

CHAPTER IX

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

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

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

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

To this the Grand Duke replied :

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

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

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

To this the Grand Duke remarked :

"Oho, you express yourself pretty strongly."

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Minister of Justice.

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

“ Who will preside over the Special Council? ”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Speak.”

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

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

“Why did you get up?”

“Your Majesty, I have finished, I have told you all.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Read what is written overleaf," said Tagantzeff.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

144 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER X

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

152 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

* Goremykin

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

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

Feeling very angry, I retorted sharply:

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

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

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

* Dmitriukoff shot himself shortly after the Revolution.

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

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

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

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

156 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

Instead of persons enjoying the confidence of the

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

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

158 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

160 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHAPTER XI

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Prince Lvoff, president of the All-Russian

166 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

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

"DEAR IVAN LOGINOVITCH,

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

THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN 167

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

To all this no definite reply was vouchsafed.

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

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

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

* Sister of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna.

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

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

* A remote town in north-eastern Russia.

CHAPTER XII

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

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

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

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

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

Pitirim here remarked soothingly :

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

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

"He will change his name to Panin."

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

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

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

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

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

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

I could see by his face that the Metropolitan

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Lord, give Thy blessing. Nicholas."

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

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

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

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

176 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

* This speech was completely distorted by the Court censorship.

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

After a short silence the Emperor said:

"I will think it over."

We were passing the doors leading to the Ministerial pavilion.

"What is that?" the Emperor asked.

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

The Emperor did not enter the pavilion.

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

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

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

The Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch remained in the Imperial box till the Duma rose for the day. The same evening the Emperor drove to the Council of the Empire. There everything passed off in an atmosphere of cold officialdom, and the enthusiasm and solemnity which attended the reception at the Duma were entirely lacking. The contrast was so marked that it excited general comment.

The Government statement, read out by Sturmer after the Emperor's departure, was a most depressing document. His rendering of it was very indistinct, and the long-winded and incoherent phrases contained no indication of the Government's intentions. The Prime Minister left the tribune amid dead silence, and only a few members

on the Extreme Right wing tried to applaud. From the very outset Sturmer revealed himself as an utter nonentity, and soon became the object of Purishkevitch's witticisms and raillery. It was then that he launched his famous bon-mot on the "Ministers' leap-frog," and nicknamed Sturmer a "*Kivatch** of eloquence," comparing him with Tchichikoff, the hero of Gogol's novel *Dead Souls*, who, after calling on all the dignitaries of the town, sat long in his gig pondering whom else to visit. The comparison was most appropriate, as from the time of his appointment Sturmer had been making a ceaseless round of the Ministries and delivering speeches.

The Minister for War, Polivanoff, received an ovation, and his businesslike and comprehensive speech was attentively listened to. An equally cordial reception was vouchsafed by the Duma to Sazonoff and Grigorovitch. The sitting closed with a resolution read out on behalf of the Progressive *bloc*, expressing the desire for the appointment of a Government enjoying the confidence of the nation, which would assist in organizing the country for decisive victory, re-establish order at home, and arraign all those who were to blame for our misfortunes at the front. This statement was couched in firm language, such as would compel the Government to listen to the voice of the nation.

The debates that followed were carried on in a similar strain; many speeches contained demands for Sukhomlinoff's prosecution. The most forcible were those of V. Bobrinsky, Maklakoff and Polovtzeff. The latter, after speaking of Miasoiedoff and the Minister for War and saying that the former had obtained his due, ended his speech with the following words: "But where is the criminal who deceived us all by his false assurances of our seem-

* A waterfall in Northern Russia.

ing preparedness for this terrible war; who by so doing has torn the laurels from the brow of our gallant army and trampled them in the mire of treachery and spoliation; who placed himself between the avenging sword of justice and the traitor Miasoiedoff? It was he, the Minister for War, who staked his head on Miasoiedoff's innocence. Miasoiedoff was executed, but where is the head of his patron? On shoulders adorned with the Imperial insignia."*

Our Allies took due note of the importance of the Emperor's visit to the Duma, and telegrams of congratulation were received from the British House of Commons and the French Chamber of Deputies, testifying that the Imperial visit was interpreted as a token of the Tsar's union with his people and as a menace to Germany, which had been building hopes on our internal dissensions. The whole of the Imperial Family approved of the Emperor's act. The Empress alone was displeased; prompted by her evil genius, she had harshly protested against her consort's decision.

A few days before the reopening of the Duma, a rumour was spread that Rasputin had been murdered at the restaurant "Villa Rode." Everyone rejoiced, but it turned out that he had only been badly mauled. It became known later that Sturmer had ordered Rasputin to be guarded as if he were a member of the Imperial Family, and, without Polivanoff's knowledge, placed four military cars at his disposal. Khvostoff boasted that he had arranged that Rasputin should be systematically poisoned with drink; but already the feeling was in the air that Khvostoff's days were numbered, that the Empress and Sturmer were giving him the cold shoulder and wished to replace him by his

* The A.D.C.'s to the Emperor wore his initials on their shoulder straps.

Assistant Minister Bieletsky, who was on intimate terms with Rasputin and directly responsible for his safety. To avoid the humiliation of a dismissal Khvostoff, as he admitted, handed in his resignation. The Emperor refused to accept it. But after Rasputin's adventure at the "Villa Rode," and the exposure of a tangled affair concerning the mission of a certain Rzhevsky, who was sent to purchase documents from Iliodor, both Khvostoff and Bieletsky were dismissed.

I heard later from M. Bakhmetieff, an engineer back from America, of what had appeared in the American Press concerning Iliodor, who had sold to the *American Magazine* the letters of the Empress he had wrested from Rasputin.

Our ambassador had endeavoured to repurchase these documents but failed, and lost 10,000 roubles he had paid out.

The Government by its actions did its best to dispel the favourable impression made by the Emperor's visit to the Duma. It continued the old policy, or rather the old disintegration. Within the Duma itself the members of the Extreme Right raised their heads. Markoff II permitted himself coarse sallies against public organizations, which he accused of spreading unrest and profiteering. Such accusations were of course flung at random, unsupported by facts or evidence, and with the sole object of sowing dissension and mistrust of these bodies. These members were dissatisfied with the congress held by the ultra-Conservatives at Nizhni-Novgorod, and started preparations for another one, for which they intended to enlist the help of the clergy and peasants. The chief promoter of this scheme was Stcheglovitoff, late Minister for Justice, and the necessary funds were liberally pro-

THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN 181

vided for by the Government. At the same time rumours of a forthcoming dissolution of the Duma and of fresh changes in the Government still persisted.

Taking advantage of the Emperor's arrival at Tsarskoe Selo, I asked for an audience and was received on February 24, 1916. The audience lasted an hour and a half. I spoke of everything with complete frankness, of the intrigues of the Ministers, who, aided by Rasputin, ousted one another; of the continuous absence of a firm policy, of the widespread abuse and contempt of public opinion and the nation's feelings. There would come a limit to all patience, I added. I mentioned the exploits of D. Rubinstein, Manus and other heroes of the rear, their connection with Rasputin, the orgies and debauchery of Rasputin himself. His proximity to the Emperor and the Imperial family, and the influence he exercised on important affairs of State were, I said, the despair of all honest men. Rasputin's role as a German agent was now also no longer open to doubt.

"Had your Majesty's Ministers," I said, "been men of independent views, whose sole aim was the good of the country, Rasputin's presence would not have really mattered. The evil lies in the fact that the members of the Government owe their posts to him and involve him in their mutual intrigues. I find myself once again obliged to submit to your Majesty that this cannot go on much longer. No one tries to open your eyes with regard to the part played by this disreputable *starlets*. His presence at the Imperial Court undermines the nation's confidence in the Crown; it may have fatal consequences for the fate of the dynasty, and turn the hearts of your subjects against their Sovereign."

All these unpleasant home truths were heard by the Emperor in silence, with occasional marks of surprise. His demeanour, however, remained gracious and affable throughout. When I interrupted my report, he turned to me with the question :

"What, do you think, will be the end of the war? Shall we win?"

I replied that the army and the people could be fully trusted, but that the war was being protracted and victory delayed through the incompetence of the higher command and the bad policy pursued at home.

This report apparently made some impression : on February 27 an order was issued for Rasputin's deportation to Tobolsk.

A few days later, on the demand of the Empress, the order was countermanded.

On March 1 Imperial sanction was obtained for the bringing of Sukhomlinoff's case before the First Department of the Senate with a view to deciding the question of his criminal prosecution. On signing the warrant the Emperor remarked : "The sacrifice has to be made."

Three weeks later, the First Department issued a resolution ordering a preliminary inquiry into the case to be held, and personal detention to be applied to General Sukhomlinoff, in conformity with the act of indictment. This decision was reported by the chief criminal investigator to the Minister for Justice, who gave his consent to Sukhomlinoff's arrest. The ex-Minister for War was imprisoned in the Alexeievsky ravelin in the fortress of Peter and Paul. His wife, who had played such an important part in all his voluntary and involuntary connections with persons convicted of espionage, not only remained at liberty but was allowed interviews with her husband. She obtained,

through Rasputin, an audience of the Empress, and thenceforward enjoyed her patronage.

On March 3, the Minister of the Interior, Khvostoff, who had broken his neck in combating Rasputin's clique, was dismissed from his post.

Strikes went on at the factories, causing great apprehension both at home and at the front. General Alexeieff wrote me that the arrival of supplies for the army was disorganized. Again there was a shortage of boots, and a complete stoppage in the supply of munitions also was feared. The troops on the northern front, nearest to the capital, were suffering from scurvy, due to malnutrition.

The question concerning the commandeering of the Putiloff works was at last dealt with by the Special Council. Not an audience passed with the Emperor but I reminded him of the necessity for revising the incorrect decision. As soon as the works were commandeered, the old members of the board were removed and replaced by competent and trustworthy men. The workers, who were made military conscripts, were thus deprived of the right to strike.

On March 15, the Minister for War, Polivanoff, was dismissed from his post without an Imperial rescript.* He had just returned from the Stavka, where he had been graciously received by the Emperor; the intimation that he was relieved of his office came as a complete surprise both to himself and to everyone else. The explanation was sought in the commandeering of the Putiloff factory, or in the charge brought against Polivanoff of having inspired the alleged political resolutions of the war industries' committee. Polivanoff's own explanation was far simpler: he had ordered the four military cars given to Rasputin by Sturmer to be

* A sign of disgrace.

taken away. The Empress, who had always mistrusted him, heard of this and insisted on his dismissal. Shortly before this Polivanoff had said : " I now see how to bring order into our military affairs after the Sukhomlinoff chaos and win the war."

The news of Polivanoff's downfall was received with profound consternation. The Press was lavish in its praises of the late Minister, and enumerated the beneficent effects of his work during his comparatively short term of office. In the Duma and in society people spoke everywhere of irresponsible influences, of the Ministerial leap-frog, the enemy's gradual penetration and concerted attacks on all those who were useful to Russia and dangerous to the Germans.

All eyes were turned to the representatives of the people, who at the time enjoyed the popularity and confidence of the nation. But the Duma already realized that with Rasputin's presence at the Court and the ever-increasing influence of the Empress, success at the front and order at home were becoming impossible.

Polivanoff's successor was General Shuvaeff, a good and honest man, but inadequately equipped to fill such a post at such a time. His manner of presiding over the meetings of the Special Council rendered them tedious and confused. After Polivanoff's resignation the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch launched an intrigue against the Special Council, and tried to persuade the Emperor to abolish it. Continual disputes arose in the Council under Shuvaeff's chairmanship, and it seemed as if he was purposely provoking a clash to obtain a pretext for closing it altogether.

The chaos in the country was becoming appalling. A meat shortage was beginning to make itself felt in Petrograd; nevertheless, cartloads of rotting

carcases being conveyed to soap factories could be met in the streets. These carts were seen by the population in broad daylight, and the sight aroused general indignation: at a time when no meat was to be found on the market, rotting carcasses were being openly conveyed practically to the rubbish heap.

Members of the Special Council inspected the municipal cold storage warehouses, beyond the Baltic railway station. The refrigerators were in order and the meat in good condition, but mounds of rotting carcasses were piled up all around. This was the meat intended for the use of the army. There was nowhere to store it. When the purveyors asked permission to build new refrigerators, they obtained neither permission nor the necessary funds. As usual, the different Ministers were unable to agree: the Commissariat placed the orders for meat and the railway companies carried it, but there was nowhere to store it, and it was not allowed to be placed on the market. All this was as stupid as many other things. Everybody seemed to conspire to bring about Russia's ruin.

The members of the Special Council reported to the meeting on all they had seen, and I wrote to Alexeieff, and then only did the meat question receive attention. Hundreds of tons had, of course, already perished. It was the same with the meat supply from Siberia: but here thousands of tons instead of hundreds were lost, owing to the inadequacy and disorganization of the transport arrangements. Those responsible for this were, of course, never discovered; each laid the blame on someone else, and all together on the general state of chaos.

Polivanoff believed the meat scandal to be due neither to chance nor to disorganization, but to

deliberate action in pursuance of a German programme.

General Russky returned from Kislovodsk in the middle of April. He went to the Stavka to ask for an appointment at the front, but obtained no definite answer, and languished in Petrograd doing nothing. In the meantime operations on the northern front under Kuropatkin were taking a turn for the worse, and we sustained needlessly heavy casualties near Riga.

The question of increasing the output of hand grenades and special guns for destroying barbed wire entanglements was raised in the Special Council. Such guns were extensively used on the French front, and General Joffre, on learning that we had none, despatched an expert engineer to Russia, under whose supervision one of the munition factories was adapted for their construction. At the front everyone was delighted with these guns; I myself saw some of them in action on the northern front with excellent effect.

Nevertheless, the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch ordered their manufacture to be stopped. I heard of this from the French Military Attaché, the Marquis de la Guiche, whose statement was confirmed by General Manikovsky, the head of the Artillery Department. Once more the whole matter had to be raised in the Special Council, advantages proved which one might think would be patent to all, and the influence of irresponsible persons combated.

A short paragraph appeared in the Press concerning the appointment of a certain official as acting secretary to a special committee composed of five Ministers under the presidency of Trepoff. No one had any idea that this Committee existed, who

were the five Ministers concerned, or upon what questions they conferred. I asked for an explanation from Sturmer concerning the nature and legal status of this institution, which had sprung into being without the knowledge of the Duma.

No answer was vouchsafed. A few days later, at a banquet in honour of the French Ministers, Sturmer drew me aside and said he was unable to answer my letter, because the Committee had been set up secretly by the Emperor's desire.

The details of the affair were as follows. After the creation of the Special Council of Defence composed of public workers, the authority of the Minister for War, as chairman, extended practically to all Government departments, where matters directly concerned with the war were involved. The Council made a decision, the Minister for War confirmed it, and the departments were bound to carry it out. The Cabinet remained, at it were, in the background. Such procedure, notwithstanding its excellent results, could not fail to displease certain Ministers and officials; so they persuaded the Emperor to appoint a kind of committee of five Ministers. They had not the courage to do it while Polivanoff was still in office, because he stood for law and order and the public good; he lost his post for that very reason.

The setting up of a Ministerial Committee, the lack of confidence in, and the secret control over the Special Council of public workers, aroused profound indignation among the members of the Council. They entrusted me with the mission of telling Sturmer that if the committee of five were not abolished, all the members of the Special Council of Defence would resign publicly, explaining the motives for their resignation—a step which would be pregnant with consequences. Sturmer hastened to declare that he, too, considered the

committee of five to be illegal, and would report in that sense to the Emperor.

MM. Viviani and Thomas, representing the French Government, arrived at Petrograd at the beginning of May. The Duma gave a banquet in their honour. There was an exchange of speeches, with mutual assurances of friendship and readiness to fight together to a finish.

