of helplessness, a complete capitulation of the bourgeois elements before the fist of the Second International, which was preparing the way for Bolshevism! But the Soviet refused. The 'bourgeoisie had started the revolution, they themselves were obliged to dig the grave in which their hopes would be buried.

"The Soviet used the same methods for exerting pressure on the Duma committee as had been applied by the opposition to terrorize the Tsarist Government - frighten them with the spectre of bloodshed: but Chkeidze and

---

<sup>793</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 478-481.

<sup>794</sup> Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 618.

<sup>795</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.

the other agents of Bolshevism played their game more decisively than Rodzyanko. The slightest attempt at resistance was suppressed with the aid of an artificially elicited disturbance of the mob in the street.”<sup>796</sup>

On March 1 the composition of the Provisional Committee was announced. It contained two leaders of the Soviet: Kerensky and Chkeidze, together with Rodzyanko, Shulgin, Miliukov, Konovalov, Dmitriukov, Rzhnevsky, Shidlovskiy, Nekrasov, Lvov.<sup>797</sup>

On the same day Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich composed and signed a manifesto in the name of the Tsar giving a constitution. (This was the same date on which Tsar Alexander II had been killed after signing a similar document!) He sent it to the Tsarina for her signature, but she refused, for no signature could take the place of the Tsar's in such an act. He then sent it to Grand Dukes Michael Alexandrovich and Cyril Vladimirovich, who both signed it. It was then sent to Miliukov, who glanced at it and then stuffed it carelessly into his portfolio, saying: “That's an interesting document” ...<sup>798</sup>

---

<sup>796</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

<sup>797</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>798</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, pp. 159-160.

<sup>798</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, p. 170.

## 54. THE ABDICATION OF TSAR NICHOLAS

However, all was not lost yet: the Master of the House had not yet appeared on the scene... On February 28, the Tsar, having sent Ivanov to crush the revolution in Petrograd, set off by train from Army Headquarters to his family in Tsarskoye Selo. He had been delayed several critical hours by the open disobedience of Quarter-master General Lukomsky, who tried to make him stay at Headquarters.<sup>799</sup> Then, in accordance with Guchkov's plan, the train was stopped first at Malaya Vishera, then at Dno. This was supposedly because the stations further down the line were in the hands of the rebels. <sup>800</sup> The Russian word "Dno" means "bottom" or "abyss" - it was precisely at this spot that Imperial Russia reached the bottom of her historical path, and Orthodox Russia stood at the edge of the abyss...

Lebedev continues: "Movement along the railway lines was already controlled by the appointee of the Masons and revolutionary Bublikov (a former assistant of the Minister of Communications). Incidentally, he later admitted: 'One disciplined division from the front would have been sufficient to put down the rebellion'. But Alexeyev, Brusilov and Ruzsky *did not allow even one* division as far as Petrograd, as we shall now see! It was decided to direct the Tsar's train to Pskov, so as then to attempt to get through to Tsarskoye Selo via Pskov. The Tsar hoped that the whole situation could be put right by General Ivanov, who at that moment was moving towards Tsarskoye Selo by another route. So everything was arranged so that his Majesty should be in Pskov, where the Headquarters of the Commander of the Northern Front, General Ruzsky, was. The Tsar was very much counting on him. Not knowing that he was one of the main traitors... It has to be said again that this lack of knowledge was not the result of bad work on the part of the police. The Masons had done their conspiring well. Moreover, it did not enter the heads either of the police or of his Majesty that fighting generals, commanders of fronts, the highest ranks in the army, 'the most noble gentlemen' from the Duma, the ministries and institutions could be plotters!...

"On March 1 there arrived at the Duma new military units, or their deputations, with declarations of fidelity to 'the new power'. At 4 o'clock in the afternoon there arrived Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich at the head of the Guards Naval Squadron.<sup>801</sup> He told Rodzyanko that he was at his disposal...

"On the same March 1 the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies issued the famous 'Order No. 1' to the army, signed by the Mason N.D. Sokolov. Its essence was that soldiers' committees should be elected by the troops and that only those orders of the Military Commission of the State Duma should be

---

<sup>799</sup> Yakoby, *op. cit.*, p. 166.

<sup>800</sup> "The plotters had earlier prepared a group to seize the train from among the reserve Guards units in the so-called Arakcheev barracks in Novgorod province. That is why the train had to be stopped nearer these barracks, and not in Pskov" (Sedova, "Ne Tsar...", p. 4).

<sup>801</sup> According to Buxgoevden, he withdrew his men to Petrograd from the garrison at the Alexandrovsky palace in Tsarskoye Selo, where the Royal Family was, on the morning of March 2 (*op. cit.*, p. 408). (V.M.)

carried out which did not contradict the orders of the Soviet (!), and that all the weapons of the army should be at the disposal and under the control of the company and battalion elected committees and in no circumstances were 'to be given to the officers, even at their demand'. Saluting and addressing [officers] by their titles were also rescinded. This was the beginning of the collapse of the Russian army. After the departure of his Majesty from Stavka General Alexeyev at 1.15 a.m. on March 1, without the knowledge of the Tsar, sent General Ivanov telegram No. 1833, which for some reason he dated February 28, in which he held Ivanov back from decisive actions by referring to 'private information' to the effect that 'complete calm had arrived' in Petrograd, that the appeal of the Provisional Government spoke about 'the inviolability of the monarchical principle in Russia', and that everyone was awaiting the arrival of His Majesty in order to end the matter through peace, negotiations and the averting of 'civil war'. Similar telegrams with completely false information were sent at the same time to all the chief commanders (including Ruzsky). The source of this lie was the Masonic 'headquarters' of Guchkov. 'Brother' Alexeyev could not fail to believe the 'brothers' from the capital, moreover he passionately *wanted to believe*, since only in this could there be a 'justification' of his treacherous actions."

Meanwhile, writes the Brotherhood of the Protecting Veil of the Mother of God, "England and France, having betrayed their duty as allies, even before the abdication of his Majesty Nicholas II, supported the revolution and officially declared on March 1/14 through their ambassadors that they were 'entering into business relations with the Provisional Executive Committee of the State Duma, as being the expression of the true will of the people and the only lawful temporary government of Russia'.

"Prime Minister Lloyd George in the British parliament welcomed 'with a feeling of the most lively joy' the overthrow of the Russian Tsar and openly admitted: 'The British government is sure that these events mark the beginning of a new epoch in the history of the world, being the first victory of the principles for which we began the war'; 'loud cries of approval resounded from all around'. Commenting on this declaration, the English newspaper *Daily News* characterized the February revolution as 'the greatest of all victories sustained by the Allies up to now... This coup is an incomparably more important event than the victory on the front'..."

Lebedev continues: "General Ivanov slowly, but surely moved towards the capital. The railwaymen were forced, under threat of court martial, to carry out his demands. At the stations, where he was met by revolutionary troops, he acted simply - by commanding them: 'On your knees!' They immediately carried out the command, casting their weapons on the ground..."<sup>802</sup>

---

<sup>802</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 477-482.



However, Ivanov got no further than Vyritsa, from where he was summoned to Mogilev after the abdication of the Tsar.<sup>803</sup>

“Meanwhile, continues Lebedev, “the Tsar arrived in Pskov. On the evening of March 1, 1917 there took place between him and General Ruzsky a very long and difficult conversation. N.V. Ruzsky, who thought the same about the situation in the capital as Alexeyev, on the instructions of Rodzyanko kept saying unashamedly to the members of the royal suite: ‘*It remains only to cast ourselves on the mercy of the conquerors*’, supposing that ‘the conquerors’ were the Masonic ‘Progressive Bloc’ of the State Duma... Unexpectedly for Nicholas II, Ruzsky ‘heatedly’ began to demonstrate to him the necessity of a ‘responsible ministry’.<sup>804</sup> His Majesty calmly objected: ‘*I am responsible before God and Russia for everything that has happened and will happen*; it does not matter whether the ministers will be responsible before the Duma and the State Council. If I see that what the ministers are doing is not for the good of Russia, I will never be able to agree with them, comforting myself with the thought that the matter is out of my hands.’ The Tsar went on to go through the qualities of all the main actors of the Duma and the ‘Bloc’, showing that none of them had the necessary qualities to rule the country. However, all this was not simply an argument on political questions between two uninvolved people. From time to time in the course of this strange conversation his Majesty received witnesses to the fact that this was the position not only of Ruzsky, but also of Alexeyev. The latter sent a panicky telegram from Headquarters about the necessity *immediately* of bestowing ‘a responsible ministry’ and even sent him the text of a *royal manifesto* composed by him to this effect! Besides, it turned out that his Majesty *could not* even communicate with anyone by direct line! The Tsar sent Voeikov (the palace commandant) to telegraph his reply to Alexeyev. Voeikov demanded access to the telegraph apparatus from General Davydov (also a traitor from Ruzsky’s headquarters). Ruzsky heard the conversation and declared that it was impossible to hand over the apparatus. Voeikov said that he was only carrying out ‘the command of his Majesty’. Ruzsky said that ‘he would not take such an insult (!), since he, Ruzsky, was the commander-in-chief here, and his Majesty’s communications *could not* take place through his headquarters without his, Ruzsky’s, knowledge, and that at the present worrying time he, Ruzsky *would not allow* Voeikov to use the apparatus at all! The Tsar understood that practically speaking *he was already separated from the levers and threads of power*. The members of his suite also understood this. One of them recalled that the behaviour and words of Ruzsky (on casting themselves ‘on the mercy of the conquerors’) ‘undoubtedly indicated that not only the Duma and Petrograd, but also the higher commanders at the front were acting *in complete agreement* and had decided to carry out *a coup*. We were

---

803 Buksgevdén, *op. cit.*, p. 408. According to Norman Lowe, Ivanov and his troops “were stopped because railway workers had torn up the tracks, when the soldiers learned what had happened in Petrograd” (*Mastering Twentieth-Century Russian History*, Houndmill: Palgrave, 2002, p. 82).

804 ““One must accept the formula ‘the monarch reigns but the government rules’, explained Ruzsky. This, explained the emperor, was incomprehensible to him, and he would need to be differently educated, born again. He could not take decisions against his conscience.” (Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 619). (V.M.)

only perplexed when this took place.<sup>805</sup> It began 'to take place' already in 1915, but *the final* decision was taken by Alexeyev and Ruzsky during a telephone conversation they had with each other on the night *from February 28 to March 1*. I. Solonevich later wrote that 'of all the weak points in the Russian State construction *the heights of the army* represented *the weakest point*. And all the plans of his Majesty Emperor Nicholas Alexandrovich were shattered *precisely at this point*'.

"In view of the exceptional and extraordinary importance of the matter, we must *once again* ask ourselves: why was it precisely this point in the 'construction' that turned out to be the weakest? And once again we reply: because it was eaten up from within by the rust of *Masonry*, its propaganda. Then there is one more question: how did this become possible in the Russian Imperial army? And again the reply: only because, since the time of *Peter I*, through the implanting of *Masonry* into Russia, the ideological *idol* of 'service to Russia and the Fatherland' was raised in the consciousness of the nobility, and in particular the serving, *military nobility*, *above* the concept of service to God and the Tsar, as was demanded by the direct, spiritual-mystical *meaning of the Oath* given by the soldiers *personally*, not to some abstraction, but to a given, concrete *Sovereign before God!* The emperors of the 19th century did not pay due attention to this danger, or were not able to destroy this idol-worship. In truth, the last of them, his Majesty Nicholas II, was now paying in full for this, '*suffering for the mistakes of his predecessors*'.