Next day Thomas expressed the wish to have a long talk on the organization of war supplies. He spent the evening at my house, and amazed a member of the Special Council, S. I. Timasheff, by his minute knowledge of the state of affairs in Russia. After speaking of the defects of our war supplies system and enumerating all our weak points, he concluded with the following significant witticism: "*La Russie doit être bien riche pour se permettre le luxe d'un gouvernement comme le vôtre, car le premier ministre—c'est un désastre, et le ministre de la guerre—une catastrophe. . .*"

On bidding farewell to the French statesmen next day, I asked one of them: "*Dites-moi, Monsieur, sincèrement votre opinion, qu'est ce qui vous manque en Russie?*"

The Frenchman replied: "*Ce qui nous manque? C'est l'autocratie de votre gouvernement, car si j'ose vous dire encore, M. le président, la Russie doit être bien forte moralement pour supporter, pendant le temps sérieux que nous passons, cet état de douce anarchie qui règne dans votre pays et se jette aux yeux.*"

On May 12 Sturmer gave a big dinner to which all the Ministers, several members of the Council of the Empire and a few ultra-Conservative members of the Duma were invited. I accepted the invitation in order to take advantage of the intimate

surroundings to give free vent to my feelings of anxiety and indignation. After dinner, when coffee was served in the drawing room, I addressed the company somewhat as follows:

"Just think of what is taking place . . . In these momentous days, when the spirit of the nation and the gallantry of our army stand revealed in all their beauty, when torrents of blood are being freely shed—the Government reveal themselves as incapable of leadership and, in pursuit of their own interests, never get farther than a petty control over public organizations. You, the representatives of the Government, see nothing, realize nothing, and clinging to your powers and privileges, remain the passive spectators of the great patriotic upheaval which sweeps the country irrespective of parties and nationalities. . . . When the people long for work in order to ensure final victory, and ask for a firm and wise Government, you spend your time in trying to discover an imaginary revolution. . . . You organize Monarchist congresses, persecute public organizations, provoke endless inter-departmental disputes and intrigues, which paralyze the work of administration, and deliver the country into the hands of self-seekers. . . . Bribery, extortion, plunder are growing on all sides, and nothing is being done to prevent it. Persons who deserve the gallows continue to remain in high favour, and instead of patriotism, personal patronage and vested interests are the moving springs of the Government's actions. . . ."

I reminded them of Maklakoff and the case of the army boot supplies, and of Goremykin who, during the retreat of 1915, kept repeating that the war "did not concern him."

"The whole nation," I said, "has rallied to the motto: 'Everything for the war,' but the Government pursues its course of petty officialdom,

completely out of touch with the great events of the moment. . . ." I pointed out the Government's utter incompetence to foresee or deal with the stupendous problems of reconstruction with which the nation would be faced after the end of the war, and which were already engaging the attention of the more advanced Allied statesmen. "You should realize," I said, "that you are neither beloved nor trusted by the nation. . . . In your senseless search for a bogey revolution, you are murdering the living soul of the people and creating unrest and discontent which sooner or later may breed an actual revolution. . . . The time will come when you will be called upon to render an account of your deeds. . . ."

Prince V. M. Volkonsky told me afterwards that my words had produced on the Ministers the effect of a thunderbolt.

Shortly after this Sturmer went to the Stavka, and the committee of the five Ministers was abolished. (A few months later, however, a similar committee was appointed, consisting of six Ministers.)

The Imperial ukase for the reopening of the Duma was issued on May 16. April 27 being the tenth anniversary of the summoning of the first Duma, I had to mark the event in my inaugural address. I said that despite the errors committed by the first two Dumas, the principle of national representation as a component factor of Russia's body politic had become profoundly engrained in the public consciousness. I emphasized the merit of the Emperor Nicholas II, who had granted a constitution to Russia. The Cabinet in a body was conspicuous for its absence, owing, it was said, to the expectation of violent anti-Government speeches.

The session proved dull and colourless;

attendance was irregular and insufficient for voting. Members of the Extreme Right made inopportune sallies in the hope of provoking adjournments, and the whole atmosphere was so full of uncertainty as to render work practically impossible. The state of perpetual conflict came to nothing, the Government refused to hear reason, disorder was increasing, and the country rapidly going to ruin. All hopes were centred in the Duma, but unfortunately it was unable to do anything. We all suffered acutely from the general depression which pervaded the country.

A fresh success was achieved on the Caucasian front, but simultaneously the news arrived of the terrible hardships endured by the troops, whose strength there was insufficient. Appeals for reinforcements were disregarded by the Stavka.

In General Polivanoff's opinion we ought to have exercised our main pressure on the Caucasian front and advanced on Constantinople, which could have been captured with the aid of our Allies at Salonica. This plan was also spoken of in the French Press. A different view, however, prevailed at the Stavka, where jealousy of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch was the guiding principle. He had only to express an opinion, for an exactly contrary decision to be made by the Stavka. None of his requests were ever carried out. This ill-feeling being entirely mutual, anyone who was dismissed from the Stavka was sure to obtain a post in the Caucasus.

General Brusiloff started his successful offensive on our western front, where his armies took 480,000 prisoners. Our success was of immense importance to the Allies. For the second time we relieved the enemy's pressure on Verdun, where,

for months past, both the French and Germans were exhausting their forces in the fruitless attempts of the latter to capture the fortress. Italy, too, was saved by our advance, and large Austrian contingents were transferred from the Italian front to ours.

Officers who took part in Brusiloff's offensive attributed our success to the fact that operations were started thirty-six hours before they were timed to do so by the Stavka. Rumours of espionage at the Stavka were current in the army, the enemy appearing to be always aware of our movements beforehand. These suspicions unfortunately received frequent confirmation.

Our parliamentary delegation made a tour of the Allied countries during May and June, and was everywhere welcomed with great enthusiasm and honours. Before they started, I warned Protopopoff, who was senior member of the delegation, that it might be treated with insufficient courtesy by members of our foreign Embassies. This, I regret to say, proved correct. Our Ambassador in London, Count Benckendorff, neither came himself nor sent any of his secretaries to welcome the delegates on their arrival. The delegates were particularly struck by this behaviour, because they received a most courteous welcome from the British; the King placed his special train at their disposal and many high officials met them at the terminus. When Protopopoff called at the Embassy, Benckendorff was barely civil to him, and explained the absence of members of the Embassy by his not having received any instructions from Petrograd. Nevertheless, in all their public speeches and private conversations, our Allies never omitted to emphasize their particular

confidence in the Russian Duma. Protopopoff, judging by the report he presented and by Miliukoff's account of his behaviour, bore himself as head of the delegation with tact and dignity. Our delegates were particularly impressed by the ideal organization of the rear in all the Allied countries, and by the united efforts of the peoples for the carrying on of the war.

The only discordant note of the tour was Protopopoff's tactless interview with a German agent. On the return journey Protopopoff was delayed at Stockholm, and after the departure of the rest of the mission he, in a private capacity, had an interview with Herr Warburg, an emissary of Herr von Lucius, German Minister at Stockholm.

The incident was taken up by the Press, and I was obliged to request Protopopoff to explain his conduct before the Duma. Protopopoff did not deny having had an interview with the First Secretary of the German Legation, to whom he emphasized the impossibility of Russia's making peace before the complete victory of the Allies. When Herr Warburg attempted to exculpate Germany and lay the blame for the war on Great Britain, Protopopoff had cut him short, saying he could not permit any incrimination of the Allies in his presence.

The Duma expressed itself satisfied by this statement, and I wrote an explanatory letter on the Stockholm incident to the Press.

The fact that our offensive was confined to the south-western front under General Brusiloff, and was unsupported in all the other sectors, caused general bewilderment at the front. Meanwhile, the break-through near Baranovitchy failed, and the advance appeared to be checked.

As a counter-balance to Brusiloff's successes, affairs in the Special Council for Defence were once more entering a critical stage, and misunderstandings between the members and the Minister Shuvaeff were becoming more acute. His incompetence to fill a responsible post became increasingly obvious; he was completely under Court influence and blindly obedient to orders emanating from Tsarskoe Selo. In spite of his undoubted honesty and probity, he was bewildered by all the conflicting currents of opinion and incapable of smoothing over difficulties. When, under the influence of the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch, a campaign was started at the Stavka against General Manikovsky, the energetic head of the Artillery Department, Shuvaeff failed to support him, and Manikovsky was only saved by the intervention of members of the Duma and of the Council of the Empire.

On June 24 I went to the Stavka to report to the Emperor. Before the audience I called on General Alexeieff. Rumours were current in Petrograd that Alexeieff was drafting a scheme for the establishment of a dictatorship in the rear to deal with all matters concerning internal government and war supplies. Shortly before my visit to the Stavka, I learnt from General Manikovsky that the scheme had already been drafted and a report on it presented to the Emperor by General Alexeieff. To confirm his statement Manikovsky gave me a copy of this report. It amounted virtually to the establishment of a dictatorship for restoring order in the rear, and with the right to cancel the orders of the Ministers and of the Special Council. The effects of such a step may easily be imagined, especially when one realized that the idea of a dictatorship emanated from the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch, who obviously reserved

the important and responsible post of dictator for himself.

I asked General Alexeieff whether what I had heard of the scheme was true, and produced the copy of the report. Alexeieff owned to having submitted a similar document to the Emperor, and insisted on learning the source from which I had obtained such confidential information. He added that he could not carry on the war with any chance of success when there was neither system nor co-ordination in the Government and when operations at the front were paralyzed by the chaos in the rear.

I agreed with Alexeieff on the justice of his complaints, but pointed out that were the necessary powers given to the Prime Minister, a dictatorship could be avoided. On the other hand, the appointment of a man like the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch would be tantamount to the ruin of the whole war supply organization. He would again be surrounded by his former associates and collaborators, and nothing but ill would come of this to the army and the whole country.

"Tell the Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovitch from me," I said to Alexeieff, "that if he does not cease intriguing in the sphere of munitions supplies, I, as President of the Duma, will expose his activities from the tribune of the Duma. I have more than sufficient evidence concerning them in my possession."

Our talk having then drifted to conditions at the front, I told Alexeieff of the troops' desire to see Russky reinstated as commander. Alexeieff agreed with me on some points, disapproved of Evert and Kuropatkin, but said with regard to Russky that he could not appoint him anywhere.

This was my first meeting with Alexeieff; so far we had only corresponded. He produced the impression of being a clever and highly expert

officer, but lacking in determination and broad political outlook.

The Emperor as usual accorded me a gracious reception, and heard all my unpleasant news of disorder in the rear without murmur or contradiction. In reporting on the work of the Duma I pointed to the desire of the ultra-Conservatives to create a conflict over the question of German aggression. The bill as drafted by the Government was rejected, as it did not secure the real object; to combat German aggression in the rear was certainly necessary, but to raise the whole question of land tenure during the war was a dangerous proceeding. Some sort of system was imperative; the taking of land from one group of owners for distribution among disabled soldiers, however, was a great risk which might lead to agrarian disorders.

The Emperor here interposed by saying that the distribution of land among the soldiers was his own idea.

"Nevertheless, your Majesty, permit me to disagree with you, and most humbly to beg that this bill may be revised."

Our conversation having touched on Poland, I reminded the Emperor that its future status was still unsettled, and that the Poles were becoming increasingly anxious, as they saw the Government's growing oblivion of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch's proclamation.

The Poles had told me, before I left for the Stavka, how the Empress had said in the course of a conversation with Count Zamoisky: "*L'idée de l'autonomie de la Pologne est insensée; on ne peut le faire sans donner les mêmes droits aux provinces Baltiques.*"

I then passed on to the question of a dictatorship, and said I felt obliged to warn the Emperor against taking such a step. To my surprise the

Emperor appeared to have completely forgotten Alexeieff's scheme.

"What dictatorship?" he asked.

I handed him the copy of the report. The Emperor glanced at it carelessly and said:

"Yes, I have a copy of this among my papers."

My opinion, in short, was that a dictatorship would not attain the object in view, while detracting from the authority of the Sovereign. The Emperor listened attentively and asked:

"What steps would you advise for restoring order in the rear?"

"Your Majesty, I have but one solution to recommend, which is the same as I proposed before: grant a responsible Ministry. By doing so you will merely extend the rights you have given already in granting the Constitution, but your own authority will remain immutable. Only the responsibility will no longer rest with you but with the Government, and you will continue as before to ratify the laws, dissolve the legislative bodies, and determine questions of war and peace."

The Emperor replied: "Very well, I will think it over." He added, "Whom would you recommend as Prime Minister?"

"You will be surprised, your Majesty, but the man I would recommend is Admiral Grigorovitch. In a short time he put his own department in excellent order."

"That is true, but that is a different sphere of action, and he would be out of place as Prime Minister."

"Believe me, Sire, he would be better than Sturmer."

Speaking of the disorder in the Ministries of Ways and Communications and of Commerce, the Emperor again asked:

"And who are your candidates for these posts?"

198 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

I named the engineer Voskresensky and Protopopoff, deputy-president of the Duma.

The Emperor made no objections and, as was his custom, made notes in his pocket book.

At the close of my report I mentioned two other items: the Ministerial defence of the so-called Kuznetsk enterprise, in which Trepoff—a brother of the Minister—had an interest, and the relief of disabled soldiers. The shareholders of the Kuznetsk works, who enjoyed the patronage of the Ministers Trepoff and Prince Shakhovskoy, were trying to obtain huge allotments of State lands, rich in mineral ore, in the Urals, and for their exploitation asked for a subsidy of twenty million roubles, which they promised to repay in five years without interest. The Imperial Duma refused a grant for what appeared to be a purely speculative concern.

The problem of the care of disabled soldiers had not yet been worked out. The Emperor requested that a detailed scheme should be submitted to him which could then be laid before the legislative chambers.

After the audience I was invited to dine at the Imperial table. Notwithstanding this gracious act of courtesy, I realized that my report had failed to produce the desired impression: a kind of indifference or weariness was noticeable in the Emperor's attitude towards everything that was taking place.

In the interval between the audience and dinner I spoke of this with M. P. Kaufman,* who said to me: "I would advise you to wait on the Empress and try to make her hear reason by explaining to her the true state of affairs. Perhaps you may achieve something in that quarter."

* Red Cross delegate at the Stavka and member of the Council of the Empire.

CHAPTER XIII

*Dismissal of Sazonoff—Sturmer as Dictator—The Guards
on the Stokhod—Aircraft from Abroad.*

THE Ministerial leap-frog still continued. Sazonoff, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was summarily dismissed and Sturmer appointed in his stead while retaining the Premiership. Khvostoff, Minister for Justice, received the post of Minister of the Interior, and Makaroff that vacated by Khvostoff. No one could explain the cause of Sazonoff's disgrace. One of the Foreign Ministry officials told me it was due to Sazonoff's report on Poland, in which he insisted on the settlement of the Polish question, and the removal of the chief opponent of Poland's autonomy—Sturmer. But in my opinion the real cause lay deeper.

With regard to the Minister for Justice, Khvostoff, it was said that he had suffered on account of Sukhomlinoff, because he had refused to suspend the investigation into his case. Khvostoff had been summoned to the Empress, who for two hours had urged him to release Sukhomlinoff. At first she persisted in asserting his innocence, and finally, raising her voice, demanded that he should be released from the fortress, repeating incessantly: "*Je veux, j'exige qu'il soit libéré.*"

Khvostoff replied that he was unable to do so, and on the Empress asking him, "*Pourquoi pas, si je vous l'ordonne?*" said, "*Ma conscience, Madame, me défend de vous obéir et de libérer un traître.*"

Khvostoff, after this interview, realized that his days were numbered, and his transference to the post of Minister of the Interior was but an inter-

lude in order to save appearances. The Empress appointed Makaroff in his stead in the hope of finding him more pliant, but such, fortunately, did not prove to be the case.

On my return from the Stavka I had an interview with Sturmer concerning the dictatorship scheme. He professed complete ignorance on the subject. A week later he departed for the Stavka bearing a letter from the Empress.

It was revealed at a meeting of the Special Council that the despatch of several artillery supply columns ordered by the Council had been countermanded by Sturmer. This Council, at the time of its formation, had by Imperial ukase been placed above the Council of Ministers. The members demanded explanations from the Minister for War. The latter then produced a secret document—an Imperial ukase appointing Sturmer dictator with full powers. A delegation of members was immediately chosen to wait on Sturmer and express the Council's indignation to him. He ceased from that time to tamper with the work of the Special Council, but continued to interfere in all other branches of the administration.

The authorities arrested D. Rubinstein, the chairman of the board of a private bank, who was known to be on intimate terms with Rasputin, also Rubinstein's two brothers, Stembo, a journalist, and the lawyer Wolfson, solicitor to the Countess Kleinmichel—all of them on the charge of profiteering; gambling on the Stock Exchange with a view to lowering the value of Russian securities, and of acts of open treason, such as the sale to Germany of war supplies ordered by us abroad.

These events almost coincided with the resignation of the Minister for Agriculture, Naumoff, the last member of the Cabinet chosen from among public workers. With the assistance of the

Zemstvos he had drafted a scheme for organizing the food supply throughout the country. The scheme, which had been debated in and approved by the Duma, was nevertheless rejected by the Cabinet under pressure from Sturmer.

My wife and I left Petrograd on July 12 for the southern front, stopping at Kieff on our way. That city was now the residence of the Empress Marie Feodorovna, who had retired there from all the cares and trials which beset her at Petrograd and Tsarskoe. I visited her, and she detained me for two hours, talking of the work of the Red Cross. On my remarking that instead of spending only a week in Kieff as originally intended, she had prolonged her stay for months, the Empress replied: "Yes, it is so nice here; I am going to stay as long as I like." Afterwards she said: "*Vous ne pouvez pas vous imaginer quel contentement pour moi après cinquante ans que je devais cacher mes sentiments — c'est de pouvoir dire à tout le monde combien je déteste les allemands.*"

On July 16 I went to visit General Brusiloff at Berditcheff in company with V. A. Maklakoff and M. I. Tereschenko. Everything was going on well on his front, munitions were plentiful, and the Commander-in-Chief seemed to be full of confidence concerning the state of his armies. There was but a temporary shortage in the supply of heavy shells, due to a great outlay during the advance.

General Kaledin, in command of the Eighth Army, whom I visited at Lutsk, repeatedly expressed his astonishment at General Besobrasoff's* behaviour. The latter acted independently of everyone else and never co-ordinated his operations with those of his neighbours. Kaledin also strongly disapproved of the appointment of the

* Gen. Besobrasoff was in command of the so-called Imperial Guards joint contingent, consisting of two corps.

Grand Duke Paul* as a corps commander. The Grand Duke did not execute the orders even of his immediate superiors, and his presence merely tended to increase the already existing confusion.

Speaking of the Kovel operations, Kaledin remarked: "Had I the Guards at my disposal, I would have captured Kovel; it was not so strongly fortified as now, and the Austrians did not dispose of large forces at that point. The Stavka failed to carry out its original plan."

Kaledin was loud in praising the fresh contingents of young soldiers, who were well trained and all of them picked men.

From Lutsk we went to Torchin, where the Zemstvo Union hospital unit, attached to the "Iron Division," was at work. All along the road we met convoys of covered waggons carrying the wounded, and traces of the Austrians' recent occupation were to be found on all sides. At Torchin we saw huge quantities of war trophies: piles of hand grenades and shells, and rows of guns of various calibres. The heavy guns had been captured where they stood, turned about and fired after the retreating enemy. A flying unit had been despatched from the Zemstvos' dressing station for work within a mile of the line of battle. The casualties were very heavy, and doctors and nurses had been working for two days without respite. The corps commander, General Kashtalinsky, said that fresh attacks were expected and that the Austrians were already carrying out an artillery preparation. In fact, towards evening a bombardment began which reminded one of uninterrupted thunder-bursts, with occasional terrific explosions.

A continuous stream of peasants' carts filled with wounded plodded along the road from Rozhistche. Many of the seriously wounded were lying without

* Uncle of the Emperor Nicholas II, commanding the 1st Guards Corps.

even a straw litter, and groaned aloud. The Red Cross delegate to the Eighth Army, H. H. Lerche, had said to us at Lutsk: "Notice the evacuation of wounded from the Guards. God knows what's happening there."

At Rozhistche great numbers of the wounded could be seen lying about everywhere: in the houses and gardens, on the ground, in sheds. Many had been wounded in the place itself during enemy air raids and by the explosion of pyroxilene fuses stacked in the open beside the hospital. G. M. Khitrovo, the head of the Red Cross, was killed like this, as he rushed to rescue the wounded from a hut which had caught fire from the explosion. The Army Medical Service, under Professor Veliaminoff, was short of the most necessary drugs and surgical appliances. General Besobrasoff's staff was over-crowded with officers. Judging by his account of conditions at the front, complete chaos reigned in his sector.

On my return journey I again met General Kaledin at Lutsk. He did not conceal his indignation at the enormous casualties sustained by the Guards coupled with negligible results. "Such a senseless sacrifice of human lives cannot be justified, and such splendid men, too!" he said.

We arrived at Rozhistche hoping to see our son, whose regiment had taken part in all the fighting, where the Guards had lost 33,000 men killed and wounded. Besobrasoff gave us leave to send for our son by telephone, his regiment having been withdrawn to the second line. We had to wait till daybreak on the second day. We sat on a bench in the road till late at night, listening in anxious expectancy to the roar and din of the battle, after the harrowing experiences of the day. The night was very dark, and my wife went to get some rest in the hut of Mme. Mestcherinova, who, true to

herself, was never far behind the Preobrazhensky Regiment. Of her three sons who served there, one was already killed. Sleep was impossible. My wife soon rejoined me, and we visited three field hospitals—one bearing the name of Rodzianko, where my nephew's wife (an Englishwoman) was doing splendid work. The second was the British hospital run by Lady Muriel Paget, and the third belonged to the Kaufman Association. The staffs were everywhere working with the utmost self-denial, but it was impossible to admit all the wounded for want of room. The men all belonged to the Guards, splendid stalwart young fellows, from the latest "Polivanoff" drafts. They answered our questions cheerfully, but the "old men" complained that such heavy casualties were needless, as the men were sent to attack barbed wire entanglements without a preliminary bombardment. They treated me with complete confidence, and spoke gently and sadly of the bad staff work.

With Mme. Mestcherinova we were present at Khitrovo's funeral. He was laid in a temporary grave, and, after the ceremony, we stayed for the burial of some soldiers who had died in hospital. They were brought without coffins, stark naked, and laid in rows in a common grave. It was a harrowing sight. The priest gabbled carelessly through the burial service, and when we asked him not to hurry and ourselves began to sing, he looked at us in surprise and read the prayers properly. Before going away the priest thanked us, saying with a sigh: "We do nothing else but bury—it's pitiful to see," and made a despairing gesture.

Our son came straight to Lutsk and, after an hour's rest, began to narrate his experiences. Criminal incompetence, lack of co-operation in the higher command, and chaotic disaccord had resulted in a senseless slaughter of our crack

regiments. Not only officers but the men saw clearly that, notwithstanding the heroism of the Guards, victory under the existing conditions was impossible. The Grand Duke Paul, corps commander, disobeyed the order he received to encircle a given point by a flank manoeuvre, and sent the Preobrazhensky and the Imperial Rifle Regiments to make a frontal attack on the Rai-Mesto heights. The troops found themselves in a swamp, where many men perished. While they were floundering through the bog, German aeroplanes hovered overhead and bombarded them at close quarters. My son sank up to the armpits and was with difficulty extricated by his men. The wounded could not be brought out, and all perished in the swamp. These marshes extended to the foot of the hill, which was covered with barbed wire. Our artillery fire was weak and failed to destroy the entanglements; the shells fell short of them, or dropped among our own men. General Rauch, in command of the cavalry division, instead of obeying orders from headquarters and attacking the enemy from the rear, withdrew his regiments. As a matter of fact, each commander acted on his own, and many men were sacrificed in vain. Nevertheless, the gallant Guards fulfilled their task and, though bled white, succeeded in capturing the heights, which they were then ordered to abandon.

My son, usually so calm and self-possessed, was terribly excited and kept repeating to me: "You must tell the Emperor. It is a crime to sacrifice these men for nothing. . . . The higher command is absolutely rotten. Everyone in the army feels that for no reason whatever matters are going from bad to worse. The men are splendid, guns and munitions plentiful, but the generals lack brains. The want of aeroplanes, too, is very bad. No one trusts either the Stavka or his own chiefs. All this

may end by creating resentment and disruption. We are willing to die for Russia, for our Mother country, but not for the caprice of the generals, who sit in safe places during the fighting; few of them are ever seen in the firing line, and it is we who die. Both men and officers think that if things are not changed, we shall never win. The eyes of people in high quarters must be opened."

Under the impression of all we had seen and heard, I wrote a detailed letter to Brusiloff, who, adding to mine a report of his own, despatched both to the Stavka. The result of this was that General Besobrasoff, his chief staff officer, Count Ignatieff, the Grand Duke Paul and Professor Veliaminoff were removed from their posts.

At the very next meeting of the Special Council I raised the question of our air force. Shuvaeff objected to this, fearing criticism of the activities of the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch.* When the members of the Council, nevertheless, determined to discuss the matter, Shuvaeff closed the meeting without further explanations. The Grand Duke's name was connected with many cases of abuse. Aeroplanes unfit for service were purchased, the receiving committee did not even trouble to open the cases on arrival, and machines were despatched to the front which could not be flown or were very dangerous. The Grand Duke's chief assistant, Colonel Fogel, enjoyed a very doubtful reputation. All orders were placed through him and he was practically at the head of our air force. When, in June, the question came up before the Special Council, information was asked for as to the exact number of aircraft actually

* Cousin of the Emperor and married to his sister the Grand Duchess Xenia. This grand duke was at the head of the Air force.

at the front as compared with those which should be there according to estimate. The reply took long in coming, and when at last it did arrive, it turned out that most of the aeroplanes were training ones and attached to the aviation schools.

The Special Council then proposed that the shortage should be made good by the purchase of aircraft from abroad. A long time elapsed; appeals for aeroplanes came repeatedly from the front, and still nothing was heard of the order. To the Special Council's reiterated inquiry the Aviation Department replied that the orders were placed in France and the machines were due to arrive shortly. A little later a statement came to the effect that France had refused to execute the order. In the meantime I received information that the alleged order had actually never been placed, and that the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch had caused all negotiations to be cancelled. I then determined to collect all the data concerning our air force organization. Valuable assistance was rendered me by two of our prominent flying officers, one of whom was at the head of the flying school and had received three Crosses of St. George* for distinguished war service. Moreover, I received numerous letters from members of the service at the front.

A conclusive report was drawn up containing precise figures of the orders given, with the dates of their execution, enumerating all the instances of abuse, casualties among the personnel, and so forth. The whole system of our air force administration stood revealed, together with the appalling state of the service. Copies of this report were sent by me to the Emperor, the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch, and all the members of the Special Council.

* The Russian V.C., which had four grades.

The whole matter was brought up again at the following meeting of the Special Council in the absence of Shuvaeff. I acquainted the assembly with the contents of my report, recounted all my experiences at the front, and added that such authorities as Brusiloff, Kaledin and Sakharoff had begged that most serious attention should be given to the state of our air force. While the Germans hovered over our lines like birds pelting us with bombs, we were powerless to prevent them. The enemy was perfectly aware of our dispositions, while our own aerial reconnaissance was practically non-existent.

I urged on the Council the impossibility of relying further on the Aviation Department and the Grand Duke, and proposed that we should take the initiative in ordering aircraft from abroad. The Council agreed to this, and in view of Shuvaeff's disinclination to negotiate the affair with the Allies, the task was entrusted to me. Shuvaeff gave me the war code cipher, and I telegraphed to General Joffre through the medium of our Military Attaché in Paris, Count Ignatieff. The reply was long in coming, and the French Military Attaché, the Marquis de La Guiche, told me that according to their secret information, Count Ignatieff had kept back my telegram and not delivered it to Joffre. I requested La Guiche to send a telegram in French cipher direct to Joffre and to the Minister of Supplies, Thomas. I also inquired of Shuvaeff by what right a Military Attaché had taken the liberty of censoring a telegram from the President of the Duma, sent with the knowledge of the Minister for War, and in war cipher. Ignatieff's reply was peculiar: he had been unwilling to agitate the Generalissimo by submitting to him the telegram of the President of the Duma. Meanwhile, a reply was soon received to La Guiche's telegram, inform-

ing us that the orders had already been placed and the aeroplanes would be delivered shortly. Joffre's reply made an excellent impression on the Special Council.

This episode, however, did not end here. I left Petrograd for a short holiday in the country. A few days later I received a telegram saying that the Budget Commission insisted on my pressing the Government for a speedy convocation of the Duma. The same telegram announced the arrival of my private secretary, V. Sadykoff. To my great surprise Sadykoff brought me, besides the report of the Budget Commission, a letter from General Alexeieff notifying me of the Emperor's desire that I should "abstain from direct interference in war matters which did not concern either the President of the Duma or a member of the Special Council."* My secretary drew my attention to the fact that the envelope containing the letter bore no seal and was not inscribed "confidential," although such seals and inscriptions were put on the most unimportant letters. Sadykoff said that on opening this envelope he decided at once to bring it me, in the country, without consulting anyone, as he knew I was due to go to the Stavka before returning to Petrograd, and, not knowing the contents of the letter, would find myself there in a very awkward position.

My conscience did not enable me to accede to the Emperor's desire. It would mean that I should have to remain silent during the Council's debates on war supplies, and in general behave, according to Goremykin's maxim, as if the war "did not concern me."

At my next audience I submitted my views to the Emperor and explained that in conformity with the law establishing the Special Council, it behoved me, as a member of it, to take an active part in

* See Appendix No. III.

210 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

all matters connected with army supplies and equipment, adding that he had obviously been misinformed with regard to my interference in the business.

The Emperor replied: "Yes, you were right, and the matter was not correctly represented to me."

The Emperor's reply gave me complete satisfaction.

CHAPTER XIV

Protopopoff becomes Minister—The President of the Duma states his Terms—A Greek Prince—Refusal of an Audience—A Visit to Sturmer.

AMONG Sturmer's particularly intimate associates was a certain Manusevitch-Manuiloff, a former collaborator of Ratchkovsky's and a journalist on a small scale connected with Rasputin's clique, to whose influence Sturmer partly owed his own promotion. He was with Sturmer in the capacity of private secretary. Taking advantage of his position, he levied blackmail on the banks, which propitiated him by bribery. Count Tatistcheff, manager of the Soedinenny (Union) Bank, together with the Minister A. A. Khvostoff, determined to catch Manuiloff out. A bribe was offered him, but each of the 500-rouble notes was marked by Ivan Khvostoff, the Minister's nephew. All this took place during Sturmer's absence at the Stavka. A search was made at Manuiloff's flat, and the 500-rouble notes found almost intact; only a part of them had disappeared. Manuiloff was arrested.

When Sturmer heard that Manuiloff had been arrested, he refused to believe it. Having ascertained the truth of it, he again left for the Stavka. What he said there no one ever knew, but he returned to Petrograd with Khvostoff's dismissal in his pocket. He summoned Khvostoff to the telephone and announced: "You brought me the unpleasant news of Manusevitch-Manuiloff's arrest; now I have news for you: you are no longer Minister of the Interior."

Khvostoff (senior) was succeeded as Minister of

the Interior by Protopopoff, Deputy-President of the Imperial Duma.