"Seeing the extreme danger of the situation, at 0.20 a.m. on the night from March 1 to March 2 the Tsar sent this telegram to General Ivanov, who had already reached Tsarskoye Selo: 'I ask you to undertake no measures before my arrival and your report to me.' It is possible that, delighted at this text, Ruzsky, behind the back of his Majesty, *on his own authority* and against the will of the Tsar, immediately *rescinded* the sending of soldiers of the Northern Front to support Ivanov and ordered them to *return* the military echelons which had already been sent to Petrograd. *At the same time* Alexeyev from Headquarters, *in the name of his Majesty, but without his knowledge and agreement*, ordered all the units of the South-Western and Western fronts that had earlier been sent to Petrograd to return and stop the loading of those who had only just begun to load. The faithful officers of the Preobrazhensky regiment recalled with pain how they had had to submit to this command. They did not know that this was not the command of the Tsar, but that *Alexeyev had deceived them!*"

"At 2 a.m., now on 2 March," writes Montefiore, "Nicholas agreed to appoint Rodzianko prime minister, while he retained autocratic power. Then he went to bed. Ruzsky informed Rodzianko, who replied at 3.30 a.m., 'It's obvious neither his Majesty nor you realize what's going on here...there is no return to the past. The threatening demands for an abdication in favour of the

---

<sup>805</sup> As we have seen, however, Guchkov claimed that the generals were not initiated into the plot, but acted independently. Sedova agrees with this assessment, as, it would seem, did Oldenburg. (V.M.)

son with Michael Alexandrovich as regent are becoming quite definite.’<sup>806</sup> In the course of that evening the bewhiskered gents of the Duma, who wished to preserve the monarchy, and the leather-capped Marxists of the Petrograd Soviet, who wanted a republic, had compromised to form a Provisional Government – and seek Nicholas’s abdication in favour of Alexei. The new premier was Prince Lvov, with Kerensky as justice minister. Now that they knew Nicholas was in Pskov, the Dumas sent two members, Guchkov and Vasily Shulgin, to procure his abdication. They set off immediately.”<sup>807</sup>

However, as Lebedev writes, “Rodzianko again, without any gnawing of conscience, *lied* to Alexeyev and Ruzsky that the Provisional Government had complete control of the situation, that ‘everybody obeyed him (i.e. Rodzianko) alone’ ...<sup>808</sup> He was hiding the fact that ‘everyone’ (that is, the Soviet first of all) *was frightened*, as of fire, of the return of the Tsar to the capital! For they were not sure even of the mutinous reservists, and if even only one warlike unit (even if only a division) were to arrive from the front – that would be the end for them all and for the revolution! We can see what the real position of the Provisional Government was from the fact that already on March 1 the Soviet had *expelled* it from its spacious accommodation in the Tauris palace, which it occupied itself, into less spacious rooms, and refused Rodzianko a train to go to negotiate with the Tsar. So Rodzianko was compelled to *beg*. The Soviet gave him two soldiers to go to the post, since on the road the ‘ruler of Russia’, whom everyone supposedly obeyed, might be attacked or completely beaten up... One of the main leaders of the Soviet in those days was Sukhanov (Himmer). In his notes he conveyed an accurate general picture of the state of things. It turns out that the ‘progressivists’ of the Duma on that very night of March 1 in a humiliating way *begged* Himmer, Nakhamkes and Alexandrovich to *allow* them to create a ‘government’. Himmer wrote: ‘The next word was mine. I noted either we could restrain the masses or nobody could. The real power, therefore, was with us or with nobody. There was only one way out: agree to *our* conditions and accept them as *the government programme*.’ And the Provisional Committee (the future ‘government’) *agreed*! Even Guchkov (!) refused to take part in such a government. He joined it later, when the Bolsheviks *allowed* them to *play a little* at a certain self-sufficiency and supposed ‘independence’ before the public.

---

<sup>806</sup> During the conversation between Ruzsky and Rodzianko, Rodzianko said: “It is obvious that His Majesty and you have not taken what is happening here into account. One of the most terrible revolutions has begun, which it will not be so easy to overcome... The people’s passions are so inflamed that it will hardly be possible to contain them, troops are completely demoralized – they not only disobey but murder their officers; hatred of Her Majesty the Empress has reached extremes. To avoid bloodshed, we were forced to imprison all the ministers except for War and Navy, in the Peter and Paul Fortress. I very much fear that I will meet the same fate, because protests are directed against any whose demands are more moderate or limited. I consider it necessary to inform you that what you have proposed is already insufficient and that the dynastic question has been raised point-blank.” (*The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, pp. 231-232). (V.M.)

<sup>807</sup> Montefiore, *op. cit.*, pp. 619-620. The Duma was terrified of the mob. So “the gods of the revolution needed a sacrifice. That sacrifice had to be the Tsar” (Yakobi, *op. cit.*, p. 174).

<sup>808</sup> Rodzianko’s vainglorious remark was proved to be wrong by the fact that when the Provisional Government was constituted, he himself was not part of it! (V.M.)

“... But Rodzianko lied and *deceived the generals*, since it was his direct responsibility before the ‘senior brothers’ by all means not to allow the arrival of military units and the Tsar into Petrograd at that moment!

“At 10.15 a.m. on March 2 Alexeyev on his own initiative sent to all the front-commanders and other major military leaders a telegram in which, conveying what Rodzianko was saying about the necessity of the abdication of his Majesty for the sake of *the salvation of the Monarchy, Russia and the army*, and for victory over the external foe, he added *personally on his own part..: ‘It appears that the situation does not allow any other resolution.’* By 2.30 on March 2 the replies of the commanders had been received. Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich replied, referring to the ‘fateful situation’: ‘I, as a faithful subject (?!), consider it necessary, in accordance with the duty of the oath and in accordance with the spirit of the oath, *to beseech Your Imperial Majesty on my knees*’ (... to abdicate). General Brusilov (the future Bolshevik ‘inspector of cavalry’) also replied that without the abdication ‘Russia will collapse’. General Evert expressed the opinion that ‘it is impossible to count on the army in its present composition for the suppression of disorders’. This was not true! The army as a whole, and some units in particular, was devoted to his Majesty. Masonic and revolutionary propaganda was indeed being carried out in it, but it did not have the necessary success *as long as the Tsar remained at the head of his Army*. General Sakharov, while reviling the Duma for all he was worth (‘a thieving band of men... which has taken advantage of a propitious moment’), nevertheless, ‘sobbing, was forced to say that abdication was the most painless way out’... To these replies Alexeyev appended his own opinion, which was also in favour of the abdication of the Tsar. Only the commander of the Guards Cavalry, General Khan-Hussein of Nakhichevan (a Muslim) remained faithful to the Russian Orthodox Autocrat! ‘I beseech you not to refuse to lay at the feet of His Majesty the boundless devotion of the Guards Cavalry and our readiness to die for our adored Monarch’, was his reply to Alexeyev. But the latter *did not pass on* this reply to the Tsar in Pskov. They also did not tell him that Admiral Rusin in Headquarters had more or less accused Alexeyev and his assistant General Lukomsky of ‘*treason*’ when they had suggested that the admiral sign the text of a general telegram to his Majesty in the name of all the commanders expressing the opinion that abdication was necessary. Then Rusin voluntarily refused to serve the enemies of Russia and resigned his post. So at that time there were still leaders who were completely faithful to the Tsar, and not only traitors like Alexeyev, Lukomsky, Ruzsky and Danilov, or like Generals Brusilov, Polivanov, Manikovsky, Bonch-Bruyevich, Klembovsky, Gatovsky, Boldyrev and others, who tried to please the Bolsheviks. At 10 a.m. on March 2 his Majesty was speaking to Ruzsky about the abdication: ‘If it is necessary that I should step aside for the good of Russia, I am ready, but I am afraid that the people will not understand this’... At this point they brought the text of Alexeyev’s telegram to the commanders. It was decided to wait for the replies. By 3 p.m. the replies had arrived from Headquarters. Ruzsky, accompanied by Danilov and Savich, came with the text of the telegram to his Majesty’s carriage. The Tsar, as Danilov recalled, ‘seemed calm, but was paler than usual: it was evident that he had passed most of the night without sleep. He was dressed in

a dark blue Circassian coat, with a dagger in a silver sheath in his belt.' Having sat down at the table, his Majesty began to listen to Ruzsky. He informed him of the events of the past hours and handed the Tsar the replies of the commanders. The Tsar read them. Ruzsky, 'emphasizing each word', began to expound his own opinion, which consisted in the fact that his Majesty had to act *as the generals advised him*. The Tsar asked the opinion of those present. Danilov and Savich said the same as Ruzsky. 'A deathly silence ensued,' wrote Danilov. 'His Majesty was visibly perturbed. Several times he unconsciously looked at the firmly drawn window of the carriage.' His Majesty's widowed mother, Empress Maria Fyodorovna, later, from the words of her son, affirmed that Ruzsky had even dared to say: 'Well, decide.'" 809

"Nicholas was shaken. His face paled. He stood up, went to the window of the car, opened it, and stuck out his head. In the car absolute quiet reigned. No one spoke, and most, recognizing how critical this moment was for all of Russian history, breathed with difficulty.

"If Nicholas disregarded the condition of the political leaders in St. Petersburg and of his generals, what could be accomplished afterward? The army and even his faithful guard had deserted. And even if he found faithful troops who would support him, the only option would be military confrontation with the rebels. That, in fact, essentially signified a civil war in the midst of the war with Germany, who would wholeheartedly rejoice in this development. Such a thing must not be permitted. It would mean handing Russia over to her enemies. Furthermore, such immediate and almost unanimous judgement from all the generals showed that his abdication had already been discussed in detail, and that they had already decided to demand it at the first opportunity...

"Turning back to those present, Nicholas said:

"'Are you sure - can you promise - that my abdication will benefit Russia?'

"'Your Majesty, it is the only thing to save Russia at the present crisis,' they replied.

"Then he stated with a steady and clear voice:

"'For the sake of the well-being, peace, and salvation of Russia, which I passionately love, I am prepared to abdicate from the throne in favour of my son. I ask you all to serve him truly and sincerely.'

"As soon as he finished this sentence, he made the sign of the Cross. At 3.00 PM Nicholas signed the official document of his abdication and transfer of power to his son."<sup>810</sup>

---

809 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 481-486.

<sup>810</sup> *The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, pp. 232, 233.

In the night of March 14-15 the Duma's Provisional Committee "had chosen two of its members, Alexander Guchkov and Vasili Shulgin, to travel by rail to Pskov and call upon Nicholas to abdicate. The journey took them seven hours, being frequently disrupted by troops who crowded every station on the way. Guchkov and Shulgin reached their destination at 10 p.m. on 15 March 1917. By that time the entire political environment had changed in Petrograd because the Provisional Committee, meeting early in the afternoon, threw its lot in with the revolution and established a Provisional Government with Georgi Lvov as minister-chairman. The new cabinet declared freedom of the press, organization and assembly while committing itself to holding elections to a Constituent Assembly on the basis of universal adult suffrage. Ministers felt that Russia's performance in the Great War would benefit from the revolution that they headed. They were convinced that Nicholas's removal would allow them to rally patriotic support. Obviously it would ease the situation if he could be persuaded to step down without a struggle - and this sharpened the importance of the mission that Guchkov and Shulgin were carrying out."<sup>811</sup>

Before they arrived, Nicholas had a conversation with the Tsarevich's doctor, Feodorov, who confirmed that his haemophilia was incurable, what that would mean for his carrying out of his duties, and the fact that he would never be allowed to leave Russia. So by the time Guchkov and Shulgin arrived, the Tsar had decided to keep Alexei with himself and abdicate in favour, not of his son, but of his brother Michael, which was not in accordance with Tsar Paul's Basic Laws, but was in accordance with what historically had been considered to be within the autocrat's rights.

On their arrival holding the text of the manifesto they had composed, Guchkov and Shulgin "found that it was not necessary. The Tsar gave them his. And they had to admit with shame how much more powerful, spiritual and majestic in its simplicity was the manifesto written by the Tsar than their talentless composition.<sup>812</sup> They *begged* the Tsar to *appoint* Prince Lvov as President of the Council of Ministers and General L.G. Kornilov as Commander of the Petrograd military district. The Tsar signed the necessary orders. These were the last appointments made by *the Tsar*.

"Seeing themselves as the controllers of the destinies and rulers of Russia, Guchkov and Shulgin both arrived in a concealed manner, bewildered, unshaven, in noticeably dirty collars, and departed with all the papers they had been given in a conspiratorial manner, looking around them and concealing themselves from 'the people' whom they thought to rule... Thieves and

---

<sup>811</sup> Service, *The Last Tsar*, p. 25.