Since Protopopoff's return from abroad and the interview with the German emissary at Stockholm, his name had begun frequently to appear in the Press. A paragraph was inserted in one of the papers announcing Protopopoff's intention of editing, with the assistance of several banks, a newspaper called *Volia Rossii*. Litvinoff-Falinsky, Tereschenko, and many others warned me that Protopopoff was surrounded by shady characters, that his name was coupled with that of Rasputin, and that the latter's clique was supporting his candidature for the post of Minister of the Interior. Protopopoff's appointment might appear to be popular, because he had had a certain amount of success as head of the parliamentary delegation and was even a member of the Progressive *bloc*.

The actual appointment created general bewilderment, but in his very first interview with representatives of the Press, Protopopoff showed his hand by declaring that he entered the Cabinet as a member of Sturmer's Government and pursued no separate programme. Protopopoff had lately been avoiding me and did not show himself at the Duma. At last I got him on the telephone and insisted on his coming to lunch with me. I put the question to him point blank :

"Tell me frankly, Alexander Dmitrievitch, are the rumours of your appointment correct? You place me in a very awkward position—I must know what post my deputy is about to accept."

"Yes, I was offered the post of Minister of the Interior," replied Protopopoff, "and accepted it."

"Who offered it you?"

"Sturmer, at the desire of his Majesty the Emperor."

"What? . . . And you consent to become a member of Sturmer's Cabinet?"

"Why, you recommended me yourself."

"Yes, I recommended you as Minister for Commerce in Grigorovitch's Cabinet, but not as Sturmer's Minister of the Interior."

"I feel," Protopopoff said, "that you are angry with me."

"I am, very angry indeed. You have acted treacherously towards the Duma. You are going to serve in a Government which the Duma considers incompetent and detrimental to Russia's interests; and this you do after having signed the resolution of the Progressive *bloc*. Moreover, you openly confess that you have no other programme but that of the Prime Minister, Sturmer. You will be called upon to explain yourself before the Duma—let me tell you that."

"I hope," said Protopopoff, "that I shall succeed in bringing about some changes in the present state of affairs. Believe me, the Emperor is willing to do all that is good, but is being prevented."

"So be it; but how will you be able to do anything against Sturmer and Rasputin? You will merely compromise both yourself and the Duma. You haven't sufficient strength for the fight, and will never dare speak outright to the Emperor."

After Protopopoff's appointment a rumour spread that the President of the Duma was to be offered the dual post of Premier and Minister for Foreign Affairs. The story was soon confirmed. I received an unexpected visit from Protopopoff, who announced:

"Do you know, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, at the Stavka they want to appoint you Minister for Foreign Affairs."

"How can I be Minister for Foreign Affairs?" I asked with a smile.

"You will have assistants who know the technique of the business."

"Am I also expected to combine this office with the Premiership?"

"Yes, that too, of course."

It was time to put a stop to this farce.

"Look here," I said, "you are executing a commission; you have been sent to learn my views on the subject. In that case, tell the Emperor, here are my terms: I alone shall have power to choose the Ministers. I must be appointed for a term of not less than three years. The Empress must renounce all interference in affairs of State and remain at Livadia* till the end of the war. None of the Grand Dukes shall be permitted to take any active part in affairs or allowed at the front. The Emperor must be reconciled with all the Ministers whom he has unjustly offended. Polivanoff must be appointed the Emperor's assistant at the Stavka, and Lukomsky Minister for War. Weekly conferences on all matters connected with the war must be held at the Stavka, at which I shall be present, with the right of a casting vote on all questions not of a purely strategical character."

Protopopoff looked staggered at my words, and, unable to imagine how he would ever have the courage to transmit them, I came to his assistance.

"If the Emperor sends for me, I will tell him all this myself."

"Oh yes, I know you'll tell him," Protopopoff kept repeating, scratching his head.

I asked him to put my terms in writing, and he put them down in his note-book.

"Please add, that I will accept this post on con-

* The Imperial estate in the Crimea.

dition that all these terms are made public in the Duma. . . ."

Dining with me a few days later, Protopopoff spoke in very high terms of the Empress.

"She is an uncommonly strong-minded, authoritative and clever woman. You really ought to go and see her, Mikhail Vladimirovitch."

Instead of an answer, I felt his pulse and asked :

"Where did you dine yesterday?" (Shortly before this his special Ministerial secretary, Grevé, who had served under Stolypin, had informed me that the day before Protopopoff had dined at Tsarskoe Selo, presumably with Mme. Vyrubova, and spent the evening at Sturmer's.)

Protopopoff looked abashed.

"Now then, tell me, where did you dine last night?" I went on with my interrogation.

"Who told you?"

"That is my own business; my secret service is better than yours. . . . Well, my dear fellow, where did you dine?"

"You probably know already," replied Protopopoff.

"And you spent the evening with Sturmer."

"You know that, too?"

"I know everything, as you see. Tell me, why do you do such things? Why do you compromise yourself? Such things cannot be kept secret. You propose that I should go and see the Empress. I would not go and see her for worlds. You want people to say that I, too, am seeking her patronage, and perhaps also that of Vyrubova and Rasputin. I cannot follow that path."

The Empress's visits to the Stavka became increasingly frequent, and when at Tsarskoe, she received the Ministers, who presented their reports to her.

Under the influence of the Metropolitan Pitirim

216 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

and Rasputin, a certain Raeff, the principal of a Higher College for Women, was appointed Procurator of the Holy Synod. A delegation of the Synod, in which this Raeff took part, presented the Empress with an ikon and a "blessed *gramota*" (address) signed by the Metropolitan Pitirim and other ecclesiastical dignitaries who were members of the Synod, extolling the Empress's work of mercy among the wounded and invoking the blessing of God on her labours.

This address was published in the Press, but failed to produce the desired impression. The Empress never had been popular, and when Rasputin's influence over her, and her own interference in affairs of State, became more widely known, public resentment was aroused. The Empress was spoken of as "that German woman," and was looked upon as the moving spirit of the Emperor's unsuccessful and ill-fated policy.

Prince Nicholas of Greece, the husband of the Grand Duchess Helena Vladimirovna,* arrived at Petrograd via Vienna and Berlin on what was purported to be a secret mission. His visit lasted several months. He went to the Stavka, and Alexeieff complained that on coming one day to make his customary report to the Emperor, he found the Prince and the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna† in the study. The Emperor proposed that Alexeieff should report in their presence, but the latter refused to do so, and requested that the interview should be strictly private. Alexeieff considered the Prince's presence at the Stavka out of place, and was of opinion that he ought to be interned and not allowed to return, and more especially, prevented from again passing through Berlin and Vienna. On the demand of the military

* First cousin to the Emperor.

† The Prince's mother-in-law.

authorities Prince Nicholas eventually travelled not via Tornea to Sweden, but direct to England via Archangel. He arrived in Greece in the very thick of the disturbances. We saw a paragraph later in the papers stating that "at the Court of King Constantine the mission of Prince Nicholas was considered to have been most successfully accomplished."

On assuming office Protopopoff had declared that the organization of the food supply would be his main task. At a Cabinet meeting he proposed that matters relating to the food supply should be transferred from the Ministry of Agriculture to that of the Interior. This proposal was opposed by the Press and the Zemstvo delegates working in the supplies organizations, as they justly feared increased pressure on the part of governors, police officials and so forth in the event of the organizations passing into the hands of the Ministry of the Interior. The majority declined to work under the control of that body.

These apprehensions were soon justified. The following incident took place in the province of Ekaterinoslav. The governor sent a telephone message to the chairman of the Zemstvo Board, Herberg (who was also plenipotentiary of the Ministry of Agriculture for food supplies) requesting him to authorize the purchase by the agents of the Ministry of the Interior of a consignment of one and a half million poods of barley for the Kalashnikoff corn exchange in Petrograd. Fearing that the activities of inexperienced outside agents would inevitably lead to an increase in prices and abuse, Herberg offered to buy and despatch the barley himself; but the governor stood his ground and added that he was merely transmitting an order

of the Minister of the Interior, which, if disobeyed, would lead to reprisals. To this Herberg replied that, as chairman of the Zemstvo Board, he was not entitled to receive notifications from the governor on matters of food supply and that, as plenipotentiary, he was subordinate to the Ministry of Agriculture. Herberg's reply was transmitted to Protopopoff, and the latter determined to deport Herberg to Siberia on the pretext of his having a German name. This was averted by a mere chance. A certain Magdenko, justice of the peace of the Novo-Moskovsk district (in the province of Ekaterinoslav) and an old fellow-officer of Protopopoff's, paid a call on the Minister. Protopopoff spoke to him of Herberg and of his intention to deport him. Magdenko implored Protopopoff to desist, saying it would provoke an outburst of indignation throughout the province, where Herberg, who had recently celebrated the twenty-fifth anniversary of his Zemstvo service, was exceedingly popular. It was only after insistent entreaties and persuasions that Protopopoff consented to cancel his decision, and, in Magdenko's presence, tore up the signed order of deportation.

Protopopoff's behaviour was in general becoming very peculiar, and at times he made the impression of not being quite normal. He arrived at a meeting of the Duma Budget Commission wearing the uniform of Chief of the Gendarmerie. He was received with marked coldness by the Duma, and his food supply scheme rejected. It was also condemned by the Unions of Towns and Zemstvos. Protopopoff pressed for an interview with his former fellow-members in the Duma and asked my assistance in the matter. He evidently hoped that an interview would be arranged solely with members belonging to the Zemstvo-Octobrist group, but I purposely invited the leaders of all parties

included in the Progressive *bloc*. Protopopoff's behaviour that evening was most extraordinary: he rolled his eyes, repeating in a kind of unnatural ecstasy, "I feel that I shall save Russia, I feel that I alone can save her." Shingareff, a doctor by profession, was of opinion that Protopopoff was simply suffering from creeping paralysis. Protopopoff remained with me till three o'clock in the morning, as if unable to leave, until finally I almost forced him to go home to bed.

In spite of Protopopoff's endeavours to assure everyone that he was the man who could save Russia, the deputies did not trust him, his scheme was condemned by the Budget Commission, and when in its final stage it was laid before the Council of Ministers, it was also rejected by the latter, and the food supply organization was left under control of the Ministry of Agriculture.

On October 27 the Anglo-Russian Flag Association held a formal meeting. This society had been founded a year before by M. M. Kovalevsky, who was also its first chairman. After his death I was elected in his place. The meeting was held in the Town Hall. Major Thornhill's speech produced an excellent effect. He drew a graphic and vivid sketch of the Russian soldier and spoke with much humour of Germany's efforts to provoke a quarrel between Great Britain and Russia. Great Britain, he said, was out to conquer not territory, but the noble heart of the Russian people; it was for him as an Englishman to say, he added, that such a conquest would also be to our advantage.

Shingareff, who narrated the impressions of his tour with the parliamentary delegation, laid stress on the wonderful solidarity and mutual confidence which existed in England between the Government and the people. This statement was greeted with applause, which grew louder when he added

that there was no room there for powers of darkness and irresponsible influences. When one of the speakers mentioned the name of the late Minister Sazonoff, also a member of the society, the assembly cheered again and called on him to give him an ovation, but he was not present in the hall.

I received the Emperor's reply to my request for an audience. The following note was written in his own hand on my petition: "I direct the Prime Minister to inform the President of the Duma that he may be received after the reopening of the session to present a report dealing with matters relating to the session only." There was no signature. The document was enclosed in an envelope addressed to me and sealed with the "small seal." Obviously the Emperor had by mistake placed a document intended for Sturmer in an envelope addressed to Rodzianko.

Next day Sturmer rang me up on the telephone. He had been at the Stavka the day before and there learnt that the Emperor had sent his reply to the wrong man by mistake.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, have you received a document from his Majesty in which he desires me to inform you that he is unable to receive you?"

"Yes, I received it."

"What do you intend to do?"

"That is my business."

"But what am I to do? I must transmit his Majesty's command to you."

"That is your own affair. I cannot take it upon myself to advise you in anything."

"Could we not consider that I have given you the message by telephone?"

"I do not think his Majesty's command ought to be transmitted by telephone."

"Then what am I to do?"

"I really don't know."

"Could you send me that document?"

"A copy, yes, but I will keep the original, as I have received it from the Emperor in an envelope addressed in my name and under seal."

"What do you intend to do with regard to this refusal?"

"I am not bound to give you an account of my actions."

Next day Sturmer, after all, sent me an official intimation of the Emperor's message. It was a repetition of the incident which had occurred a few years before during Kokovtzeff's Premiership.

That same day or the next, two members of the Duma met Verevkin, the Assistant Minister for Justice, who asked them: "Whom does the Duma propose to elect as President?" The deputies replied that the re-election of the present President was practically certain. Verevkin looked surprised. "What," said he, "after the Emperor's refusal to receive him?" The deputies, though unaware of this, replied that it would not prevent a re-election. They straightway came to see me and repeated the conversation.

I determined, in order not to strain further the already tense atmosphere of the Duma, to conceal from the members both General Alexeieff's letter concerning the aeroplanes and the Emperor's reply to my request for an audience. But when the Government itself began to circulate rumours to that effect, I sent for the leaders of the parties forming the Progressive *bloc* and acquainted them with all the facts.

The Duma was due to assemble on November 1. The members of the Progressive *bloc* held con-

tinual conferences, at which a resolution, in strong terms, was drafted, stating the need of forming a Government supported by a majority in the Imperial Duma. The Progressives insisted on demanding a responsible Ministry, but, thanks to Miliukoff, the final resolution was couched in more moderate language. The motive for this was that were the demands of the *bloc* rejected, the latter would either be compelled to work with the same Government, or have recourse to revolutionary methods. Two days before the opening of the Duma I received a visit from the Minister for Education, Count Ignatieff. It appeared that the Government was already in possession of a copy of the resolution of the *bloc*. The Ministers were exceedingly perturbed by the fact of its containing the word "treason."* The Cabinet, so Count Ignatieff informed me, had held a special meeting on account of it and decided to request the President of the Duma to erase that word, as otherwise the Duma would have to be dissolved. I could not give Count Ignatieff any definite promise.

A similar request was made to me by Sturmer, on the eve of the opening of the Duma. On the plea of illness he asked me to call on him. At first I decided not to go, and wrote Sturmer a letter. I thought better of it afterwards and resolved to have a personal explanation. I handed to him a resolution passed by the chairmen of the provincial Zemstvo Boards, in which they reiterated all that had many times been pointed out to the Government: its incapacity to make the most of the nation's patriotic enthusiasm, its perpetual conflict with the representatives of the people all through the war, its incompetence under present conditions

* It transpired after the Revolution that the Government was informed of all that went on in the Duma by the deputy P. N. Krupensky.

to bring the war to a victorious end, and the fact that the principal danger with which the country was menaced lay not outside but within.

"Such is the opinion of Russia's most conservative men," I told Sturmer, "the opinion of persons of ripe experience, that of the whole of Russia's Zemstvos. This resolution is similar to that of the Progressive *bloc*, and thus enables you to know the mind of all Russia. Co-operation with public workers is for you impossible, and without such co-operation the war cannot be won. Everyone feels that the Government is driving the country to ruin. One must speak nothing but the truth now, for we are living through terrible times."

Having read the resolution, Sturmer asked :

"What am I to do?"

"Resign."

"How do you mean—resign?"

"Just take a pen, write, and sign."

Sturmer was extremely annoyed.

"So that is the advice you give me!"

CHAPTER XV

The "Junge Zarin": Miliukoff's Speech and its Consequences—Sturmer and Protopopoff demand the Dissolution of the Duma—Markoff II makes a Scene—After Rasputin's Murder—Protopopoff as Spiritualist.

A FEW days before the opening of the Duma the German Governor-General of Warsaw issued a proclamation announcing the decision of the German and Austrian Emperors to create out of the Polish provinces annexed from Russia an independent State under an hereditary constitutional monarch. This was but another of Wilhelm's cunning moves. Poles living in neutral countries passed resolutions protesting against such a violation of international law and the settlement of the destiny of whole provinces before the end of the war and the conclusion of a general peace. They treated this act as a clever manœuvre for the conscription of a Polish army. The Russian Poles thought likewise. A statement was read out at the very first sitting of the Duma protesting, in the name of the Polish "Kolo,"* against the German act, and expressing their hope for the ultimate victory of the Allies, the unification of all Polish territory and the restoration of a free Poland.

Unfortunately, after Sazonoff's resignation, our own Government displayed absolute indifference with regard to the Polish question. More than this, it seemed purposely to be creating a feeling that Russia was not bound by the promise contained in the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch's manifesto, nor did it find the right word to say at this

* The Polish group in the Duma.

junction. No statement was made in the Duma in reply to that read by Garusevitch on behalf of the "Kolo," while in the Council of the Empire. Protopopoff, as if suddenly remembering that he had something to say, asked leave to speak at the moment when members were already dispersing at the end of the sitting. They were asked to return to the hall, and Protopopoff, ascending the tribune, made a brief statement to the effect that with regard to the Polish question the Government still adhered to the principles enunciated in the manifesto of the Grand Duke Nicolai Nicolaevitch and in a subsequent declaration made in the Duma by Goremykin. Such a statement, of course, failed to satisfy anyone, nor could it counteract the effect of the Kaiser's proclamation.

The Cabinet, including Sturmer, were present at the opening of the Duma. After listening to the presidential address Sturmer rose and, amid shouts from the Left wing of "Down with the traitor Sturmer," quitted the assembly, followed by the rest of the Ministers. They were all alleged to be hastening to the opening of the Council of the Empire, which was fixed for 2 p.m. instead of 8 p.m. as was the custom. Kulomsin, President of the Council of the Empire, was ill, and his deputy, Golubeff, had fixed this early hour at Sturmer's request, because Sturmer and Protopopoff, having no statements to make, were unwilling to listen to disagreeable home truths in the Duma.

I had caught a chill the day before, felt very unwell, and having with difficulty got through my inaugural address, gave up the chair to my deputy, Varun-Secret. This fact, trivial in itself, was pregnant with unpleasant consequences. Miliukoff, in the course of his speech, read out a passage from a German newspaper. Varun-Secret, who apparently had not heard what Miliukoff was read-

ing, and overlooked the fact that the use of foreign languages on the tribune of the Duma was prohibited by the order of procedure, did not call Miliukoff to order. Yet the passage quoted by Miliukoff contained a broad hint at the active part taken by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in Sturmer's appointment to the Premiership, while Sturmer himself was openly called a traitor. The passage read was as follows: "*Das ist der Sieg der Hofpartei, die sich um die junge Zarin gruppiert.*" ("This is a victory of the Court party, grouped around the young Tsaritsa.")

That same night, at 2 a.m., I received the following letter from Sturmer:

"DEAR MIKHAIL VLADIMIROVITCH,

"Information has reached me that at to-day's sitting of the Imperial Duma, Miliukoff, a member of the Duma, took the liberty of quoting a paragraph from a newspaper edited in one of the countries with which we are at war, in which paragraph mention was made of the august name of her Imperial Majesty the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna in an inadmissible juxtaposition with the names of certain other persons; and that no steps were taken by the presiding member for putting a stop to such proceedings.

"Attaching, as I do, exceptional importance to this event, hitherto unknown in the annals of the Imperial Duma, I entertain no doubt but that you will take decisive measures, and would be greatly obliged if you could let me know your decision on the matter."

Simultaneously Sturmer wrote me another letter asking for a copy of the stenographic report of the speech as actually delivered, uncensored by the President, and adding that "this speech may be the subject of a judicial investigation."

The head of the Duma secretariat, Glinka, told me that the ministers held a conference that night at Sturmer's house. The Premier urged the dissolution of the Duma, but eventually they decided to

send me the above letters, while the Minister for Justice, Makaroff, did not consider that Miliukoff's speech contained anything criminal and refused to bring him to justice.

After Sturmer's letters I also received one from Count Fredericks, Minister of the Imperial Court. He reminded me that I held the rank of Chamberlain, and asked to be informed of the steps I intended to take in connection with the mention of the Empress's name. To Sturmer I replied that the President of the Duma was not bound to render account of his actions to the Prime Minister, and forwarded him a verbatim copy of Miliukoff's speech in full. I wrote a similar official reply to Fredericks, but as he was a man whom I esteemed, I added a private letter in which I told him that in the stenographic reports intended for the Press the Empress's name was not mentioned.

At the next sitting of the Duma, Varun-Secret made a statement in which he explained his conduct of the day before by his ignorance of the German language and by the fact that in the stenographic report of Miliukoff's speech submitted to him the German quotation was omitted. Nevertheless, Varun-Secret admitted himself to be guilty of inattention to the words of the speaker and resigned his office of Deputy-President of the Duma.

That same day, I believe, I received a letter from the Chief Committee of the All-Russian Union of Towns. It reiterated still more forcibly all that had been said in the resolution of the chairmen of the provincial Zemstvo Boards. The letter ended with an entreaty that I should tell the Duma that in the opinion of the Committee the decisive hour had struck, and that it was urgently necessary to insist on obtaining a Government which would lead the nation to victory in union with the people.

On November 3 I was re-elected President by

232 votes against 58. The Right Wing voted against me, the Left abstained, as usual. On November 5 an event occurred which created a profound impression not only in the Duma, but throughout the country. In the course of Markoff's speech, in which he endeavoured diligently, but unsuccessfully, to parry Maklakoff's attacks on Sturmer, Shuvaeff and Grigorovitch, Ministers for War and Marine respectively, entered the assembly hall. They notified the President of their desire to make a statement. After Markoff II had finished speaking, Shuvaeff mounted the tribune and said, showing great emotion, that he, as an old soldier, trusted in the gallantry of the Russian army, and that owing to the unanimous support of the nation and the representatives of the people, the army was now properly equipped and supplied with all necessaries. He quoted figures showing the increase in munitions since the formation of the Special Council for Defence. His speech ended in an appeal for the Duma's continued support and confidence. Grigorovitch's brief statement was equally effective. The meaning attributed to their joint demonstration was as follows: "If the other Ministers choose to steer clear of the Duma, we, the representatives of the services, desire to make common cause with the nation."

When the Ministers descended from their box into the hall, they were at once surrounded by deputies, who shook hands with them. Shuvaeff found himself among the Cadets and, gripping Miliukoff's hand, repeatedly said: "I thank you." Involuntarily one asked oneself, whether Shuvaeff and Grigorovitch had acted on their own initiative or had made sure of a permission from the Stavka. It is significant that even such an ordinary event as a Minister's cordial visit to the Duma produced an impression on the country:

telegrams of sympathy and joy addressed to the Duma and the Ministers themselves began to pour in from all sides. The Government, led by Sturmer, remained absolutely indifferent: Shuvaeff and Grigorovitch, it appeared, had not consulted the Stavka, and visited the Duma at their own risk.

After this Sturmer and Protopopoff pressed the Empress for the dissolution of the Duma.

On my re-election I solicited an audience of the Emperor. At the same time I forwarded to him a copy of the resolution of the Zemstvos and Towns as well as the full text of Miliukoff's speech, including the German quotation. The reply was long in coming.

Trepoff, the Minister for Ways and Communications, desired to make a statement on the Murmansk railway. The construction of this important strategic railway had just been completed, and Trepoff prided himself on its having begun to function during his tenure of office. He hoped to gain the approval of the Duma, and perhaps share the popularity of Grigorovitch and Shuvaeff. He was quite out of place as Minister for Communications, and not always unbiassed in the matter of the direction of new railway lines, in which private companies were interested.

Trepoff asked Shingareff, chairman of the Duma Commission for Defence, to fix a date for his statement and was invited by the latter to come next day. As soon as the members of the Commission learnt that Trepoff's report had been placed on the agenda, the majority declined to hear him, and announced their intention of making a disturbance in the event of his arrival. In the meantime Trepoff had already arrived and was waiting in the Ministerial pavilion. Shingareff was vainly trying

to persuade the members to give the Minister a hearing. At last, in despair, he asked me by telephone to come to the Duma. I had great trouble in proving to the deputies that once the chairman of a commission had invited a Minister to make a statement, members were not entitled to turn him out. Trepoff was kept waiting for two hours. When finally admitted before the Commission, he hurried through his statement, asked whether there would be any questions and, as no one replied, left the Duma.

On November 9 Sturmer and Grigorovitch left for the Stavka. Fresh changes were expected. Eventually Sturmer was dismissed and Trepoff appointed Premier. It was said that Sturmer received notice of his dismissal at Orsha before reaching the Stavka. As soon as the Empress heard of this she immediately started for Headquarters, accompanied by Protopopoff.

Trepoff called on me the day after his appointment and assured me of his desire to work in collaboration with the Duma, adding that he felt capable of overcoming the influence of Rasputin. I told him that the first thing for him to do was to dismiss Protopopoff, Shakhovskoy and A. Bobrinsky (Minister of Agriculture), as otherwise he would never be trusted.

The Duma recess was drawing to a close, but beyond Sturmer's dismissal no further changes had taken place. The reopening of the Duma was again deferred. It was generally believed that Trepoff would profit by the interval to remove several other Ministers and prepare a statement on the policy of the Government. Rumours were current that he had accepted the Premiership on condition of Protopopoff's resignation, but this unfortunately proved incorrect; the only minister to be dismissed was A. Bobrinsky, who, as Minister

for Agriculture, was succeeded by Rittich.

At last, on November 15, I was received in audience by his Majesty, to whom I presented a detailed report on the same subject as before. I remained with the Emperor for an hour and three-quarters.

The Duma reassembled on the 19th. Trepoff read out the Government statement, which contained no programme and took refuge in common-places. He made public our agreement with the Allies on the subject of our annexation of the Dardanelles after the war. Rittich was obliged to own that he had had no time to acquaint himself with the food supply organization during his short term of office, and was therefore unable to submit any scheme to the Duma. The deputies criticized both Trepoff and Rittich severely, and set themselves to work out a comprehensive system for improving the country's food supply. I was very sorry that for political reasons the Left wing had at once launched an open campaign against Rittich. I always looked on him as an eminently capable and hard-working man, having had occasion to collaborate with him when I was chairman of the Agrarian Commission. I had then learnt to appreciate him as a perfectly honest and experienced worker. His appointment unfortunately came too late, and he was in bad company.

A disturbance occurred in the Duma during the sitting of November 22. It had obviously been planned beforehand, because the serjeants-at-arms heard members of the Right asking each other in the gallery: "Has the row come off yet?"

Markoff II, having obtained leave to speak, intentionally used language calling for reprimand from the chair. I stopped him several times and finally ruled him out of order. On quitting the tribune, Markoff approached the presidential chair

and, waving his papers and shaking his fist in my face, uttered distinctly: "You scoundrel, scoundrel, scoundrel . . ."

At first I did not even realize what had happened. Then, having notified the Duma of the insult directed at its President, I gave up the chair to my senior deputy.

Count Bobrinsky, after making a statement on the incident, moved that the severest punishment allowed for by the procedure, i.e., suspension for fifteen sittings, be applied to Markoff. The motion was carried unanimously. Markoff asked for leave to make a statement and announced: "I re-affirm what I said before. I wished to insult your President, and in his person to insult you all, gentlemen. Insulting allusions to exalted personages were made in this place, which none of you resented, through the medium of your President, who is partial and not a gentleman. . . . I insult you all!"

On the way from the hall to my room I caught sight of Markoff's retreating figure. My first impulse was to overtake him, but luckily I was prevented from doing so by my confessor, the Duma chaplain. I regained my self-possession and together we entered my room. It was already crowded with deputies. Dmitriukoff, a highly-strung, nervous man, embraced me with tears in his eyes. Bobrinsky tried to soothe me, and Markoff I came up to me saying that though he was Markoff II's uncle he begged not to be "associated with his nephew." My son George, an officer in the Preobrazhensky Regiment, who was in the gallery with several brother officers, rushed downstairs to the telephone to ask his colonel's permission to challenge Markoff to a duel. As soon as I heard of it, I forbade him to do so. I sent for Panchulidzeff and D. Dashkoff, two of my

own old brother officers in the Chevaliers Gardes, and asked them to act as my seconds.

That same evening the Duma met for the election of the presidential body. I was re-elected by the majority against 26 votes. The Zemstvo-Octobrist group decided that the utterances of Markoff II were unworthy of notice and that he should not be shaken hands with. This resolution was endorsed by all the parties included in the Progressive *bloc*. The deputies Savitch and Kapnist arrived at my house with a copy of this resolution, which they handed me in the presence of my seconds, Panchulidzeff and Dashkoff. My seconds considered that under the circumstances Markoff II could not be regarded as a man enjoying the right to fight a duel.

After this unfortunate episode, in which Markoff II figured merely as somebody's mouthpiece, I began to receive numerous letters and telegrams from acquaintances and strangers, from assemblies of the Zemstvos and the Nobility assemblies, provincial and district Zemstvo Boards, municipalities and so forth. The Council of Professors of Petrograd University honoured me by electing me a member of the University *honoris causa*. The Ekaterinoslav Municipal Council sent me the following telegram: "Congratulations on brilliant victory over base sally of henchman of Ministerial lobby."

There could be no doubt but that Markoff's bout had been premeditated; clearly the desire existed to degrade the President of the Duma and trample him in the mud. It turned out otherwise.

A few days later the French Ambassador presented me, in the name of the President of the French Republic, with the Grand Cordon of the Legion of Honour.

At one of the next sittings a wonderfully powerful and inspiring speech was delivered by Purishke-

vitch. Disassociating himself from the Extreme Right, he spoke of the influence of the powers of darkness, and appealed to the Ministers present in the Duma. "You must," he said, "go at once to the Stavka, throw yourselves at the Emperor's feet, and implore him to credit the full horror of Rasputin's influence, the dire consequences of the present state of affairs, and to change his policy."

As all the stenographic reports of proceedings at the Duma were strictly censored, the members' speeches appeared in the Press with large blank spaces and reached the public in a completely distorted form. Evil-intentioned persons even began to fabricate certain speeches by inserting passages of their own, and sold separate copies for a few roubles.

A sharp change of front became manifest in the Council of the Empire. There, too, the members at last realized the impossibility of supporting such a Government. Eugene Trubetzkoy appealed to the members of the Synod to remember the cross which they wore on their breast, and taking up their cross, to go to the Tsar and implore him to deliver the Church and the Government from unclean influences. Like the Duma, the Council of the Empire passed a resolution declaring that it was the duty of the Government to listen to the voice of the nation and entrust power to men who enjoyed the confidence of the country. (How many times had all this been said already! . . .) A similar resolution was carried by the congress of the United Nobility.

All Russia thought alike and desired the same thing, yet the Government's policy remained unchanged. On the contrary, the acute divergency between Government and people appeared to be intentionally emphasized. The Pan-Zemstvo Congress in Moscow was prohibited at the last

moment, in spite of Protopopoff's assurances to the Press of his favourable attitude towards the Zemstvos and public workers in general. The delegates to the congress held meetings in private houses and handed over their rights to the committee presided over by Prince Lvoff.* In the papers blank columns appeared in place of the reports communicated by telephone from Moscow.

A notice appeared in the Press that Princess S. N. Vasilchikova, wife of a member of the Council of the Empire, was about to leave Petrograd for her estate in the province of Novgorod. The Princess's departure, as everyone understood, was not voluntary. Soon it became known that Princess Vasilchikova had written a letter to the Empress about Rasputin. Kaufman-Turkestansky, High Steward to the Imperial household, suffered in a similar fashion. He was Red Cross delegate at the Stavka. He had the courage to speak to the Emperor and entreat him to dismiss Protopopoff and appoint a man trusted by the nation. The Emperor agreed. The Empress arrived at the Stavka. Kaufman was due to leave for a time. He was bidden a most cordial farewell, but on reaching Petrograd he received from the Emperor an intimation that he was released from his duties as Red Cross representative at the Stavka.