<sup>812</sup> Shulgin wrote: "How pitiful seemed to me the sketch that we had brought him... It is too late to guess whether his Majesty could have not abdicated. Taking into account the position that General Ruzsky and General Alexeyev held, the possibility of resistance was excluded: his Majesty's orders were no longer passed on, the telegrams of those faithful to him were not communicated to him... In abdicating, his Majesty at least retained the possibility of appealing to the people with his own last word" (in S.S. Oldenburg, *Tsarstvovanie Imperatora Nikolaia II* (The Reign of Emperor Nicholas II), Belgrade, 1939, vol. 2, p. 253). (V.M.)

robbers! Guchkov's plan had been carried out, while as for Guchkov himself – what a boundlessly pitiful situation did this very clever Mason find himself in, he who had worked for so many years to dig a hole under Tsar Nicholas II!

“Nicholas II's manifesto declared: ‘During the days of the great struggle against the external foe which, in the space of almost three years, has been striving to enslave our Native Land, it has pleased the Lord God to send down upon Russia a new and difficult trial. The national disturbances that have begun within the country threaten to reflect disastrously upon the further conduct of the stubborn war. The fate of Russia, the honour of our heroic army, the well-being of the people, the entire future of our precious Fatherland demand that the war be carried out to a victorious conclusion, come what may. The cruel foe is exerting what remains of his strength, and nor far distant is the hour when our valiant army with our glorious allies will be able to break the foe completely. In these decisive days in the life of Russia, We have considered it a duty of conscience to make it easy for Our people to bring about a tight-knit union and cohesion of all our national strength, in order that victory might be the more quickly attained, and, in agreement with the State Duma We have concluded that it would be a good thing to abdicate the Throne of the Russian State and to remove Supreme Power from Ourselves. Not desiring to be separated from Our beloved Son, We transfer Our legacy to Our Brother Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich, and bless Him to ascend the Throne of the Russian State. We command Our Brother to conduct State affairs fully and in inviolable unity with the representatives of those men who hold legislative office, upon those principles which they shall establish, swearing an inviolable oath to that effect. In the name of our ardently beloved Native Land We call upon all faithful sons of the Fatherland to fulfil their sacred duty before it, by submitting to the Tsar during the difficult moment of universal trials, and, aiding Him, together with the representatives of the people, to lead the Russian State out upon the path of victory, well-being and glory. May the Lord God help Russia. Pskov. 2 March, 15.00 hours. 1917. Nicholas.’ Countersigned by the Minister of the Court Count Fredericks.<sup>813</sup>

Nicholas came out with this revised manifesto at 11.40 p.m. However, “so that it might not be said that he had acted under pressure he pre-timed the manifesto at 3 p.m. the same day. Guchkov and Shulgin received what they wanted. According to Alexander Kerensky,... the news was immediately communicated that night by a direct line to Petrograd. Nicholas also wrote a letter to Prince Georgi Lvov putting his security into his hands. It was over. The emperor of all Russia had stepped down from the throne without a fight... At 1.45 a.m. on [3/]16 March 1917, he sent the following telegram to his brother Mikhail: ‘Petrograd. To His Highness – I hope to see you soon. Nicky.’ This was the first time that anyone had addressed the Grand Duke in that way.”<sup>814</sup>

---

<sup>813</sup> Lebedev's text has been slightly altered to include the whole text of the manifesto (V.M.). For more on the text of the manifesto, and proof that it was written by the Tsar himself, see “Manifest ob otrechenii i oktiabrskij pervorot: Kniaz' Nikolai Davydovich Zhevakov” (1874-1939)”, <http://www.zhevakhov.info/?p=465>.

<sup>814</sup> Service, *The Last Tsar*, pp. 27-28.

As Lebedev writes, the Tsar also asked the new Emperor's forgiveness "that he 'had not been able to warn' him. But this telegram *did not reach* its addressee.

"Then the train set off. Left on his own, in his personal compartment, the Tsar prayed for a long time by the light only of a lampada that burned in front of an icon. Then he sat down and wrote in his diary: 'At one in the morning I left Pskov greatly affected by all that had come to pass. All around me I see treason, cowardice, and deceit.'

"This is the condition that *reigned* at that time in 'society', and especially in democratic, Duma society, in the highest army circles, in a definite part of the workers and reservists of Petrograd..."<sup>815</sup>

\*

The autocrat, according to the Orthodox understanding, can rule only in partnership or "symphony" with the Church. Moreover, the leaders of neither Church nor State can rule if the people reject them; for in Deuteronomy 17.14 the Lord had laid it down as one of the conditions of the creation of a God-pleasing monarchy that the people should *want* a God-pleasing king.<sup>816</sup> In view of this, the Tsar, who very well understood the true meaning of the autocracy, could not continue to rule if the Church and people did not want it. Just as it takes two willing partners to make a marriage, so it takes a head and a body who are willing to work with each other to make a Christian state. The bridegroom in this case was willing and worthy, but the bride was not...

In an important address entitled "Tsar and Patriarch", P.S. Lopukhin approaches this question by noting that the Tsar's role was one of *service*, service in the Church and for the Church. And its purpose was to bring people to the Church and keep them there, in conditions maximally conducive to their salvation. But if the people of the Church, in their great majority, cease to understand the Tsar's role in that way, then he becomes literally of no service to them.

"The understanding of, and love and desire for, the 'tsar's service' began to wane in Russia. Sympathy began to be elicited, by contrast, by the bases of the rationalist West European state, which was separated from the Church, from the religious world-view. The idea of the democratic state liberated from all obligation in relation to God, the Church and the spiritual state of the people began to become attractive. The movement in this direction in the Russian

---

<sup>815</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 488-489.

<sup>816</sup> As Lev Alexandrovich Tikhomirov writes: "Without establishing a kingdom, Moses foresaw it and pointed it out in advance to Israel... It was precisely Moses who pointed out in advance the two conditions for the emergence of monarchical power: it was necessary, first, that the people itself should recognize its necessity, and secondly, that the people itself should not elect the king over itself, but should present this to the Lord. Moreover, Moses indicated a leadership for the king himself: 'when he shall sit upon the throne of his kingdom, he must... fulfil all the words of this law'." (*Monarkhicheskaia Gosudarstvennost'* (Monarchical Statehood), St. Petersburg, 1992, pp. 127-129).



people was long-standing and stubborn, and it had already a long time ago begun to elicit profound alarm, for this movement was not so much 'political' as spiritual and psychological: the so-called Russian 'liberation' and then 'revolutionary movement' was mainly, with rare and uncharacteristic exceptions, an a-religious and anti-religious movement.

"It was precisely this that elicited profound alarm in the hearts of St. Seraphim, Fr. John of Kronstadt, Dostoyevsky and Metropolitan Anthony...

"This movement developed inexorably, and finally there came the day when his Majesty understood that he was alone in his 'service of the Tsar'...

"The Orthodox Tsar has authority in order that there should be a Christian state, so that there should be a Christian-minded environment. The Tsar bears his tsarist service for this end.

"When the desire for a Christian state and environment is quenched in the people, the Orthodox monarchy loses both the presupposition and the aim of its existence, for nobody can be forced to become a Christian. The Tsar needs Christians, not trembling slaves.

"In the life of a people and of a man there are periods of spiritual darkening, of 'stony lack of feeling', but this does not mean that the man has become completely stony: the days of temptation and darkness pass, and he is again resurrected. When a people is overcome by passions, it is the duty of the authorities by severe means to sober it up and wake it up. And this must be done with decisive vividness, and it is healing, just as a thunderstorm is healing.

"But this can only be done when the blindness is not deep and when he who is punished and woken up understands the righteousness of the punishment. Thus one peasant reproached a landowner, asking why he had not begun to struggle against the pogroms with a machine-gun. "Well, and what would have happened them?" "We would have come to our senses! But now we are drunk and we burn and beat each other."

"But when the spiritual illness has penetrated even into the subconscious, then the application of force will seem to be violence, and not just retribution, then the sick people will not longer be capable of being healed. Then it will be in the state in which was the sinner whom the Apostle Paul 'delivered to Satan for the tormenting of the flesh, so that his spirit may be saved' (I Corinthians 5.5).

"At the moment of his abdication his Majesty felt himself to be profoundly alone, and around him was 'cowardice, baseness and treason', and to the question how he could have abdicated from his tsarist service, it is necessary

to reply: he did this because we abdicated from his tsarist service, from his sacred and sanctified authority..."<sup>817</sup>

Vladimir Lavrov writes: "The headquarters, the senior generals and the commanders of the fronts, the State Duma, all the parties from the Octobrists to the Bolsheviks, and the Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church, joined the side of the revolution, while the noble and monarchist public organizations as it were died out..."<sup>818</sup>

As St. John Maximovich put it: "Calculating malice did its work: it separated Russia from her tsar, and at that terrible moment in Pskov he remained abandoned... The terrible abandonment of the Tsar... But it was not he who abandoned Russia: Russia abandoned him, who loved Russia more than his own life. Seeing this, and in hope that his self-humiliation would calm the stormy passions of the people, his Majesty renounced the throne... They rejoiced who wanted the deposition of the Tsar. The rest were silent. There followed the arrest of his Majesty and the further developments were inevitable... His Majesty was killed, Russia was silent..."

These explanations of why the Tsar abdicated agree with each other and are essentially true. But we can go still further and deeper. Michael Nazarov argues that the Tsar, seeing that it was impossible to stem the tide of apostasy at that time, offered himself as a sacrifice for the enlightenment of *future* generations, in accordance with the revelation given to Metropolitan Macarius (see above): "His Majesty Nicholas II very profoundly felt the meaning of his service as tsar. His tragedy consisted in the fact that at the governmental level of the crisis fewer and fewer co-workers were appearing who would combine in themselves administrative abilities, spiritual discernment and devotion. 'All around me are betrayal and cowardice and deception', wrote his Majesty in his diary on the day of the abdication... Therefore, in the conditions of almost complete betrayal, his humble refusal to fight for power was dictated not only by a striving to avoid civil war, which would have weakened the country before the external enemy. This rejection of power was in some way similar to Christ's refusal to fight for His life before His crucifixion - for the sake of the future salvation of men. Perhaps his Majesty Nicholas II, the most Orthodox of all the Romanovs, intuitively felt that there was already no other way for Russia to be saved - except *the path of self-sacrifice for the enlightenment of descendants*, hoping on the help and the will of God..."<sup>819</sup> For by sacrificing himself in this way, as Metropolitan Anastasy (Gribanovsky) writes, "he saved and preserved for future generations the idea of the Orthodox Tsar, the Anointed of God, for

---

<sup>817</sup> Lopukhin, "Tsar' i Patriarkh" (Tsar and Patriarch), *Pravoslavnij Put'* (The Orthodox Way), Jordanville, 1951, pp. 103-104.

<sup>818</sup> Lavrov, "Mozhno li dostoverno govorit' ob otrechenii Nikolaia II?" (Can one truly speak of the abdication of Nicholas II).

<sup>819</sup> Nazarov, *Kto Naslednik Rossijskogo Prestola?* (Who is the Heir of the Russian Throne?), Moscow, 1996, pp. 72-73. Italics mine (V.M.).

whom power is an unmercenary ascetic service to God and men for the affirmation of goodness, righteousness and peace on earth".<sup>820</sup>

From this point of view it was the will of God that the Tsar abdicate, even though it meant disaster for the Russian people, just as it was the will of God that Christ be crucified, even though it meant the destruction of the Jewish people. Hence the words of Eldress Paraskeva (Pasha) of Sarov (+1915), who had foretold the Tsar's destiny during the Sarov Days: "Your Majesty, descend from the throne yourself".<sup>821</sup> On the one hand, his abdication was wrong both in the sense that it meant "the removal of him who restrains" the coming of the Antichrist (II Thessalonians 2.7) But on the other hand, it was right and inevitable in a mystical, eschatological sense, in that it preserved the Autocracy pure and unimpaired, ready for the time when the bride would awake from her profound sleep and return with penitence and joy to her bridegroom...<sup>822</sup> As Blessed Duniushka of Ussuruisk (+1918) said: "The Tsar will leave the nation, which shouldn't be, but this has been foretold to him from Above. This is his destiny. There is no way that he can evade it..."<sup>823</sup>

\*

In recent times the question has arisen: did the Tsar in fact abdicate?