A whole group of members of the Left had been suspended for from eight to fifteen sittings a few days before the Markoff episode. They had created a disturbance during the reading of the Government statement and had prevented Trepoff from speaking. After Markoff's suspension, the question was raised that the punishments meted out had been equal, while the offences were by no means equal. I intended to move in the Duma that the term of suspension of the deputies of the Left should be

* Prime Minister of the first Provisional Government in 1917.

reduced. At this juncture a delegation arrived from the Petrograd factory workers, announcing that they had come to "demand" a reprieve for the suspended deputies. I had a long talk with them about the state of the country, and, with regard to their claim, told them frankly what my intention had been, but that in view of the "demand" put forward by the workers I did not consider it possible to act under pressure from outside.

Quite unexpectedly and illegally Dobrovolsky, the Minister for Justice, dismissed the case of Manusevitch-Manuiloff, which had already been heard by Court and jury. This was a proceeding unheard of in Russian jurisprudence. It was done by Imperial command.

On December 16 the Duma rose for the Christmas recess.

An event occurred on the night of December 17 which may justly be considered as marking the beginning of the second Revolution—the murder of Rasputin. No doubt the perpetrators of this murder acted from patriotic motives. They saw that all legal methods of fighting the dangerous favourite led to nothing, and thought it their sacred duty to deliver the Imperial Family and Russia from the hypnotic power in which they were held enthralled. The result, however, was exactly contrary to the anticipation. The people saw that the fight for Russia's interests was only possible by means of terroristic acts, as legal methods failed to attain the desired aim. The knowledge that a Grand Duke, a member of the highest aristocracy, and members of the Duma had taken part in Rasputin's murder seemed to emphasize this fact.

At the same time, Rasputin's power and influence appeared to be confirmed by the extraordinary severity of the punishment meted out by the

Emperor to members of the Imperial Family. A number of Grand Dukes were banished from the capital to the army and other places. The papers were prohibited by the censor from writing of the *starets* Rasputin and of *startsy* in general. Editors, however, while paying heavy fines, published all the minutest details of the case. As if in defiance of public opinion, the policy of the Government became still more reactionary, and confidence was bestowed only on Rasputin's followers. The clamour roused by this terroristic act only served to make it generally popular, and the conviction steadily grew that since persons closely connected with the Imperial Family and members of the aristocracy had taken part in it—matters had indeed reached a climax.

Ever since the winter of 1913-14 society had talked of little else but of the influence exercised by the "powers of darkness." It was stated openly and definitely that the appointment of Ministers and other officials depended on these "powers of darkness," whose medium was Rasputin. The Court entourage either could or would not realize the fatal consequences such a state of affairs might have for the dynasty. Indignation was practically universal—but so were silence and submission. Such was the state of mind of Russian society when the world war broke out. The universal outburst of patriotic enthusiasm which swept the country relegated all internal troubles and apprehensions temporarily to the background. It seemed as if at the prospect of a cruel war, which claimed such heavy sacrifices from everyone, all differences had disappeared and the whole community, in singleness of purpose had rallied round the motto of "War to a victorious end."

The Rasputinites, however, did not rest. They soon resumed their intrigues, which aimed at

238 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

placing the Government in opposition to public opinion. In order to shake the Government's confidence in the nation, the legend of the growth of revolutionary tendencies was carefully and adroitly circulated. There were at the time absolutely no grounds for such fears, but the Russian public was immediately made suspect by the Government, and this policy of no confidence was continued right up to the outbreak of the Revolution. As most of the Ministers were Rasputin's nominees, I am justified in asserting that this policy of alienating the Government from the nation originated with his circle. Patriotic enthusiasm soon gave way to keen apprehension, and the fatal word "treason," first whispered secretly, soon sounded loudly and ominously throughout the country. Defeatists raised their heads, and the criminal, treacherous propaganda of their ideas soon became widespread, affecting all the weak and vacillating members of the community.

I here close the narrative of Rasputin's career and of the part played by him in the history of the Russian Empire. I can vouch for the truth of all the facts I have alleged. These facts adjust themselves into a definite and intricate pattern, showing the enormous influence this man exercised on the trend of public affairs through the medium of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna. The case leaves no room for doubt. What always struck me, who closely observed these phenomena, was the strict correlation in all the acts of the Rasputinites. It seemed as if they were pursuing some well thought out and definite plan.

I am far from asserting that Rasputin himself was the inspirer and leader of the nefarious activities of his clique. Though clever and astute by nature, he was after all only an illiterate and uneducated peasant, with a limited outlook on life and

absolutely devoid of any political ideas—world politics were simply beyond his power of comprehension. He was, therefore, incapable of guiding the political opinions of the Imperial couple. Had he alone been an intimate of the Court, the whole affair would have been limited to donations, presents, perhaps to instances of patronage extended to a certain number of suppliants—nothing more. On the other hand, the wicked idea of "treason" on the part of the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna must be rejected once and for all. This charge was absolutely repudiated by the commission under Muravieff which was appointed by the Provisional Government for the purpose of elucidating this matter in the light of documentary evidence.

That the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna may have thought a separate peace with Germany would serve Russia's interests better than a prolongation of the war on the side of the Allies, is certainly possible, but this was never actually established. Still less has anyone the right to speak of "treason" to the Allied cause on the part of the Emperor Nicholas II. He sealed his loyalty to his pledge by dying a martyr's death.

But at the same time it was perfectly clear that the whole internal policy of the Imperial Government from the outbreak of the war had inevitably and methodically led the country to revolution, to confusion in the minds of the citizens and to the complete political and economic collapse of the State.

One has but to recall the "Ministerial leap-frog." Five Ministers of the Interior had succeeded one another between the autumn of 1915 and that of 1916; Prince Scherbatoff was followed by A. N. Khvostoff, who was succeeded in turn by Makaroff, the elder Khvostoff, and lastly Proto-

popoff. Their average term of office was about two and a half months. How was any serious home policy possible under such circumstances? Three Ministers for War were changed during the same period—Polivanoff, Shuvaeff and Beliaeff, and four Ministers for Agriculture—Krivoshin, Naumoff, Count A. Bobrinsky and Rittich. The regular work of all State departments connected with the war was inevitably interrupted by these continual changes. No good could come of it: chaos, contradictory orders, general confusion, absence of guiding will power, lack of determination and firmness of purpose were not conducive to victory.

The people looked on, felt something was wrong, the conscience of the nation was stirred, and simple-minded folk drew the logically sound conclusion: a war is on, yet no one seems to care for our brothers, the soldiers in the ranks, who are being slain in their thousands, while there is chaos everywhere, due to the incompetence and carelessness of the Ministers and generals appointed by the Tsar.

All that happened during the war was not merely the result of bureaucratic negligence, caprice and unlimited power, or of incapacity to cope with the stupendous difficulties raised by the war. It was the outcome of a well thought out and systematic campaign for creating disruption in the rear of our army. And for those who were working consciously towards that end, Rasputin proved a most convenient tool.

For this reason I affirm that those who were in a position, and whose duty it was, to combat this evil phenomenon have sinned heavily against their Mother country, for not only did they not oppose Rasputin, but they used him as a means to attain their own selfish interests at the expense of Russia.

It is interesting to note that agents of the Okhrana who stood on duty near Rasputin's house and whom

he had dismissed before the arrival of Yusupoff's car on the fatal night, returned to their post next morning knowing nothing of the murder. Rumours of Rasputin's murder had spread long before it had actually taken place, and after the event the police rushed in all directions. Even my sons were suspected, and under the pretence of a burglary a search was made in my flat. The front door latch was forced, the contents of drawers and cupboards overhauled; none of the clothes were taken, but all the papers and letters scattered about.

It was hoped that the murder would have a salutary effect, the warning taken to heart at Tsarskoe Selo, and the Government brought to its senses, or at least frightened. Actually the reverse was the case. As if to spite the public, all Rasputin's adherents were promoted. Protopopoff's appointment as Minister of the Interior received Imperial confirmation, as if to emphasize the Emperor's approval of his policy; Trepoff resigned; Count Ignatieff, Makaroff and the Assistant Minister of the Interior, Prince Volkonsky, did likewise. Trepoff was succeeded by the old Prince N. D. Golitzyn. Ignatieff's and Volkonsky's resignations were temporarily not accepted, but a few days later they read in the papers of their dismissal. The Duma learnt of the peculiar role played at the Ministry of the Interior by General Kurloff, who held no official post and was looked upon as the organizer of Stolypin's assassination. In the absence of Protopopoff, who scarcely attended to his duties and was perpetually at Tsarskoe, Kurloff signed documents "p.p. Minister of the Interior." In the meantime, as no decree concerning his appointment had been published by the Senate, Government institutions declined to acknowledge such documents. Kurloff's appointment, it appeared, had been kept secret even from

the Senate. The Government had actually come to this. Exposure by the Duma had no effect, and Kurloff remained at his post.

On January 1, 1917, corresponding changes were made in the Council of the Empire. Kulomsin was relieved of the presidency and replaced by Stcheglovitoff, and a number of ultra-reactionary men nominated members of the Council. Nevertheless, the Government failed to alter the spirit of the Upper Chamber. The recent supporters of the Government, "right or wrong," now declared themselves against Protopopoff. When the rumour arose that Sturmer would be included in the list of newly-nominated members of the Council, the Conservatives announced that they would not admit him into their group. Trepoff was elected chairman of the Right group, as if to emphasize the members' approval of his stand against Protopopoff and the motives which led to his resignation from the Cabinet.

The whole policy of the Government during this period consisted of a series of inefficient reprisals coupled with inaction. After the Duma rose for the Christmas holidays rumours became current that it would not be summoned on January 9, which was the date fixed for its reopening. The Imperial warrant on the appointment of Prince Golitzyn contained a phrase recommending "friendly relations with the legislative chambers and the necessity of collaborating with them in their work." This, however, in no wise prevented Protopopoff from obtaining, without Golitzyn's knowledge, a postponement of the Duma session till January 14. Protopopoff not only continued to be an important personage at Tsarskoe, but apparently posed as Rasputin's successor. It was said that he held spiritualist *séances* and even evoked Rasputin's spirit.

CHAPTER XVI

Disruption in the Rear—Krymoff urges a Coup d'État
—*Luncheon with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna*
—*Visit of the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch—*
Audience of January 7.

THE supply organization was going from bad to worse. The towns were short of food, the peasants could not buy boots; yet all felt that there was plenty of everything in Russia, and that the shortage was due to the chaos prevailing throughout the country. While Moscow and Petrograd had no meat, the papers wrote of large consignments of frozen meat which had accumulated at the railway stations in Siberia. All these stocks of over half a million poods were bound to be spoilt as soon as the thaw set in. All efforts on the part of Zemstvo organizations or private persons were wrecked by the criminal indifference or incompetence of the authorities. Each Minister or senior official laid the blame on someone else, and those actually guilty could never be discovered.

For the improvement of the food supply in the large centres the Government could think of nothing more effective than a temporary suspension of passenger traffic. This, too, proved a scandalous failure. After one of these stoppages the locomotives were found to be out of order: the water had not been let out, frost had set in and the pipes burst; instead of improving, the transport became still worse. The Zemstvos and trade organizations attempted to convene special food supply conferences, but these were prohibited by the Government. The local supply officials, who vainly sought to obtain instructions in the various Ministries, used

to come in despair to consult the President of the Duma, who, in the absence of the Duma itself, embodied the principle of national representation. Many of the Government's measures provided food for peculiar and melancholy reflections: it seemed as if the authorities were consciously working on behalf of Germany and against Russia. Closer investigation of the sources from which such measures emanated led inevitably to Protopopoff and through him to the Empress.

At the beginning of January (1917) General Krymoff arrived from the front and asked to be given an opportunity of unofficially acquainting the members of the Duma with the disastrous conditions at the front and the spirit of the army. A large number of members of the Duma, the Council of the Empire and the Special Council assembled at my flat. The gallant General's tale was listened to with profound emotion. His was a painful and grim confession. There could be no hope of victory, said Krymoff, until the Government had changed its course, or given way to another which the army could trust. The progress of the war was heavily handicapped and all temporary successes brought to nought by conditions in the rear. Krymoff wound up his statement more or less as follows:

"The spirit of the army is such that the news of a *coup d'état* would be welcomed with joy. A revolution is imminent, and we at the front feel it to be so. If you decide on such an extreme step, we will support you. Clearly there is no other way. You, as well as numbers of others, have tried everything, but the Emperor attaches more weight to his wife's nefarious influence than to all honest words of warning. There is no time to lose."

Krymoff ceased speaking, and for a few seconds an ominous and painful silence filled the room. It

was first broken by Shingareff.

"The General is right. A *coup d'état* is urgent. But who will have the courage to undertake it?"

Shidlovsky said fiercely:

"No need to pity or spare *him*, when he is driving Russia to ruin."

Many members of the Duma agreed with Shingareff and Shidlovsky; heated arguments arose on every side. Someone quoted Brusiloff's words: "If I had to choose between the Emperor and Russia, I follow Russia."

The most implacable of all proved to be Tere-schenko. His words greatly agitated me, and I rebuked him.

"You do not take into account," I said, "what will follow on the Emperor's abdication. . . . I shall never countenance a revolution. . . . I have taken the oath of allegiance. . . . I desire you not to speak this way in my house. . . . If the army can insist on an abdication, let it do so through the medium of its leaders; as for me, I will continue to act, not by violence, but by persuasion, to the very last."

The conference lasted far into the night. One felt the gathering of the storm, and the future loomed dark and menacing: some fatal destiny seemed to be drawing the country into a fathomless abyss.

About the same time I had a peculiar interview with the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna.

One night, about 1 a.m., the Grand Duchess summoned me on the telephone.

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, could you come and see me at once?"

"Your Highness, I really don't know whether it would be convenient at such a late hour. . . . To tell you the truth, I was just going to bed."

"I must see you on an urgent matter. I will send my car to fetch you. Do come, please."

I felt puzzled by such insistence, and asked if I might give my answer in a quarter of an hour. The President of the Duma calling on a Grand Duchess at one o'clock in the morning—it would savour too much of a conspiracy.

Exactly a quarter of an hour later the telephone bell rang again and Marie Pavlovna's voice was heard asking:

"Well, are you coming?"

"No, your Highness, I cannot come to you now."

"Then come to lunch to-morrow."

"At your service, thank you. I will come to-morrow."

On my arrival next day I found the Grand Duchess and her sons, as if assembled for a family council. They were all most cordial to me, and not a word was said about the "urgent matter." At last we passed into the Grand Duchess's boudoir, the conversation still revolving round trivial topics. Cyril Vladimirovitch, turning to his mother, said:

"Why don't you speak?"

The Grand Duchess then began to talk of the general state of affairs, of the Government's incompetence, of Protopopoff and of the Empress. On mentioning the latter's name she became more and more excited, dwelt on her nefarious influence and interference in everything, and said she was driving the country to destruction; that she was the cause of the danger which threatened the Emperor and the rest of the Imperial Family; that such conditions could no longer be tolerated; that things must be changed, something done, removed, destroyed. . . .

Wishing to understand more precisely what she was driving at, I asked:

"What do you mean by 'removed'?"

"Well, I don't know. . . . Some attempt must be made The Duma must do something. . . . She must be annihilated. . . ."

"Who?"

"The Empress."

"Your Highness," said I, "allow me to treat this conversation as if it had never taken place, because if you address me as the President of the Duma, my oath of allegiance compels me to wait at once on his Imperial Majesty and report to him that the Grand Duchess Marie Pavlovna has declared to me that the Empress must be annihilated."

The idea of the Emperor's compulsory abdication had been persistently circulated in Petrograd since the end of 1916. Persons belonging to the highest society frequently urged upon me that it was the duty of the Duma and of its President to make themselves responsible to the country and save the army. After Rasputin's death such talk became still more insistent. Many people were sincerely convinced that I was preparing a *coup d'état* with the support of officers of the Guard and the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan. I was profoundly indignant at this, and whenever people hinted or spoke openly to me of a *coup d'état*, I invariably repeated the same denial:

"I will not be a party to any venture, both on principle and because it is impossible to involve the Duma in an inevitable collision. The legislative chambers cannot be concerned in palace revolutions, and I have neither the will nor the power to raise the people against their Tsar."

Resentment, indignation and complaints became universal, and found vent at political meetings, at drawing-room parties, in casual talks in the theatres, shops or even trams, but no one went beyond talk. Meanwhile, had all been united, had

the clergy, the men of science and of business, and representatives of the upper classes together presented a petition or even a demand to the Emperor to listen to the voice of the nation, perhaps something might have been attained. Instead of this, some cringed and fawned, others safeguarded their own interests or clung to their posts, some kept silent, confining themselves to grumbling, gossip, and underhand threats of a revolution.

Strange as it may appear, certain members of the Imperial Family also sought the aid of the President of the Duma, demanding that he should go, prove, and persuade.

The Emperor's immediate circle also realized the magnitude of the approaching danger, but they too, even the Emperor's own brother, were both irresolute and powerless.

One afternoon the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch called unexpectedly at my flat.

"I should like to speak to you of what is going on, to ask your advice as to what is to be done. We realize the situation perfectly," said the Grand Duke.

"Yes, your Highness, the situation is so grave that there is not a moment to lose, and Russia must be saved at once."

"Do you think there will be a revolution?"

"The people realize that while the war is on, a revolution would be fatal to the army, but the danger lies elsewhere. The Government and the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna are driving the country to a separate peace and disgrace; they are delivering us into Germany's hands. This the nation will not tolerate. Should such rumours be confirmed, a most terrible revolution will break out, and will sweep away the Throne, the dynasty, all of you and us too. There is yet time to save

Russia. Even now your brother's reign may attain unsurpassed grandeur and glory, but if this is to happen, the entire policy of the Government must undergo a radical change. Ministers must be appointed whom the nation trusts, not men whose very presence in the Government is an insult to public feeling. I am sorry to have to tell you that this can only be done on condition that the Empress is removed. She exercises a deplorable influence on all appointments, even those in the army. She and the Emperor are surrounded by shady, incompetent, evil persons. Alexandra Feodorovna is fiercely and universally hated, and all circles are clamouring for her removal. While she remains in power, we shall continue on the road to ruin."

"Do you know," said Mikhail Alexandrovitch, "Buchanan told my brother exactly the same thing. The whole family realizes Alexandra Feodorovna's evil influence; she and my brother are surrounded by traitors. All the decent people have gone. . . . But, things being so, what is to be done?"

"Your Highness, you, as the Emperor's only brother, must tell him the whole truth, point out the pernicious results of the Empress's interference, seeing that the country looks on her as a pro-German, who is not concerned for Russia's interests."

"Do you think a responsible Ministry necessary?"

"The general demand is only for a strong Government, and no mention is made anywhere of a responsible Ministry. The country's desire is to see at the head of the Cabinet a man enjoying the confidence of the nation. Such a man would form a Ministry responsible to the Tsar."

"Only you, Mikhail Vladimirovitch, could be that man; everybody trusts you."

"If I were indispensable, I should be willing to devote all my energies to my country's service, but again on one condition: the removal of the Empress from all interference in affairs of State. She must go, for owing to the Emperor's unfortunate lack of will power it is quite useless to fight her. The Emperor's refusal to receive me is due to the influence of the Empress and Protopopoff. There are also grounds for belief that the Duma will be dissolved and fresh elections held. I am informed that owing to disruption in the rear, disaffection is spreading to the troops. The army is losing its self-control. . . . If all the sacrifices and suffering endured, and the blood shed, prove in vain—there will be a terrible reckoning."

"Mikhail Vladimirovitch, you must see the Emperor and once again tell him the whole truth."

"I entreat you to persuade your august brother to receive me before the opening of the Duma. For God's sake, your Highness, use your influence to get the Duma summoned and Alexandra Feodorovna and her set put out of the way."

Our talk lasted for over an hour. The Grand Duke agreed to all I said and promised to help.

The Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch was not the only one to realize the menacing state of affairs; it was clearly understood by other members of the Imperial Family. The Grand Duke Nicolai Mikhailovitch had said to me long before, "Goodness knows what they are doing with their insane policy. They want to drive the whole Russian public to desperation."

I determined once more to solicit an audience and on January 5 wrote to the Emperor:

"I take the liberty of asking permission to wait on your Imperial Majesty. In the awful hour our Mother country is passing through, I deem it my duty as a loyal subject and President of the

Imperial Duma to lay before you in full the knowledge of the calamity which is threatening the Russian State. I implore you, Sire, to command my presence and hear me out."

The reply came next day, and on January 7 I was received by the Emperor.

Shortly before this the customary New Year's Day reception was held at the Palace. I knew I should meet Protopopoff and resolved not to shake hands with him. On entering I asked the Masters of the Ceremonies, Baron Korff and Tolstoy, to warn Protopopoff not to approach me. Either they did not tell him, or Protopopoff took no heed of the warning, but I noticed that he was following me with his eyes as if intending to approach me. To avoid a meeting I moved to another part of the hall and stood with my back towards Protopopoff's group. Notwithstanding this, Protopopoff showed a bold front and, approaching me with a cordial greeting, held out his hand. I replied:

"Nowhere and never."

Protopopoff seemed nonplussed, and, at a loss what to do, took me in a friendly manner by the elbow, saying:

"My dear fellow, surely we can come to an understanding."

I felt disgusted with him.

"Leave me alone; you are repellent to me," I said.

This incident, though not in full detail, appeared in the Press. Protopopoff, it was added, intended to challenge me to a duel. However, nothing happened.

My first act, on being received by the Emperor, was to apologize for my behaviour in the Palace to a guest of the Emperor's. To this the Emperor replied:

"Yes, it was not right—at the Palace. . . ."

I remarked that Protopopoff had not greatly felt the insult, as he had sent no challenge.

"What, hasn't he challenged you?" asked the Emperor, looking surprised.

"No, your Majesty. . . . As Protopopoff is unable to defend his honour, next time I will simply thrash him."

The Emperor laughed.

I then passed on to my report.

"Your Majesty was able to gather from my second report that I consider the state of the country to have become more critical and menacing than ever. The spirit of the people is such that the gravest upheavals may be expected. Parties exist no longer, and all Russia is unanimous in claiming a change of Government and the appointment of a responsible Premier invested with the confidence of the nation. It is necessary to organize, on the basis of mutual confidence between the Government, the legislative chambers and public bodies, the work for the attainment of victory over the enemy and order at home. To our shame, chaos reigns everywhere. There is no Government and no system, neither is there, up to the present, any co-ordination between the front and the rear. At every turn one is confronted with abuse and confusion. The nation realizes that you have banished from the Government all those in whom the Duma and the people trusted, and replaced them by unworthy and incompetent men. The constant changes of Ministers at first created confusion among the officials, which finally gave place to complete indifference. Think, your Majesty, of Polivanoff, Sazonoff, Count Ignatieff, Scherbatoff, Naumoff—all of them honest and loyal servants of yourself and of Russia, who were dismissed for no cause or any fault whatever. . . . Think of such venerable statesmen as Golubeff and Kulomskin.

They were removed for the sole reason that they refused to silence honest men in the Council of the Empire. As if purposely, everything is being done to the detriment of Russia and the advantage of her enemies. No wonder monstrous rumours are afloat of treason and espionage in the rear of the army. Sire, there is not a single honest or reliable man left in your entourage; all the best have either been eliminated or resigned, and only those who have bad reputations have remained. It is an open secret that the Empress issues orders without your knowledge, that Ministers report to her on matters of State, and that by her wish those whom she views with disfavour lose their posts and are replaced by incompetent and inexperienced persons. Indignation against and hatred of the Empress are growing throughout the country. She is looked upon as Germany's champion. Even the common people are speaking of it. . . ."

"Give me facts," said the Emperor, "there are no facts to confirm your statements."

"There are no facts, but the whole trend of policy directed by her Majesty gives ground for such ideas. To save your family your Majesty ought to find some way of preventing the Empress from exercising any influence on politics. The heart of the Russian people is tortured by the foreboding of awful calamities, the people are turning away from their Tsar because they see that after all their suffering and bloodshed fresh trials are in store for them."

Touching upon events at the front, I reminded the Emperor that as long ago as 1915 I had entreated him not to assume the supreme command; that now the entire responsibility for our reverses in Rumania was attributed to him.

"Your Majesty," I continued, "do not compel the people to choose between you and the good

of the country. So far, the ideas of Tsar and Motherland were indissoluble, but lately they have begun to be separated."

The Emperor pressed his head between his hands, then said :

"Is it possible that for twenty-two years I tried to act for the best, and that for twenty-two years it was all a mistake?"

It was a hard moment. With a great effort at self-control, I replied :

"Yes, your Majesty, for twenty-two years you followed a wrong course."

In spite of these frank words, which it could not be pleasant to hear, the Emperor bade me a kind farewell and manifested neither anger nor even displeasure.

My memory here involuntarily recalls another audience, in which the true nature of the Emperor Nicholas II stood revealed more clearly than at any other time. Those who considered him to be a false and callous man are mistaken. He was merely weak and easily led by another's stronger will.

I remember how tired the Emperor looked after hearing one of my reports.

"Have I wearied your Majesty?"

"Yes, I didn't have my sleep out last night. I went out woodcock shooting this morning. How lovely it was in the woods!"

The Emperor went up to the window. It was early spring. He stood silently looking out. I, too, stood respectfully at a distance. Then the Emperor turned to me :

"How is it, Mikhail Vladimirovitch? I was in the woods to-day. . . . It is so quiet there. . . . One forgets all these intrigues and paltry human restlessness. . . . My soul felt so peaceful. . . . One is nearer to Nature there, nearer to God. . . ."

A man who felt like this could not be callous and deceitful.

Shortly before my audience on January 3, I summoned Samarin from Moscow. He had just been elected President of the United Nobility. It should be noted that rumours of my impending arrest and banishment were persistently current at the time. They were confirmed to me by a member of the Government. I felt bound to impart this information to those of my associates who in my absence would take upon themselves the defence of Russia's dignity and honour and protect the representatives of the people from undeserved insult.

Samarin arrived, accompanied by two members of the Council of the Nobility—Karpoff and Prince Kurakin. He also had asked for an audience. He was determined to lay before the Emperor the resolution of the United Nobility and explain its full significance. He spoke with intense emotion of how he felt it to be his duty to tell the Emperor the plain truth. On the eve of his visit to Tsarskoe he sat with me till late at night; he never, to the last moment, abandoned his faith in the ultimate triumph of truth and justice, and his belief that, at last, we should be granted a hearing.

Samarin's visit to me was followed by those of Prince Lvoff, Tchelnokoff and Konovaloff. They all approved of my actions and upheld my view that it was time to speak the whole truth, however unpalatable it might be.

After my report and that of Samarin's rumours again arose that Trepoff would be invited to form a Cabinet of "confidence" chosen from among the members of the legislative chambers. These rumours were taken up by the Press, but they soon

died down. Protopopoff remained at his post, continued his frequent visits to Tsarskoe Selo, and everything went on as before. There was even some talk of the Duma being dissolved till the end of the war, after which fresh elections would take place. What seemed to be preparations for an election campaign were set on foot. As neither the clergy nor the nobility could be relied upon, Protopopoff conceived the idea of rallying the peasants to the Government. A bill was drafted providing for the distribution of land to peasants—Knights of the Order of St. George—in holdings amounting to 30 dessiatines (about 80 acres) to be compulsorily expropriated from private landowners.

The nobility of ancient Novgorod held its provincial assembly. The spirit which animated the members found expression in a resolution vividly reflecting their feelings of anguish and fear for the future of Russia. It was hoped that a direct appeal addressed to the Emperor by members of the ruling class would produce the desired effect. The marshal of the nobility of Novgorod, Budkevitch, was unanimously elected to lay the resolution personally before the Sovereign. Unfortunately, the Emperor did not find time to receive Budkevitch, and the resolution was handed in through Protopopoff. The result of this was that the Governor of Novgorod, Islavin, was summoned to Petrograd to give explanations, and was dismissed from his post.

CHAPTER XVII

Entente Delegates in Petrograd—Police and Machine Guns—The Last Audience—Labour Arrests—The Emperor agrees to a Responsible Ministry—His Sudden Departure—Adrift.

AN Allied Mission arrived in Petrograd towards the end of January for the purpose of co-ordinating operations during the approaching spring campaign.

Joint conferences were held with the Allied delegates, at which the absolute ignorance of Beliaeff, the Minister for War, was fully revealed. He and also some of our other Ministers found themselves in an extremely awkward situation with reference to our Allies; they had failed on many points to reach a preliminary understanding among themselves, and were not up-to-date even concerning their own departments. This was particularly noticeable with regard to orders placed abroad. After listening for a long time in silence to our Ministers' arguments, Lord Milner finally asked: "What is the amount of the orders you intend to place?" He was told. "And how much tonnage do you require for the transport of the material?" On receiving the answer, he remarked: "Then let me tell you that you are asking for one-fifth of the tonnage required."

The Allied delegates expressed their regret that Russia's remoteness, and her independence of the united Allied command in the West, prevented their obtaining sufficient information concerning us. The Minister Pokrovsky then proposed that a special commissioner should be appointed who would represent Russia in the West and rank above

our ambassadors. Sazonoff, the newly-appointed Russian Ambassador in London, who was present at the conference, resented this, and an argument ensued between him and Pokrovsky. The foreign delegates saw clearly that we had no unity, no system, and no understanding of the seriousness of the situation. This made them most indignant. Lord Milner, a cool and collected man, could scarcely control his feelings. He kept throwing himself back in his chair and groaned audibly. Every time the chair cracked, and he was offered another.

The French delegates also seemed very nervous, and obviously dissatisfied with us. As far back as January, 1916, when the members of the French mission, Doumergue and Castelnau, had visited Tsarskoe Selo, they had seen there, to their amazement, the heavy guns sent from France to the Russian front.

I was informed that the Petrograd police were being trained in machine gun firing. Large quantities of machine guns, instead of being despatched to the front, were distributed to the police divisions. At the same time a very peculiar order was issued, on the strength of which the troops of the Petrograd military district were excluded from the command of the northern front field army, and made directly subordinate to the Government under the command of the military district. Some secret purpose, it was said, underlay this strange proceeding. According to persistent rumour, the Empress desired a separate peace at all costs, and Protopopoff, who was her ally, conceived the idea of provoking food riots in Petrograd and Moscow in order to suppress them and thus obtain a lawful excuse for starting peace negotiations.

So persistent were these rumours that they created grave consternation not only among members of the Duma, but also among the representatives of the Allies. Members of the Special Council for Defence resolved to raise the question of the French artillery and machine guns at the earliest meeting of the Council. They asked Beliaeff, the Minister for War, by what right he had handed over, without sanction from the Special Council, such an enormous quantity of war material to the Minister of the Interior. Beliaeff promised to give a reply in the course of the meeting, but did not, and on the question being put to him a second time, tried to close the debate. My protest against the War Minister's action was seconded by Stishinsky, Gurko and Karpoff, members of the Council of the Empire, who urged that the Minister had no right to evade answering questions put to him by the Council.