It has been argued that Tsar Nicholas' abdication had no legal force. First, it would have to have been confirmed by the Senate.<sup>824</sup> Again, as Michael Nazarov points out, the Basic Laws of the Russian Empire, which had been drawn up by Tsar Paul I, "do not foresee the abdication of a reigning Emperor ('from a religious... point of view the abdication of the Monarch, the Anointed of God, is contrary to the act of His Sacred Coronation and Anointing; it would be possible only by means of monastic tonsure' [N. Korevo]). Still less did his Majesty have the right to abdicate for his son in favour of his brother; while his brother Michael Alexandrovich had the right neither to ascend the Throne during the lifetime of the adolescent Tsarevich Alexis, nor to be crowned, since he was married to a divorced woman, nor to transfer power to the Provisional government, nor refer the resolution of the question of the fate of the monarchy to the future Constituent Assembly.

"Even if the monarch had been installed by the will of such an Assembly, 'this would have abolished the Orthodox legitimizing principle of the Basic Laws', so that these acts would have been 'juridically non-existent'<sup>825</sup>... 'Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich... performed only an act in which he

---

<sup>820</sup> Griбанovsky, in S. Fomin and T. Fomina, *Rossia pered Vtorym Prishestviem* (Russia before the Second Coming), Moscow, 1994, vol. II, p. 137.

<sup>821</sup> N. Gubanov (ed.), *Nikolai II-ij i Novie Mucheniki*, St. Petersburg, 2000, p. 70.

<sup>822</sup> On hearing the news of the abdication, the Tsar's earthly bride wrote to him: "I fully understand your action, my own hero... I know that you could not sign against what you swore at your coronation. We know each other through and through - need no words."

<sup>823</sup> <http://www.geocities.com/kitezgrad/prophets/duniushka.html>.

<sup>824</sup> Lavrov, *op. cit.*

<sup>825</sup> M.V. Zyzykin, *Tsarskaia Vlast'*, Sophia, 1924. (V.M.)

expressed his personal opinions and abdication, which had an obligatory force for nobody. Thereby he estranged himself from the succession in accordance with the Basic Laws, which juridically in his eyes did not exist, in spite of the fact that he had earlier, in his capacity as Grand Duke on the day of his coming of age, sworn allegiance to the decrees of the Basic Laws on the inheritance of the Throne and the order of the Family Institution’.

“It goes without saying that his Majesty did not expect such a step from his brother, a step which placed the very monarchical order under question...”<sup>826</sup>

There are also strong reasons for believing that the supposed original of the manifesto, discovered in 1929, is not the original, but a fake...

This is a somewhat academic, legalistic question in that there can be no doubt that, if not *de jure* at any rate *de facto*, the abdication did take place. And it was believed to have taken place by such well-placed witnesses as the Dowager-Empress Maria Fyodorovna, Tsaritsa Alexandra Fyodorovna and Fr. Afanasy Beliaev, the Tsar’s confessor. Moreover, as we have seen, the Tsar addressed his brother as the Tsar in the early morning of March 3/16, which strongly suggests that he recognized that he, Nicholas, was no longer tsar... Nevertheless, this debate highlights the very important fact that, as Lavrov points out, “while *de facto* Nicholas II ceased to be tsar after the February revolution, in a mystical and deeply juridical sense he remained the Russian tsar and died as the Tsar...”<sup>827</sup>

---

<sup>826</sup> Nazarov, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

<sup>827</sup> Lavrov, *op. cit.*

## 55. THE REASONS FOR THE ABDICATION

Why did the Tsar abdicate?

A very important factor, according to Fr. Sergei Chechanichev, was the fact that his family was completely at the mercy of the revolutionaries. Still more important was the impossibility of calling on any substantial forces to execute his decisions, which were consistently ignored.

“The affirmation,” writes Chechanichev, “that in Pskov or in Mogilev there armies or people faithful to his Majesty to whom he could turn, is unproven. There were no faithful people. There was not even anybody to whom he could turn, for everyone had either betrayed him, or indifferently stepped aside, or were simply cowards. As his Majesty noted in his Diary: ‘Around me are betrayal, cowardice and deception.’ ‘Around me’ meant that there did not exist even chinks allowing a choice of ‘free expression of will’. The revolutionaries had surrounded his Majesty very reliably...

“Nor should his Majesty have been obliged to address anybody. In the army there was one’s duty before the Sovereign. They had given oaths of allegiance. It was they who were obliged to address him, not he them.

“In those days only one person loudly proclaimed his allegiance to his Sovereign – Count Theodore Keller. He broke his sabre, refused to swear to the Provisional Government and tried to come to the aid of his Majesty. But his actions were neutralized by General Mannerheim. In a telegram to his Majesty dated March 6 Count Keller wrote that the soldiers ‘listened to the manifesto of your Majesty on your abdication from the All-Russian throne with horror and despair, and were angry and disgusted at the traitors who had forgotten their duty before the Tsar, had forgotten the oath they had given to God.’”<sup>828</sup>

Yana Sedova goes back to the similar crisis of October, 1905. “His Majesty himself explained the reason for his agreement. He wrote that he had to choose between two paths: a dictatorship and a constitution. A dictatorship, in his words, would give a short ‘breathing space’, after which he would ‘again have to act by force within a few months; but this would cost rivers of blood and in the end would lead inexorably to the present situation, that is, the power’s authority would have been demonstrated, but the result would remain the same and reforms could not be achieved in the future’. So as to escape this closed circle, his Majesty preferred to give a constitution with which he was not in sympathy.

“These words about a ‘breathing-space’ after which he would again have to act by force could perhaps have been applied now [in 1917]. In view of the solitude in which his Majesty found himself in 1917, the suppression of the

---

<sup>828</sup> Chechanichev, “Tajna Molchania Gosudaria” (The Mystery of the Tsar’s Silence), *Russkaia Narodnaia Linia*, May 19, 2020.

revolution would have been the cure, not of the illness, but of its symptoms, a temporary anaesthesia – and, moreover, for a very short time.”<sup>829</sup>

“By contrast with Peter I, Tsar Nicholas II of course was not inclined to walk over other people’s bodies. But he, too, was able, in case of necessity, to act firmly and send troops to put down the rebellious city. He could have acted in this way to defend the throne, order and the monarchical principle as a whole. But now he saw how much hatred there was against himself, and that the February revolution was as it were directed only personally against him. He did not want to shed the blood of his subjects to defend, not so much his throne, as himself on the throne...”<sup>830</sup>

Archpriest Lev Lebedev agrees that the Tsar agreed to abdicate because he believed that the general dissatisfaction with his *personal* rule could be assuaged by his *personal* departure from the scene. But he never saw in this the renunciation of the Monarchy and its replacement by a republic; he envisaged only the transfer of power from himself to another member of the Dynasty – his son, under the regency of his brother. This, he thought, would placate the army and therefore ensure victory against Germany.

The Tsar wrote in his diary-entry for March 2: “My abdication is necessary. Ruzsky transmitted this conversation [with Rodzianko] to the Staff HQ, and Alexeyev to all the commanders-in-chief of the fronts. The replies from all arrived at 2:05. The essence is that that for the sake of the salvation of Russia and keeping the army at the front quiet, I must resolve on this step. I agreed. From the Staff HQ they sent the draft of a manifesto. In the evening there arrived from Petrograd Guchkov and Shulgín. I discussed and transmitted to them the signed and edited manifesto. At one in the morning I left Pskov greatly affected by all that had come to pass. All around me I see treason, cowardice, and deceit.”

Commenting on these words, Fr. Lev writes: “The Tsar was convinced that this treason was personally directed to him, and not to the Monarchy, not to Russia! The generals were *sincerely* convinced of the same: they supposed that in betraying the Tsar they were not betraying the Monarchy and the Fatherland, but were even serving them, acting for their true good!... But betrayal and treason to *God’s* Anointed is treason to everything that is headed by him. The Masonic consciousness of the generals, drunk on their supposed ‘real power’ over the army, could not rise even to the level of this *simple* spiritual truth! And meanwhile the traitors had already been *betrayed*, the deceivers *deceived*! Already on the following day, March 3, General Alexeyev, having received more detailed information on what was happening in Petrograd, exclaimed: ‘I shall never forgive myself that I *believed* in the sincerity of certain people, obeyed them and sent the telegram to the commanders-in-

---

<sup>829</sup> Sedova, “Pochemu Gosudar’ ne mog ne otrech’sa?” (Why his Majesty could not avoid abdication), *Nasha Strana*, March 6, 2010, N 2887, p. 2.

<sup>830</sup> Sedova, “Ataka na Gosudaria Sprava” (An Attack on his Majesty from the Right), *Nasha Strana*, September 5, 2009.

chief on the question of the abdication of his Majesty from the Throne! ... In a similar way General Ruzsky quickly '*lost faith* in the new government' and, as was written about him, 'suffered great moral torments' concerning his conversation with the Tsar, and the days March 1 and 2, 'until the end of his life' (his end came in October, 1918, when the Bolsheviks finished off Ruzsky in the Northern Caucasus). But we should not be moved by these belated 'sufferings' and 'recovery of sight' of the generals (and also of some of the Great Princes). They did not have to possess information, nor be particularly clairvoyant or wise; they simply had to be *faithful to their oath* - and nothing more!..

" ... At that time, March 1-2, 1917, the question was placed before the Tsar, his consciousness and his conscience in the following way: the revolution in Petrograd is being carried out under *monarchical* banners: society, the people (Russia!) are standing for the preservation of tsarist power, for the planned carrying on of the war to victory, but this is being hindered only by one thing - general dissatisfaction *personally* with Nicholas II, general distrust of his *personal* leadership, so that if he, for the sake of the good and the victory of Russia, were to depart, he would *save* both the Homeland and the Dynasty!

"Convinced, as were his generals, that everything was like that, his Majesty, who never suffered from love of power (he could be powerful, but not power-loving!), after 3 o'clock in the afternoon of March 2, 1917, immediately sent two telegrams - to Rodzianko in Petrograd and to Alexeyev in Mogilev. In the first he said: '*There is no sacrifice that I would not undertake in the name of the real good of our native Mother Russia.* For that reason I am ready to renounce the Throne in favour of My Son, in order that he should remain with Me until his coming of age, under the regency of My brother, Michael Alexandrovich'. The telegram to Headquarters proclaimed: 'In the name of the good of our ardently beloved Russia, her calm and salvation, I am ready to renounce the Throne in favour of My Son. I ask everyone to serve Him faithfully and unhyprocritically.' His Majesty said, as it were between the lines: 'Not as you have served Me...' Ruzsky, Danilov and Savich went away with the texts of the telegrams.

"On learning about this, Voeikov ran into the Tsar's carriage: 'Can it be true... that You have signed the abdication?' The Tsar gave him the telegrams lying on the table with the replies of the commanders-in-chief, and said: 'What was left for me to do, when they have all betrayed Me? And first of all - Nikolasha (Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich)... Read!'" 831

As in 1905, so in 1917, probably the single most important factor influencing the Tsar's decision was the attitude of his uncle and the former Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich Romanov, "Nikolasha" as he was known in the family. It was indeed the case

---

831 Lebedev, *op. cit.*, pp. 486-488; Voeikov, *op. cit.*, p. 212; Mark Steinberg and Vladimir Khrustalev, *The Fall of the Romanovs*, Yale University Press, 1995, pp. 89-90, citing State Archive of the Russian Federation, document f.601, op. 1, d. 2102, 1.1-2.

that there was very little he could do in view of the treason of the generals and Nikolasha.<sup>832</sup> He could probably continue to defy the will of the social and political élite, as he had done more than once in the past – but not the generals... As S.S. Oldenburg writes: “One can speculate whether his Majesty could have not abdicated. With the position taken by General Ruzsky and General Alexeyev, the possibility of resistance was excluded: the commands of his Majesty were not delivered, the telegrams of those who were loyal to him were not communicated to him. Moreover, they could have announced the abdication without his will: Prince Mark of Baden announced the abdication of the German emperor (9.11.1918) when the Kaiser had by no means abdicated! His Majesty at least retained the possibility of addressing the people with his own last word... His Majesty did not believe that his opponents could cope with the situation. For that reason, to the last moment he tried to keep the steering wheel in his own hands. When that possibility had disappeared – it was clear that he was in captivity – his Majesty wanted at least to do all he could to make the task of his successors easier... Only he did not want to entrust his son to them: he knew that the youthful monarch could not abdicate, and to remove him they might use other, bloody methods. His Majesty gave his opponents everything he could: they still turned out to be powerless in the face of events. The steering wheel was torn out of the hands of the autocrat-‘chauffeur’ and the car fell into the abyss...”<sup>833</sup>

E.E. Alferev echoes this assessment and adds: “The Empress, who had never trusted Ruzsky, on learning that the Tsar’s train had been held up at Pskov, immediately understood the danger. On March 2 she wrote to his Majesty: ‘But you are alone, you don’t have the army with you, you are caught like a mouse in a trap. What can you do?’”<sup>834</sup>

Even if he had been able to count on the support of some military units, the result would undoubtedly have been a civil war, whose outcome was doubtful, but whose effect on the war with Germany could not be doubted: the Germans would have been given a decisive advantage at a critical moment when Russia was about to launch a spring offensive. This last factor was decisive for the Tsar: he would not contemplate undermining the war effort for any reason. For the first duty of an Orthodox Tsar after the defence of the Orthodox faith is the defence of the country against external enemies – and in the case of the war with Germany the two duties coincided.

The Tsar had always steadfastly refused to consider any internal constitutional changes during the war for the very good reason that such changes were bound to undermine the war effort. But his enemies wanted to

---

<sup>832</sup> Nikolasha was blessed by Metropolitan Platon, Exarch of Georgia to ask the Tsar to abdicate. See N.K. Talberg, “K sorokaletiu pagubnogo evlogianskogo raskola” (On the Fortieth Anniversary of the Destructive Eulogian Schism), *Pravoslavnij Put’* (The Orthodox Way), Jordanville, 1966, p. 36; Groyan, *op. cit.*, p. CLXI, note.

<sup>833</sup> Oldenburg, *op. cit.*, pp. 641-642.

<sup>834</sup> Alferev, *Imperator Nikolaj II kak chelovek sil’noj voli* (Emperor Nicholas II as a Man of Strong Will), Jordanville, N.Y.: Holy Trinity Monastery, 1983, 2004, p. 121.



force him to make such changes precisely while the war was still being waged. For, as George Katkov penetratingly observes, the Russian liberals' and radicals' "fear of the military failure and humiliation of Russia was, if we are not mistaken, only the decent cover for another feeling – the profound inner anxiety that the war would end in victory before the political plans of the opposition could be fulfilled, and that the possibilities presented to it by the exceptional circumstances of wartime, would be missed".<sup>835</sup>

\*

Although he had abdicated, the Tsar considered himself to be still Supreme Commander of the Armed Forces. That is why his train now moved towards Mogilev, and why neither Ruzsky nor Alexeyev nor even Guchkov prevented him from returning there.

General Voeikov writes: "Immediately the train had moved from the station, I went into the Tsar's compartment, which was lit by one lampada burning in front of an icon. After all the experiences of that heavy day, the Tsar, who was always distinguished by huge self-possession, could not control himself. He embraced me and sobbed... My heart broke into pieces at the sight of such undeserved sufferings that had fallen to the lot of the noblest and kindest of tsars. He had only just endured the tragedy of abdicating from the throne for himself and his son because of the treason and baseness of the people who had abdicated from him, although they had received only good from him. He was torn away from his beloved family. All the misfortunes sent down upon him he bore with the humility of an ascetic... The image of the Tsar with his tear-blurred eyes in the half-lit compartment will never be erased from my memory to the end of my life..."<sup>836</sup>

"Afterwards, 'I slept long and deeply,' wrote Nicholas. 'Talked with my people about yesterday. Read a lot about Julius Caesar.' Then he remembered Misha: 'to his Majesty Emperor Michael. Recent events have led me to decide irrevocably to take this extreme step. Forgive me if it grieves you and also for no warning – there was no time.'"<sup>837</sup>

At Stavka the Tsar appointed Nikolasha supreme commander of the armed forces, and Prince George Lvov – president of the Council of Ministers of the Provisional Government. For the last time, he listened to a report by General Alexeyev on the military situation. At the end of it, in a low voice he said that it was difficult for him to part from them, and it was sad for him to be present for the last time at a report, "but it is evident that the will of God is stronger than my will".<sup>838</sup>

---

<sup>835</sup> Katkov, *op. cit.*, p. 236.

<sup>836</sup> Voeikov, *op. cit.*, p. 190.

<sup>837</sup> Montefiore, *op. cit.*, p. 623. Well he might remember Julius Caesar. For like Caesar, the Tsar was stabbed in the back on the Ides of March...

<sup>838</sup> Alferov, *op. cit.*, p. 105.

Sister Florence Farmborough, an English Red Cross nurse serving at the Russian Front, writes: "Deprived of Throne and Power, his visit was sorrowful in the extreme. He spent only a few days there and was visited by his mother, the Dowager Empress Marie. There they parted; she, to return to her home in Kiev; he, to return as a prisoner to his family in Tsarskoe Selo [the Village of the Tsar]. Those who saw him in Mogilev were amazed at the self-control and courage with which he carried out the final ceremonies. He wrote to his fighting men on the various Fronts and addressed the troops in person. He told them that he was leaving them because he felt that he was no longer necessary; thanked them for their never-failing loyalty; praised them for their unwavering patriotism and besought them to obey the Provisional Government, to continue the war and to lead Russia to Victory. Only his mournful, hollow eyes, and extreme pallor told of the effort he was making to preserve the calm demanded of him."<sup>839</sup>

"Even before he left Mogilev, vociferous celebrations were taking place in the town; large red flags blazed in the streets; all photographs of himself and family had disappeared; Imperial emblems were being pulled down from walls, cut off uniforms; and, while the ex-Tsar sat alone in his room, the officers who had visited him, cheered his brave words and bowed low – many in tears – before him as he bid them farewell, were at that moment queuing up in the open air, outside his window, to take the Oath of Allegiance to the Provisional Government."<sup>840</sup>

On March 5, in the presence of the Tsar and the Vladimir icon of the Mother of God, a liturgy was served at which the tsar was commemorated but no longer as 'his most autocratic majesty and emperor'. A hum went through the congregation, and many wept.

On March 7 the Provisional Government ordered the arrest of the Tsar, and on March 8 four Duma deputies came to Mogilev and arrested him. This meant that he could not leave Russia (even if he had wanted to, which he and the Tsarina did not), and was the step that led inexorably to his martyrdom in Yekaterinburg the following year...

And for almost a whole week he had continued to lead all the Armed Forces of Russia!... But, although there were many senior officers there who were ready to die for him, the Tsar made no move to make use of his powerful position to march against the revolution. For, according to Lebedev, he was sincerely convinced that "his departure from power could help everyone to

---

<sup>839</sup> Contrary to the confident assertions of some, the Tsar's abdication was welcomed by by no means all the soldiers. Thus General Denikin wrote: "The troops were stunned – it is difficult to define with another word the first impression that the manifestos made. No joy, no sorrow. Silent, concentrated silence... and tears flowed down the cheeks of the old soldiers... There was no resentment personally against the Sovereign nor against the Royal Family. On the contrary, everyone was interested in their fate and feared for it." (*The Romanov Royal Martyrs*, p. 239) (V.M.)

<sup>840</sup> Farmborough, *Nurse at the Russian Front. A Diary 1914-18*, London: Book Club Associates, 1974, pp. 271-272. Alexeyev reported the Tsar's last address to the army to Guchkov, now War Minister. Guchkov forbade the distribution of the speech... (Alferov, p. 108)

come together for the decisive and already very imminent victory over the external enemy (the general offensive was due to take place in April). Let us recall his words to the effect that *there was no sacrifice* which he was not prepared to offer for the good of Russia. In those days the Tsar expressed himself still more definitely: '*... If Russia needs an atoning sacrifice, let me be that sacrifice*'. The Tsar was convinced (and they convinced him) that... the Provisional Government, society and the revolution were all (!) for *the preservation of the Monarchy* and for carrying through the war to a glorious victory..."<sup>841</sup>

Lebedev is not convincing here. The Tsar's first priority was undoubtedly a successful conclusion to the war. After all, on the night of his abdication, he wrote in his diary: "I decided to take this step for the sake of Russia, *and to keep the armies in the field.*" But it is hard to believe that he *still*, after all the treason he had seen around him, believed that "the Provisional Government, society and the revolution [!] are all for the preservation of the Monarchy" ...

It is more likely that he believed that without the cooperation of the generals and the Duma Russia could not win the war, which was the prime objective, upon which everything else depended. And so he abdicated, not because he had any illusions about the Provisional Government, but because, as a true patriot, he wanted Russia to win the war...

One of the best comments on the overthrow of the Tsar in the February revolution came from Winston Churchill, a minister in the British government at the time, but one who, unlike so many others, did not rejoice in the fall of the Tsar: "Surely to no nation has Fate been more malignant than to Russia. Her ship went down in sight of port... Every sacrifice had been made; the toil was achieved... In March the Tsar was on the throne: the Russian Empire and the Russian army held up, the front was secured and victory was undoubted. The long retreats were ended, the munitions famine was broken; arms were pouring in; stronger, larger, better equipped armies guarded the immense front... Moreover, no difficult action was now required: to remain in presence: to lean with heavy weight upon the far stretched Teutonic line: to hold without exceptional activity the weakened hostile forces on her front: in a word to endure - that was all that stood between Russia and the fruits of general victory... According to the superficial fashion of our time, the tsarist order is customarily seen as blind, rotten, a tyranny capable of nothing. But an examination of the thirty months of war with Germany and Austria should correct these light-minded ideas. We can measure the strength of the Russian Empire by the blows which it suffered, by the woes it experienced, by the inexhaustible forces that it developed, and by the restoration of forces of which it showed itself capable... In the government of states, when great events take place, the leader of the nation, whoever he may be, is condemned for failures and glorified for successes. The point is not who did the work or sketched the plan of battle: reproach or praise for the outcome is accorded to him who bears

---

<sup>841</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 491.

the authority of supreme responsibility. Why refuse this strict examination to Nicholas II? The brunt of supreme decisions centred upon him. At the summit where all problems are reduced to Yea and Nay, where events transcend the faculties of men and where all is inscrutable, he had to give the answers. His was the function of the compass needle. War or no war? Advance or retreat? Right or left? Democratise or hold firm? Quit or persevere? These were the battlefields of Nicholas II. Why should he reap no honour for them?...

“The regime which he personified, over which he presided, to which his personal character gave the final spark, had at this moment won the war for Russia. Now they crush him. A dark hand intervenes, clothed from the beginning in madness. The Tsar departs from the scene. He and all those whom he loved are given over to suffering and death. His efforts are minimized; his actions are condemned; his memory is defiled...”<sup>842</sup>

Only in recent decades has the good name of Tsar Nicholas II been resurrected in the Orthodox world. Meanwhile, the old false clichés about him continue to be repeated in Western historiography.

---

<sup>842</sup> Churchill, *The World Crisis. 1916-18*, vol. I, London, 1927, pp. 223-225. Churchill had been a Mason, Master of “Rosemary” lodge no. 2851, since 1902. However, he evidently played no part in the international Masonic conspiracy; he remained an admirer of the Tsar, and a fierce anti-communist.

## 56. MICHAEL ALEXANDROVICH ROMANOV: TSAR FOR A DAY?

Although the Tsar had addressed a telegram to “Emperor Michael Alexandrovich” (he received it in the late morning of March 16)<sup>843</sup>, Michael was destined to be emperor, if he really was emperor, for no more than a day. But without an autocratic tsar Russia was bound to descend into anarchy. So the fruit of February was bound to be October...

The February revolution had not been taking place only in Petrograd. “In Moscow on February 28th there were massive demonstrations under red flags. The garrison (also composed of reservists) passed over to the side of the rebellion on March 1. In those days a Soviet of workers’ deputies and a Committee of public organizations was formed in the Moscow Duma, as in Petrograd. Something similar took place also in Kharkov and Nizhni-Novgorod. In Tver a crowd killed Governor N.G. Byunting, who, as the crowd approached, had managed to make his confession [by telephone] to the bishop...”<sup>844</sup>

In such circumstances, the Duma and the Provisional Government, which always followed rather than led public opinion, could not be for the continuation of the Monarchy. It will be remembered that the leaders of the Duma had originally wanted the preservation of the monarchy, but without Nicholas II and with a “responsible ministry”. But in the course of the revolution, and with the Soviet breathing down their necks, the Duma leaders, even the monarchists among them, changed course...

“In the middle of the day on [3/16] March a group of Provisional Government ministers and Duma leaders met at Mikhail’s small salon in Petrograd to discuss the idea of his becoming emperor. Guchkov and Shulgin had just arrived back from Pskov, and Rodzyanko invited them to join the gathering. Rodzyanko also asked them not to publish the news of Nicholas’s act of abdication. Politicians had to prepare for whatever might be the next stage in the emergency in Petrograd.

“Rodzyanko, Guchkov, Milyukov, Kerensky and the liberal industrialist Alexander Konovalov were among those present, and there was a forceful exchange of opinions. It was a painful occasion for everyone. Guchkov insisted that the country needed a tsar; he was pleased with Mikhail accepting the throne from his brother with a commitment to convoking a Constituent Assembly. Milyukov too wanted the throne to pass to Mikhail, but got into a short though fiery dispute with Guchkov about the Basic Law. This boded ill for the Provisional Government’s prospects of settling the political situation in the capital. Guchkov argued that each and every action taken by ministers could be justified in the light of the wartime emergency. But whereas Guchkov

---

<sup>843</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I4orSmDAU-w>  
<sup>844</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 489.

and Milyukov agreed that Mikhail should become tsar, Kerensky strongly opposed the whole idea and urged Mikhail to reject the throne in recognition of the fact that the streets were full of thousands of angry workers and soldiers demonstrating against the monarchy. He warned of civil war if Mikhail tried to succeed his brother. For Kerensky this was the main practical point rather than any republican principle. He added that Mikhail would be putting his own life in danger if he complied with what Nicholas wanted."<sup>845</sup>

Rodzyanko and Lvov supported Kerensky. They "ardently tried to prove the impossibility and danger of such an act at the present time. They said openly that in that case Michael Alexandrovich could be killed, while the Imperial Family and all the officers could 'have their throats cut'. A second historically important moment had arrived. What would the Grand Duke decide, who was then from a juridical point of view already *the All-Russian Emperor*?"<sup>846</sup>

The Grand Duke was a fine soldier and a gentle man whom everybody liked. But before the war he had defied the Tsar in marrying a divorcée, Countess Natalia Brassova, in Switzerland, for which he was exiled for several years. Moreover, he had cooperated with the liberal revolutionaries during the February revolution. So strength of character in defence of the autocracy was not to be expected of him. He said he wanted to speak to his wife on the telephone and would appreciate time to consult his conscience. Then he returned.

Edvard Radzinsky describes the scene:-

"Michael came in, tall, pale, his face very young.

"They spoke in turn.

"Alexander Kerensky: 'By taking the throne you will not save Russia. I know the mood of the masses. At present everyone feels intense displeasure with the monarchy. I have no right to conceal that the dangers that taking power would subject you to personally. I could not vouch for your life.'

"Then silence, a long silence. And Michael's voice, his barely audible voice: 'In these circumstances, I cannot.'

"Michael was crying. It was his fate to end the monarchy. Three hundred years - and it all ended with him."<sup>847</sup>

According to Montefiore, "the ministers tried to intimidate Michael into abdicating. He asked if they could guarantee his safety. 'I had to answer in the

---

<sup>845</sup> Robert Service, *The Last Tsar*, London: Pan, 2017, p. 20.

<sup>846</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 491.

<sup>847</sup> Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar*, p. 173.

negative,' said Rodzianko, but Pavel Milyukov, the foreign minister, argued that this 'frail craft' – the Provisional Government – would sink in 'the ocean of national disorder' without the raft of the monarchy. Kerensky, the only one who could speak for the Soviet, disagreed, threatening chaos: 'I can't answer for Your Highness's life.'

"Princess Putiatina invited them all for lunch, sitting between the emperor and the prime minister. After a day of negotiations, Michael signed his abdication: 'I have taken a firm decision to assume the Supreme Power only if such be the will of our great people by universal suffrage through its representatives to the Constituent Assembly.' Next day, he sent a note to his wife Natasha: 'Awfully busy and extremely exhausted. Will tell you many interesting things.' Among these interesting things, he had been emperor of Russia for a day – and after 304 years the Romanovs had fallen."<sup>848</sup>

The explanation of Michael's pusillanimity was simple: as Fr. Sergei Chechanichev writes, "*he was a participant in the conspiracy*. Grand Duke Michael wrote in his diary on February 27, 1917: 'At 5 o'clock Johnson [his English secretary] and I went by train to Petrograd. In the Mariinsky palace I conferred with M.V. Rodzianko, Nekrasov, Savich, Dmitiurkov.' He himself confirmed that he had conferred with the enemies of his Majesty. He conducted negotiations with them, defending his brother's right to power as the lawful Sovereign, and conducted negotiations with his Majesty in the name of the conspirators. On March 1 in a telegram he called on his Majesty: 'Forgetting all that is past, I beseech you to proceed along the new path indicated by the people' – that is, that of the conspirators.

"Even if we close our eyes to all the 'fakery' of the documents called 'abdications', then that power which his Majesty supposedly transferred to Grand Duke Michael should have been returned, in the case of Michael's rejection, to his Majesty. Insofar as Michael did not accept the power, he could not transfer it to the Provisional Government. He simply did not have the authority to do that.

"... In his so-called 'abdication' it is written in black and white: 'I have taken the firm decision to accept the Supreme power only if that is the will of our great people.' But if the Grand Duke did not accept the Supreme power, what right did he have to transfer it to anybody else?"<sup>849</sup>

---

<sup>848</sup> Montefiore, *The Romanovs*, p. 623. Rodzianko writes in his memoirs, *Krushenie Imperii*: "Great Prince Michael Alexandrovich put the question to me bluntly: could I guarantee his life if he accepted the throne, and I had to give him a negative reply, for, I repeat, he had no firm armed force behind him" (Moscow: Ikar, 2002, p. 303).

<sup>849</sup> Chechanichev, "Tajna Molchania Gosudaria" (The Mystery of the Tsar's Silence), *Russkaia Narodnaia Linia*, May 19, 2020. Italics mine (V.M.).

This is a powerful argument. Michael Alexandrovich never became tsar; as Service writes, his act was not one of abdication, but of renunciation.<sup>850</sup> The last tsar was Nicholas II...

\*

However, Michael's actions were significant in another, important respect. As Archpriest Lev Lebedev writes, "Michael Alexandrovich... did not decide [completely] as Kerensky and the others wanted. He did not abdicate from the Throne directly *in favour of the Provisional Government*. In the manifesto that he immediately wrote he suggested that the question of his power and in general of the form of power in Russia should be decided *by the people itself*, and in that case he would become ruling Monarch if 'that will be the will of our Great People, to whom it belongs, by universal suffrage, through their representatives in a Constituent Assembly, to establish the form of government and the new basic laws of the Russian State'. For that reason, the manifesto goes on to say, 'invoking the blessing of God, I beseech all the citizens of the Russian State to submit to the Provisional Government, which has arisen and been endowed with all the fullness of power *at the initiative of the State Duma* (that is, in a self-willed manner, not according to the will of the Tsar – Prot. Lebedev), *until the Constituent Assembly, convened in the shortest possible time on the basis of a universal, direct, equal and secret ballot, should by its decision on the form of government express the will of the people.* Michael.' The manifesto has been justly criticised in many respects. But still it is not a direct transfer of power to the 'democrats'!"<sup>851</sup>

The historian Mikhail Babkin agrees with Lebedev: Just as Michael Alexandrovich never became tsar, so he never transferred power to the Duma (even assuming he had the right to do that), but said that he would agree to become tsar if the people wanted it. "The talk was not about the Great Prince's abdication from the throne, but about the impossibility of his occupying the royal throne without the clearly expressed acceptance of this by the whole people of Russia."<sup>852</sup>

However, by effectively giving the people the final say in how they were to be ruled, Tsar Michael effectively *introduced the democratic principle, making the people the final arbiter of power*. Tsar Nicholas clearly saw what had happened, writing in his diary: "God knows who gave him the idea of signing such rot."<sup>853</sup>

---

<sup>850</sup> Service, *op. cit.*, p. 30.

<sup>851</sup> Lebedev, *op. cit.*, p. 491.

<sup>852</sup> Babkin, "Sviatejskij Sinod Pravoslavnoj Rossijskoj Tserkvi i Revoliutsionnie Sobytia Fevralia-Marta 1917 g." ("The Most Holy Synod of the Russian Orthodox Church and the Revolutionary Events of February-March, 1917"), <http://www.monarhist-spb.narod.ru/D-ST/Babkin-1>, p. 3.

<sup>853</sup> Radzinsky, *The Last Tsar*, p. 172. It has been argued that Tsar Nicholas had also given a certain impulse towards the democratic anarchy when he declared in his manifesto: "We command Our Brother to conduct State affairs fully and in inviolable unity with the representatives of those men who hold legislative office, *upon those principles which they shall establish, swearing an inviolable oath to that effect.*" The principles established by the State Duma were, of course, democratic, not monarchical. And on



Unlike Tsar Nicholas, who simply tried (unsuccessfully) to transfer power from himself to his brother, Michael Alexandrovich undermined the very basis of the Monarchy by acting as if the true sovereign were the people. Like King Saul in the Old Testament he listened to the voice of the people (and out of *fear* of the people) rather than the voice of God – with fateful consequences for himself and the people. It was he who finally destroyed the autocracy...

We can see the confusion and searching of consciences all this caused in a letter of some Orthodox Christians to the Holy Synod dated July 24, 1917: “We Orthodox Christians most ardently beseech you to explain to us in the newspaper *Russkoe Slovo* [*Russian Word*] what... the oath given to us to be faithful to the Tsar, Nicholas Alexandrovich, means. People are saying in our area that if this oath is worth nothing, then the new oath to the new Tsar [the Provisional Government?] will be worth nothing. Which oath must be more pleasing to God. The first or the second? Because the Tsar is not dead, but is alive and in prison...”<sup>854</sup>

Since Michael had presented the choice of the form of State government to the Constituent Assembly, many opponents of the revolution were prepared to accept the Provisional Government on the grounds that it was just that – provisional. Moreover, they could with some reason argue that they were acting in obedience to the last manifestation of lawful, tsarist power in Russia... They were not to know that the Constituent Assembly would be forcibly dissolved by the Bolsheviks in January, 1918. So the results of the Tsar’s abdication for Russia were different from what he had hoped and believed. Instead of an orderly transfer of power from one member of the royal family to another, the whole dynasty and autocratic order collapsed. And instead of preventing civil war for the sake of victory in the world war, the abdication was followed by defeat in the world war and the bloodiest civil war in history, followed by the greatest persecution of the faith in history. Michael’s renunciation of the throne “was the beginning”, as Buxhoeveden writes, “of universal chaos. All the structures of the empire were destroyed. The natural consequences of this were a military rebellion that was supported by the civil population, which was also discontented with the actions of the cabinet. And all this, to sum up, led to a complete collapse. The supporters of the monarchy, of whom there were not a few in the rear and at the front, found themselves on their own, while the revolutionaries used the universal madness to take power into their own hands.”<sup>855</sup>

\*

---

September 15, 1917, Kerensky even declared, in defiance of the whole aim of the Constituent Assembly as defined by Michael Alexandrovich in his manifesto, that Russia was now a republic... But perhaps the Tsar meant, not a Constituent Assembly, but a *Zemsky Sobor*, of the kind that brought Tsar Michael Romanov to the throne in 1613...

<sup>854</sup> Groyan, *op. cit.*, pp. 122, 123.

<sup>855</sup> Buxhoeveden, *op. cit.*, p. 412.

What about the other Romanovs? Could not any of them have claimed the throne after the abdication of Michael?

Robert Massie writes: "After Nicholas II's sisters, nephews, and nieces, the tsar's closest surviving relatives were the Vladimirovichi, then comprising his four first cousins, Grand Dukes Cyril, Boris, and Andrew and their sister, Grand Duchess Helen, all children of Nicholas's eldest uncle, Grand Duke Vladimir. In normal times, the near-simultaneous deaths of a tsar, his son, and his brother, as happened in 1918, automatically would have promoted the eldest of these cousins, Cyril, who was forty-two in 1918, to the Imperial throne. In 1918, however, there was neither empire nor throne, and, consequently, nothing was automatic. Succession to the Russian throne followed the Salic law, meaning that the crown passed only to males, through males, until there were no more eligible males. When an emperor died and neither a son nor a brother was available, the eldest eligible male from the branch of the family closest to the deceased monarch would succeed. In this case, under the old laws, this was Cyril. After Cyril stood his two brothers, Boris and Andrew, and after them the only surviving male of the Pavlovich line, their first cousin Grand Duke Dimitri, the son of Nicholas II's youngest uncle, Grand Duke Paul. Nicholas II's six nephews, the sons of the tsar's sister Xenia, were closer by blood than Cyril but were ineligible because the succession could not pass through a woman..."<sup>856</sup>

However, there were powerful objections to Cyril's candidacy. He had married a Lutheran and his first cousin, Victoria Melita, a grand-daughter of Queen Victoria, who, moreover, had been married to and divorced from Tsaritsa Alexandra's brother, Grand Duke Ernest of Hesse. By marrying a divorced and heterodox woman who was his cousin, he violated Basic Laws 183 and 185 as well as the Church canons. The Tsar exiled him from Russia, and then, in 1907, deprived him and his descendants of the right to inherit the throne in accordance with Basic Law 126. Although the Tsar later allowed him and his wife to return, the couple plotted against him, and on March 1, even before the abdication, Cyril withdrew his Naval Guard from guarding the Tsaritsa and her family at Tsarskoye Selo and went to the Duma to hail the revolution, sporting a red cockade. He renounced his rights to the Throne, and hoisted the red flag above his palace and his car...<sup>857</sup>

In July, noting the anti-monarchist mood in Petrograd, he moved to nearby Finland, and only moved again to Switzerland in 1920, when it was clear that there was no hope of the restoration of the monarchy in the near future.

Cyril eventually emigrated to France, but was at first cautious about putting forward his claim to the throne. "The Dowager Empress Marie would not believe that her son and his family were dead and refused to attend any memorial service on their behalf. A succession proclamation by Cyril would

---

<sup>856</sup> Massie, *The Romanovs: The Final Chapter*, London: Arrow, 1995, p.261.

<sup>857</sup> Massie, *op. cit.*, pp. 267-269.

have shocked and deeply offended the old woman. Further, there was another, not very willing pretender: Grand Duke Nicholas Nicholaevich, former commander-in-chief of the Russian Army, was from the Nicholaevichi, a more distant branch of the Romanov tree, but, among Russians, he was far more respected and popular than Cyril. Nicholas Nicholaevich was forceful and Russia's most famous soldier whereas Cyril was a naval captain, who, having had one ship sunk beneath him, refused to go to sea again. Nevertheless, when émigré Russians spoke to Grand Duke Nicholas about assuming the throne in exile, he refused, explaining that he did not wish to shatter the hopes of the dowager empress. Besides, Nicholas agreed with Marie that if Nicholas II, his son, and his brother really were dead, the Russian people should be free to choose as their new tsar whatever Romanov – or whatever Russian – they wished.

“In 1922, six years before the death of Marie and while the old soldier Nicholas Nicholaevich still had seven years to live, Cyril decided to wait no longer. He proclaimed himself first Curator of the Throne and then, in 1924, Tsar of All the Russias – although he announced that for everyday use he still should be addressed by the lesser title Grand Duke. He established a court around his small villa in the village of Saint-Briac in Brittany, issued manifestos, and distributed titles...”<sup>858</sup>

His claim to be Tsar was recognized by Metropolitan Anthony (Khrapovitsky), first-hierarchy of the Russian Church Abroad, but not by Metropolitan Evlogy of Paris. Evlogy was in Karlovtsy in the autumn of 1922, when “I received a telegram: ‘At the request of Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich, we ask you insistently to come immediately to Paris.’ I arrived... I was presented with a group of generals led by General Sakharov, and a group of dignitaries asked me to go and visit Grand Duke Cyril Vladimirovich in Saint-Briac so as to perform a Divine service for him and give him my blessing to assume the imperial throne. I refused...”<sup>859</sup>

Most of the Romanov family living in exile also rejected Cyril's claim... The other leading Romanovs were either killed or made their peace with the new regime. Thus the behavior of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevich (“Nikolasha”) was, according to Mikhail Nazarov, “unforgivable: he didn't move a finger to avert the plot that he knew was being prepared..., pushed Nicholas II to abdicate, and, having again been appointed by him Commander-in-Chief of the Army, swore to the plotters: ‘The new government already exists and there can be no changes. I will not permit any reaction in any form...’

“In those days the other members of the Dynasty also forgot about their allegiance to the Tsar and welcomed his abdication. Many signed their own rejection of their rights to the Throne...: Grand Dukes Dmitri Konstantinovich, Gabriel Konstantinovich, Igor Konstantinovich, George Mikhailovich and

---

858 Massie, *op. cit.*, pp. 261-262.

859 Evlogy, *Puti moej zhizni* (The Paths of My Life), Paris: YMCA Press, 1947, p. 604.

Nicholas Mikhailovich. The latter, following Cyril, also paid a visit of loyalty to the revolutionary Duma on March 1... In the press there appeared declarations by Grand Dukes Boris Vladimirovich, Alexander Mikhailovich, Sergei Mikhailovich and Prince Alexander Oldenburg concerning their 'boundless support' for the Provisional government...

"The identical form of these rejections and declarations witness to the fact of a corresponding demand on the part of the new authorities: these were a kind of signature of loyalty to the revolution. (It is possible that this conceals one of the reasons for the monarchical apathy of these members of the Dynasty in emigration. Only 'Cyril I' felt not the slightest shame: neither for the plans of his mother 'to destroy the empress', nor for his own appeal to the soldiers to go over to the side of the revolution...)

"It goes without saying that in rebelling against his Majesty before the revolution, such members of the Dynasty did not intend to overthrow the monarchy: they would thereby have deprived themselves of privileges and income from their Appanages. They hoped to use the plotters in their own interests, for a court coup within the Dynasty, - but were cruelly deceived. The Provisional government immediately showed that even loyal Romanovs - 'symbols of Tsarism' - were not needed by the new authorities: Nicholas Nikolayevich was not confirmed in the post of Commander-in-Chief, and Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich found himself under house arrest in his own palace for 'being slow to recognize the new order'... We have some reason to suppose that by their 'signatures of loyalty' and renunciations of their claims to the Throne the Grand Dukes bought freedom for themselves. Kerensky declared at the Soviet of Workers' and Soldiers' Deputies: 'You have doubts about the fact that some members of the Royal Family have remained in freedom. But only those are in freedom who have protested with us against the old regime and the caprices of Tsarism.'

"The Februarists from the beginning did not intend to give the Royal Family freedom. They were subjected to humiliating arrest in the palace of Tsarskoye Selo, and were restricted even in their relations with each other. And none of the previously active monarchists spoke out for them. True, many of them had already been arrested, the editors of their newspapers and their organizations had been repressed. But even more monarchist activists kept silent, while some even signed declarations of loyalty to the new government..."<sup>860</sup>

---

860 Nazarov, *Kto Naslednik Rossijskogo Prestola?* (Who is the Heir of the Russian Throne?), Moscow, 1996, p. 375.

## CONCLUSION. AUTOCRACY VERSUS CONSTITUTIONALISM

There is much talk today about a possible revival of the Russian monarchy. The position most often taken, even by monarchists, and even among the surviving Romanovs themselves, is that the new tsar should not be an *autocrat*, but rather a *constitutional monarch*. This is both ironic and sad, for it implies that even if the Russian monarchy were restored now with the enthronement of one of the Romanovs, it would not be a true restoration, but a surrender to that liberal and emasculated view of monarchy which Tsar Nicholas and his predecessors and the Russian saints fought so hard against and which in the end destroyed Holy Rus'. For it is important to realize that the fall of the Romanov dynasty was not engineered in the first place by Russian-Jewish Bolsheviks or American-Jewish bankers, nor by the German General Staff. It was engineered and carried out by what Lebedev calls "the first echelon" of the revolution – the Mason-Cadets and Octobrists, such as Rodzianko and Guchkov. Their creed was not revolution – or, at any rate, not the full-blooded revolution that aimed at regicide and the complete overthrow of the existing social order; for they had too much to lose from such an upheaval. Their ideal was the more moderate but thoroughly un-Russian one of *English constitutional monarchy*.

Indeed, with the exception of some republicans such as Kerensky, the conspirators of February would probably have been content with simply stripping the Tsar of his autocratic powers and turning him into their puppet, a constitutional monarch on the English model – provided he did not interfere with their own supreme power. They forced him to abdicate only when they saw that he would not play their game, but was determined to preserve the Autocracy – if not in his own person, then in the person of his appointed heir. But their lack of understanding of the revolutionary process that they had initiated, meant that their rule was short-lived and served only as a transition from full Autocracy to the victory of the Bolsheviks.

The Russian constitutionalists demanded of Tsar Nicholas that he give them a "responsible" government, by which they meant a government under *their* control. But the rule of Tsar Nicholas was already responsible in the highest degree – to God. For this is the fundamental difference between the Orthodox autocrat and the constitutional monarch, that the autocrat truly governs his people, whereas the constitutional monarch "reigns, but does not rule". The first is responsible to God alone, but the latter, even if he claims to rule "by the Grace of God", in fact fulfils the will of the people rather than God's. As St. John Maximovich writes, "the Russian sovereigns were never tsars by the will of the people, but always remained Autocrats by the Mercy of God. They were sovereigns in accordance with the dispensation of God, and not according to the 'multimutinous' will of man."<sup>861</sup>

---

<sup>861</sup> St. John Maximovich, *Proiskhozhdenie Zakona o Prestolonasledii v Rossii* (The Origin of the Law of Succession in Russia), quoted in "Nasledstvennost' ili Vybory?" ("Hereditary or Elections?"), *Svecha*

And so we have three kinds of king: the Orthodox autocrat, who strives to fulfill the will of God alone, and is responsible to Him alone, being limited only by the Faith and Tradition of the people as represented by the Orthodox Church; the absolute monarch, such as the French Louis XIV or the English Henry VIII, who fulfills only his own will, is responsible to nobody, and is limited by nothing; and the constitutional monarch, who fulfills the will of the people, and can be applauded or ignored or deposed by them as they see fit.

Monarchy by the Grace of God and monarchy by the will of the people are incompatible principles. The very first king appointed by God in the Old Testament, Saul, fell because he tried to combine them; he pretended to listen to God while in fact obeying the people. Thus he spared Agag, the king of the Amalekites, together with the best of his livestock, instead of killing them all, as God had commanded, "because I listened to the voice of the people" (*I Kings* 15.20). In other words, he abdicated his God-given authority and *became, spiritually speaking, a democrat*, listening to the people rather than to God.

The significance of the reign of Tsar Nicholas II lies in the fact that he demonstrated what a true Orthodox autocrat – as opposed to an absolutist despot or a constitutional monarch – really is. This knowledge had begun to fade in the minds of the people, and with its fading the monarchy itself had become weaker. But Tsar Nicholas restored the image to its full glory, and thereby preserved the possibility of the complete restoration of the autocracy in a future generation...

Appearances can be deceptive. There is a famous photograph of the Russian Tsar Nicholas II and the English King George V standing together, looking as if they were twins (they were in fact cousins) and wearing almost identical uniforms. Surely, one would think, these were kings of a similar type, even brothers in royalty? After all, they called each other "Nicky" and "Georgie", had very similar tastes, had ecumenical links (Nicky was godfather of Georgie's son, the future Edward VIII, and their common grandmother, Queen Victoria, was invited to be godmother of Grand Duchess Olga<sup>862</sup>), and their empires were similar in their vastness and diversity (Nicholas was ruler of the greatest land empire in history, George – of the greatest sea power in history). Moreover, the two cousins never went to war with each other, but were allies in the First World War. They seem to have been genuinely fond of each other, and shared a mutual antipathy for their bombastic and warmongering "Cousin Willy" – Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany. To crown it all, when Tsar Nicholas abdicated in 1917, Kerensky suggested that he take refuge with Cousin Georgie in England.

---

*Pokaiana* (Candle of Repentance), N 4, February, 2000, p. 12. The phrase "multimutinous" is that of Tsar Ivan the Terrible.

<sup>862</sup> Miranda Carter, *The Three Emperors*, London: Penguin, 2011, p. 177.

But Cousin Georgie betrayed Cousin Nicky; in August, 1917 he withdrew his invitation for fear of a revolution in England.

As Roy Hattersley writes, in view of the failure of rescue attempts from within Russia, “the future of the Tsar and his family grew ever more precarious. It was the Prime Minister who initiated the meeting with George V’s private secretary at which, for a second time, ‘it was generally agreed that the proposal we should receive the Emperor in this country... could not be refused’. When Lloyd George proposed that the King should place a house at the Romanovs’ disposal he was told that only Balmoral was available and that it was ‘not a suitable residence at this time of year’. But it transpired that the King had more substantial objections to the offer of asylum. He ‘begged’ (a remarkably unregal verb) the Foreign Secretary ‘to represent to the Prime Minister that, from all he hears and reads in the press, the residence in this country of the ex-Emperor and Empress would be strongly resented by the public and would undoubtedly compromise the position of the King and Queen’. It was the hereditary monarch, not the radical politician, who left the Russian royal family to the mercy of the Bolsheviks and execution in Ekaterinburg.”<sup>863</sup>

The result was that, as Frances Welch writes, “eleven months later, the Tsar, the Tsarina and their five children were all murdered. But when the Tsar’s sister finally reached London in 1919, King George V brazenly blamed his Prime Minister for refusing a refuge to the Romanovs. Over dinner, he would regularly castigate Lloyd George as ‘that murderer’...”<sup>864</sup>

Nor was this the first or only betrayal: in a deeper sense English constitutionalism betrayed Russian autocracy in February, 1917. For it was a band of constitutionalist Masons supported by the Grand Orient of France and the Great Lodge of England, that plotted the overthrow of the Tsar in the safe haven of the English embassy in St. Petersburg. (Surprising as it may seem in view of the Masons’ overt republicanism, they were patronized by the British monarchy; there is a photograph of King Edward VII, Georgie’s father, in the full regalia of a Grand Master...<sup>865</sup>)

And so it was constitutional monarchists who overthrew the Russian autocratic monarchy. The false kingship that was all show and no substance betrayed the true kingship that perished in defence of the truth in poverty and humiliation. For Tsar Nicholas died in true imitation of the Christ the King. And with Him he could have said: “You say rightly that I am a king: for this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth!” (John 18.37).

---

863 Roy Hattersley, *The Great Outsider: David Lloyd George*, London: Abacus, 2010, p. 472.

864 Welch, “A Last Fraught Encounter”, *The Oldie*, N 325, August, 2015, p. 26.

865 See the photo on the back cover of Jasper Ridley, *The Freemasons*, London: Constable, 1999.

The Tsar's attachment to the autocratic principle never wavered: as he said to Count Witte in 1904: "I will never, in any circumstances, agree to a representative form of government, for I consider it harmful for the people entrusted to me by God."<sup>866</sup> And his choice was vindicated by his own reign, which so benefited the people both materially and spiritually. Moreover, no autocrat conducted himself with more genuine humility and love for his subjects, and a more profound feeling of responsibility before God. He was truly an autocrat, and not a tyrant. He did not sacrifice the people for himself, but himself for the people. The tragedy of the Russian people was that they exchanged the most truly Christian of monarchs for the most horrific of all tyrannies - in the name of freedom!

The tsar's commitment to the autocratic principle was reinforced by the tsarina, who, as Hew Strachan writes, "despite being the granddaughter of a British queen, believed, according to [the British ambassador] Buchanan, that 'autocracy was the only regime that could hold the Empire together'.

"Writing after the war, Buchanan confessed that she might have been right. It was one thing for well-established liberal states to move in the direction of authoritarianism for the duration of the war; it was quite another for an authoritarian government to move towards liberalism which many hoped would last beyond the return to peace. Moreover, the strains the war had imposed on Russian society, and the expectations that those strains had generated, looked increasingly unlikely to be controlled by constitutional reform..."<sup>867</sup>

The constitutionalists then as now criticize the Orthodox autocracy mainly on the grounds that it presented a system of absolute, uncontrolled power, and therefore of tyranny. They quote the saying of the historian Lord Acton: "Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely". But this is and was a serious misunderstanding. The Russian autocracy was based on the anointing of the Church and on the faith of the people; and when it betrayed either - by disobeying the Church, or by trampling on the people's faith, - it lost its legitimacy, as we see in the Time of Troubles. It was therefore limited, not absolute. But it was limited, not by parliament or any secular power, still less the money power that governed the British Monarchy from 1689, but by the teachings of the Orthodox Faith and Church, and as such must not be confused with the system of absolutist monarchy that we see in, for example, the French King Louis XIV, or the English King Henry VIII.

The Tsar could have refused to abdicate and started a civil war against those who sought to overthrow him. But this would have meant imposing his will in an absolutist manner on the majority of his people, whose faith was now no longer the faith of Tsarist Russia but that of the "enlightened" West. So, like Christ the King in Gethsemane, he told his friends to put up their swords, and

---

866 Nicholas II, in Fomin & Fomina, *op. cit.*, vol. 1, p. 376.

867 Strachan, *The First World War*, London: Pocket Books, 2006, pp. 234-235.



surrendered himself into the hands of his enemies; “for this is your hour, and the power of darkness” (Luke 22.53). He showed that the Orthodox Autocracy was not a form of western-style absolutism, whose right lies exclusively in its might, but something completely *sui generis*, whose right lies in its faithfulness to the truth of Christ and the sacrament of anointing. He refused to treat his power as if it were *independent of or over* the Church and people, but showed that it was a form of *service to* the Church and the people *from within* the Church and the people; and if the people now renounced him (and the Church), so be it - there was no longer any place for him in Russia.

The tragedy of Russia was that in rebelling against the Tsar and forcing his resignation she was about to exchange the most truly Christian of monarchs for the most horrific and antichristian of all tyrannies - all in the name of freedom!

But in what resides true freedom? The Anglophile liberals claimed that only a constitution can guarantee the freedom and equality of its citizens. But the idea that autocracy is necessarily inimical to freedom and equality was refuted by the monarchist Andozerskaya in Alexander Solzhenitsyn's novel, *The Red Wheel*: “Under a monarchy it is perfectly possible for both the freedom and the equality of citizens to flourish. First, a firm hereditary system delivers the country from destructive disturbances. Secondly, under a hereditary monarchy there is no periodic upheaval of elections, and political disputes in the country are weakened. Thirdly, republican elections lower the authority of the power, we are not obliged to respect it, but the power is forced to please us before the elections and serve us after them. But the monarch promised nothing in order to be elected. Fourthly, the monarch has the opportunity to weigh up things in an unbiased way. The monarchy is the spirit of national unity, but under a republic divisive competition is inevitable. Fifthly, the good and the strength of the monarch coincide with the good and the strength of the whole country, he is simply forced to defend the interests of the whole country if only in order to survive. Sixthly, for multi-national, variegated countries the monarch is the only bond and the personification of unity...”<sup>868</sup>

\*

If we compare the abdication of Tsar Nicholas II in 1917 with that of his godson, the British King Edward VIII in 1936, we immediately see the superiority, not only of the Tsar over the King personally, but also of Orthodox autocracy over English constitutional monarchy. Edward VIII lived a debauched life, flirted with the Nazis, and then abdicated, not for the sake of the nation, but because he could not have both the throne and continue to live with his mistress at the same time. He showed no respect for Church or faith, and perished saying: “What a wasted life!”

While the abdication of Edward VIII placed the monarchy in grave danger, the abdication of Tsar Nicholas, by contrast, saved the autocracy for the future.

---

868 Solzhenitsyn, *The Red Wheel*, “October, 1916”, uzel 2, Paris: YMCA Press, pp. 401-408.

For in abdicating he resisted the temptation to apply force and start a civil war in a cause that was just from a purely juridical point of view, but which could not be justified from a deeper, eschatological point of view. If the people and the Church did not want him, he would not impose himself on them, because his was truly a government *for* the people. He would not fight a ruinous civil war in order to preserve his power, because his power was not given to him to take up arms *against* the people but *for* the people. Instead, following the word of St. John Chrysostom that it is fitting for a king to die for the truth, he chose to *die*, and in dying he proclaimed the truth of Christ the King. He followed the advice of the Prophet Shemaiah to King Rehoboam and the house of Judah as they prepared to face the house of Israel: "Thus saith the Lord, Ye shall not go up, nor fight against your brethren, the children of Israel. Return every man to his house..." (I Kings 12.24))

The fall of the Romanov dynasty so soon after Tsar Nicholas' abdication, and the seizing of power by the Bolsheviks only a few months after that, proves the essential rightness of the Tsar's struggle to preserve the autocracy and his refusal to succumb to pressures for a constitutional government. As in 1789, so in 1917, constitutional monarchy, being itself the product of a disobedient, anti-monarchical spirit, proved itself to be a feeble reed in the face of the revolution.

The Tsar clung onto power for as long as he could, not out of personal ambition, but because he knew that he was literally *irreplaceable*. Or rather, he believed that *the dynasty* was irreplaceable, which is why he passed on his power, not to the Duma, but to his brother Michael. But the dynastic family, being itself corrupted by its disobedience and disloyalty to the Tsar (even Michael had disobeyed the Tsar in marrying the divorced Natalia Brassova), was unable to take up the burden that Tsar Nicholas had borne so bravely. They were not fit to bear that burden. And God did not allow them.

And so not only the Tsar and his family perished, but the whole of Russia...

And not only Russia... It is striking how, with the fall of the autocracy in Russia, the structure of European monarchy, being built, not on the rock of the true faith and the Grace of God, but on the porous sand of the "multitudinous will" of the people, began to collapse. For in 1917-18 the dynasties of all the defeated nations: Russia, Germany, Austria-Hungary and Bulgaria (temporarily) collapsed. And within a decade monarchy had more or less disappeared in several other nations, such as Turkey, Italy and Greece, while the British Empire was shaken by nationalist rebellions in Ireland, Egypt, Iraq and India. Monarchy survived in Serbia until the Second World War - probably thanks to the protection that the Serbs offered to the monarchist Russian Church in Exile.

\*

The first monarchy to go had to be Russia; for the one true monarchy had to be destroyed violently before the pseudo-monarchies could be peacefully put

out to grass, reigning figuratively but not truly ruling over their subjects. The abortive revolution of 1905 had imposed a kind of constitution on the Tsar. But then he, courageously and subtly but always honourably, managed to keep the Masons at bay and himself effectively in control until 1917. And even then he did not give the liberals their “responsible government”, but abdicated in favour of another member of the dynasty. Thus the Russian autocracy went out with a bang, undefeated in war and defiantly resisting the traitors and oath-breakers who opposed it. The traitors, however, went out with a whimper, ingloriously losing the war, and after only nine months’ rule fleeing in all directions in a distinctly unmanly way (Kerensky fled in women’s clothes to Paris, and the last defenders of his regime was a battalion of women soldiers).

The abdication of Tsar Nicholas in March, 1917 brought to an end the 1600-year period of the Orthodox Christian Empire that began with St. Constantine the Great. “He who restrains” the coming of the Antichrist, the Orthodox Christian Emperor, “was removed from the midst” (II Thessalonians 2.7) - and very soon “the collective Antichrist”, Soviet power, began its savage torture of the Body of Holy Russia. St. John of Kronstadt had said that Russia without the Tsar would no longer even bear the name of Russia, and would be “a stinking corpse” - and so it proved to be...

*Glory to God for all things!*