Having failed to obtain the desired information, the members decided to resort to extreme measures and request the Emperor to preside over the next meeting. The resolution on that point was carried unanimously, especially as the Emperor had promised that he would preside over particularly important meetings. Beliaeff, however, held his ground and declined to submit the Council's resolution to the Emperor on the plea that it was inopportune to harass his Majesty with questions which were not of primary importance. The members then drew up a written petition, which I despatched with my customary report.

No answer was given. . . .

On February 10 I was received in audience by the Emperor. I started on my journey with a heavy heart. Beliaeff's evasiveness and delay in replying to important questions put by the Special Council,

the Emperor's unwillingness to preside—all this boded no good.

The unusual coldness with which I was received showed me that I could not even, as usual, frankly set forth my arguments in the course of conversation. I therefore proceeded to read my written report. The Emperor's attitude was not merely indifferent, but positively harsh. During the reading of the passage which dealt with the shortage of food supplies in the army and the towns, the arming of the police with machine guns, and the general political situation, the Emperor seemed absent-minded and finally interrupted me:

"Couldn't you get through with it quicker?" he said sharply: "the Grand Duke Mikhail Alexandrovitch is expecting me to tea."

When I mentioned the terrible conditions in which our prisoners of war were kept and the report on the subject made by the Red Cross nurses who had visited Germany and Austria, the Emperor said:

"This does not concern me at all. There is a special committee for this presided over by the Empress Alexandra Feodorovna."

Concerning the machine guns for the police, the Emperor remarked apathetically:

"Strange, I've heard nothing about it."

But when I mentioned Protopopoff, he said irritably:

"Protopopoff was your deputy-president in the Duma. Why do you dislike him now?"

I explained that since he became Minister, Protopopoff had positively gone mad.

In the course of our talk about Protopopoff and home policy in general, I alluded to Maklakoff.

"I very much regret Maklakoff," said the Emperor, "he at least was certainly not out of his mind."

"He had none to get out of, your Majesty," I could not refrain from saying.

On my speaking of the menacing state of the country and the prospect of a revolution, the Emperor again interposed:

"My information is directly contrary to yours. As to the spirit prevailing in the Duma—if the Duma permits itself such harsh utterances as last time, it will be dissolved."

I was obliged to conclude my report.

"I consider it my duty, Sire, to express to you my profound foreboding and my conviction that this will be my last report to you."

"Why?" the Emperor asked.

"Because the Duma will be dissolved, and the course the Government is taking bodes no good. There is still time; it is still possible to change everything and grant a responsible Ministry, That, apparently, is not to be. You, your Majesty, disagree with me, and everything will remain as it is. The consequence of this, in my opinion, will be revolution and a state of anarchy which no one will be able to control."

The Emperor said nothing and curtly bade me farewell.

The opening of the Duma was fixed for February 14. A few days earlier I learnt that a delegation of Petrograd workmen meant to attend the first meeting in order to put forward some demands. At the same time I heard that an unknown individual posing as Miliukoff was making a round of the factories and inciting the workmen to riot. Miliukoff wrote a letter to the Press denouncing the impostor and warning the workers against provocation. This letter was suppressed by the war censor, and it was only after repeated requests on my part that the commander of the Petrograd military district, General Khabaloff, realized the expediency

of allowing Miliukoff's statement to be published. He also issued an appeal to the workers on his own account, urging them to keep calm and threatening reprisals in case of riot.

Immediately before the opening of the Duma, members of the Labour group in the war industries committee were arrested. They were men of moderate views, and the Government's motives for arresting them seemed incomprehensible. Neither were all arrested; two members remained at liberty. They addressed an appeal to the workers, entreating them to keep calm whatever happened. This appeal, like Miliukoff's letter, was not allowed to appear in the Press.

The opening of the Duma passed off quietly. There were no signs of any Labour delegation, but large police forces had been mustered in the neighbouring courtyards. In order not to add more fuel to the already smouldering fire, I limited my inaugural speech to a mention of the army and its loyal fulfilment of its duty. Instead of dealing with the general political situation, the debates were diverted to the food supply, the Minister for Agriculture, Rittich, having intimated his desire to make a statement. He made a long speech, was supported by the Centre and severely criticized by the Cadets. It was clear from his speech that in the short space of time he had been in office he had been able to do very little, and that the food supply organization was in a state of chaos. Owing to the disorganization of transport the towns were threatened with famine, while large quantities of meat, butter and corn had accumulated in Siberia. The apportionment system for the provision of supplies from the different provinces was defective. The corn-growing districts supplied too little, while excessive charges were laid upon those which themselves lacked grain. The peasants, terrified by

various apportionments, registrations and rumours of requisitions, had begun to conceal their supplies of grain or hastened to sell them off to middlemen.

In the Duma spirits were at a low ebb. Even Purishkevitch's speech lacked verve. The Duma felt itself powerless, weary of the useless struggle, almost reduced, indeed, to the role of passive spectator. Yet, despite everything, the Duma clung to its old position and did not proceed to an open rupture with the Government. Its sole weapon was the spoken word—and this was emphasized by Miliukoff when he said that the Duma "would act with words, and with words only."

The Duma was in session for nearly a week. I learnt casually that the Emperor had summoned several of the Ministers, including Golitzyn, and expressed his desire to discuss the question of a responsible Ministry. The conference ended in the Emperor's decision to go to the Duma next day and proclaim his will to grant a responsible Ministry. Prince Golitzyn was overjoyed and came home in high spirits. That same evening he was again summoned to the Palace, where the Emperor announced to him his intention to leave for the Stavka.

"How is that, your Majesty?" asked Golitzyn, amazed. "What about a responsible Ministry? You intended to go to the Duma to-morrow."

"I have changed my mind. . . . I am leaving for the Stavka to-night. . . ."

Golitzyn explained this sudden departure by the Emperor's desire to avoid further reports, conferences and deliberations.

The Emperor left.

The Duma continued with the debate on food supplies. Outwardly everything appeared quite quiet. Suddenly something seemed to snap, and the State machine jumped off the rails. . . .

264 THE REIGN OF RASPUTIN

Something happened—that something which those at Court though often warned, did not believe in, and which now, implacable and menacing, suddenly arose before us all. . . .

M. V. SOOZIANOFF'S MEMOIR OF THE CELEBRATION OF THE TRICENTENARY ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOUSE OF ROMANOFF, 1913.

Three centuries ago, when it emerged as the Russian State had come to an end, your august ancestor, Mikhail Fedorovich Romanoff, was called to the throne by the will of Divine Providence, the blessing of God and the unanimous voice of the people.

Inspired by their unity with their crowned leader, and beneath the shelter of the Holy Synod's Church, the Russian people defended their native land from the daring attacks of her foes. Great as the yoke was the service of the Tsar—great, too, is the solemn day we are now celebrating.

Three centuries of the glorious reign of the House of Romanoff testify that beneath the empire of the august successors of the first Tsar of the new reigning House, Mary Susha's valiantly struggled at the trials with which she was afflicted, grew, gathered strength, expanded, and attained her present state of greatness.

The heart of the Russian Tsar, so filled with love, always palpitated with joy in all the joys and successes of the Motherland, and was filled with profound sorrow in the hour of trouble and misfortune. The grief of the Russian Sovereign was the grief of the people. His grief was the people's grief, and the Russian people now, as three hundred years ago, reverently venerate and unreservedly love their Tsar. O great Sovereign, manifest are your labors and your care for the good of the people, and unswerving your solidarity for them. Believing, as of yore, that the strength of the Motherland lies in close unity of Tsar and people, believing in close statecraft and wisdom, you have summoned the most chosen by the nation to participate in legislative construction. And the members of the Imperial Duma, the chosen of the people, inspired by the confidence of the Monarch, are infinitely rejoiced personally to lay at the feet of your Imperial Majesty their most loyal congratulations on the occasion of this supremely momentous festival of the Russian State.

APPENDIX I

M. V. RODZIANKO'S SPEECH AT THE CELEBRATION OF THE TERCENTENARY ANNIVERSARY OF THE HOUSE OF ROMANOFF, 1913.

Three centuries ago, when it seemed as if the Russian State had come to an end, your august ancestor, Mikhail Feodorovitch Romanoff, was called to the throne by the will of Divine Providence, the blessing of God and the unanimous voice of the people.

Inspired by their unity with their crowned leader, and beneath the shelter of the Holy Orthodox Church, the Russian people defended their native land from the daring attacks of her foes. Great in those days was the service of the Tsar—great, too, is the solemn day we are now celebrating.

Three centuries of the glorious reign of the House of Romanoff testify that beneath the sceptre of the august successors of the first Tsar of the now reigning House, Holy Russia valiantly withstood all the trials with which she was afflicted, grew, gathered strength, expanded, and attained her present state of greatness.

The heart of the Russian Tsars, so filled with love, always palpitated with joy at all the joys and successes of the Fatherland, and was filled with profound sorrow in the year of troubles and misfortune. The good of the Russian Sovereign was the good of the people, his grief was the people's grief, and the Russian people now, as three hundred years ago, reverently venerate and unreservedly love their Tsar. O great Sovereign, manifold are your labours and your care for the good of the people, and unwearied your solicitude for them. Believing, as of yore, that the strength of the Motherland lies in close unity of Tsar and people, believing in their statesmanship and wisdom, you have summoned the men chosen by the nation to participate in legislative construction. And the members of the Imperial Duma, the chosen of the people, inspired by the confidence of the Monarch, are infinitely rejoiced personally to lay at the feet of your Imperial Majesty their most loyal congratulations on the occasion of this supremely momentous festival of the Russian State.

Accept therefore, Sire, this holy ikon of Christ the Saviour as a blessing from the people, as a visible token of those heartfelt prayers which are offered to-day in all the remotest parts of Russia for the health and happiness of your Majesty and all the Reigning Family.

May the blessing of the All-Highest be upon you, may He guard His Anointed beneath His heavenly pall, for the happiness and joy of all the Russian nation.

APPENDIX II

M. V. RODZIANKO'S SPEECH AT THE OPENING OF THE IMPERIAL DUMA ON JULY 26 (O.S.), 1914.

His Majesty the Emperor has been most graciously pleased, in this hour of trial which has befallen the Fatherland, to summon the Imperial Duma in the name of the Russian Tsar's unity with his loyal people. The Imperial Duma has given its reply to its Sovereign at to-day's reception. We all know well that Russia did not want war, that the Russian people are alien to aspirations for conquest, but destiny itself has drawn us into war. The die is cast, and we are now fully confronted with the problem of safeguarding the integrity and unity of our State. It is good to see, in the midst of a tempestuous vortex of events unparalleled in the history of the world, the calm and dignified assurance which has possessed all without exception, and which has emphasized before the whole world the majestic strength of the Russian spirit. We are able to say, calmly and without challenge: "Hands off! Dare not touch our Holy Russia." Our people are gentle and peaceful, but terrible and powerful when forced to defend themselves. "See,"—so may we say—"you thought that we were torn by dissensions and antagonisms, and yet all the nationalities inhabiting Russia are united in one family when their common Fatherland is threatened with danger."

And the Russian paladin will not bow his head in discouragement whatever trials befall him. His powerful shoulders will bear any burden, however heavy; and once again will our Motherland, one and undivided, be glorified with peace and plenty in all the lustre of her indomitable greatness. Gentlemen, members of the Imperial Duma! At this hour, all our thoughts and wishes are directed to our frontiers, where our gallant army and glorious navy are fearlessly advancing to battle. Our thoughts are there, where our children and brothers, with the bravery inherent to them, are defending the greatness of the Fatherland. God the Almighty be with them, defend and strengthen them, while our own heartfelt wishes of success and glory will always be with these our heroes. We who stay at home must work without respite to

provide for the families left without their breadwinners; and those in the army know that in deed, and not merely in word, we shall look to it that they shall want for nothing.

LETTER FROM GENERAL ALEXANDER TO
M. V. ROSSIGNOL

DEAR MR. MICHAËL ROSSIGNOL, You have informed, through the intermediaries of our embassy in France, a telegram to General Joffe and M. Alfred Thomas concerning the supply of ammunitions for the Russian army, and have determined, according to your own habits, both the type and quantity of the ammunitions, without any relation to the general programme adopted and by common agreement between ourselves and the French and British Governments. Copies of the correspondence conducted by you, though after the receipt of your telegram, were forwarded by you to the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich. On this matter, having being submitted to his Majesty the Emperor, his Majesty recommended me to notify you of his will that our agents refrain from direct interference in your affairs, which do not concern either the President of the Imperial State or a member of the Special Council. A bureau possessing several centers, each desiring to act as independent of the others, equally competent and charged with full powers, is liable to come to ruin in a very short time.

I beg to assure you of my sincere respect and loyalty.

ALEXANDER.

* In Russian official correspondence the military address was "Ministry General" ("General's Office"), followed by the name and patronym.

APPENDIX III

LETTER FROM GENERAL ALEXEIEFF TO M. V. RODZIANKO.

DEAR MIKHAIL VLADIMIROVITCH*, You have addressed, through the intermediary of our attaché in France, a telegram to General Joffre and M. Albert Thomas concerning the supply of aeroplanes for the Russian army, and have determined, according to your own lights, both the type and quantity of the machines, without any relation to the general programme worked out by common agreement between ourselves and the French and British Governments. Copies of the correspondence conducted by you, though after the despatch of your telegram, were forwarded by you to the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovitch. On this correspondence being submitted to his Majesty the Emperor, his Majesty commanded me to notify you of his wish that you should abstain from direct interference in war matters which do not concern either the President of the Imperial Duma or a member of the Special Council. A business possessing several masters, each deeming himself to be independent of the others, equally competent and invested with full powers, is liable to come to ruin in a very short time.

I beg to assure you of my absolute respect and loyalty.

MIKHAIL ALEXEIEFF.

* In Russian official correspondence the customary address was: "Milostivy Gosudar" ("Gracious Sir"), followed by the name and patronymic,

APPENDIX IV

M. V. RODZIANKO'S SPEECH AT THE INDUSTRIALISTS' CONGRESS, 1915.

GENTLEMEN: On my way to attend this meeting, I encountered more than one unit of young recruits now being trained and preparing to fill the places of the fallen. I have travelled 2,000 versts, visited Galicia, been in close contact with the army, and can find no suitable words to express my profound emotion and my infinite reverence for these brave soldiers, for the indomitable spirit which I have everywhere witnessed, and with which the young men now in training are animated, knowing it to be their duty fearlessly to march into the field of battle. It is, therefore, the first and most important duty of citizens of the Russian State to give the army a complete and perfect assurance that perfect calm reigns in the rear; that the interior of our peaceful homeland, as yet untroubled by the effects of the war, is ready to devote all its strength to the task of assisting them and working for their needs and their glory. We must, too, convey to them the certainty that here, in the rear, there is no room for parties or dissensions, but only one desire—for victory over the enemy.

I am happy, gentlemen, to testify that this is now the watchword firmly established among the members of the Imperial Duma. The representatives of the people realized this by instinct, and you can bear witness that the absence of parties, and complete unanimity, are a continuous feature of all our sittings. I may say that this unity, this absence of all party principles, are equally manifest in the small meetings we now frequently hold in connection with the business of the Imperial Duma. I am perfectly well aware that the industrial world, industrial circles, are a class and a sphere of immense importance to the State. You represent the masters and rulers of that vast sphere of the economic life of the State which in its future high grade of progress will enable us not only to defeat the enemy in the field, but will give us power to prove what Russia is capable of achieving. Henceforth all Russian citizens must have but one watchword: Everything for the army, everything for victory

over the enemy. Everything must be done in order to overthrow by our united efforts those who dare challenge Russia's greatness. I take the liberty of expressing a wish that henceforth there may be no party divisions, aspirations or ambitions, but one unanimous thought, directed towards productive work for assisting our army completely to enfranchise Russia from all assaults of alien influence. Allow me to greet you in these words and express the certainty that so it will be in deed.

INDEX

- Abalaksy monastery, 5, 6
 Adrianople, fall of, 78, 81
 Agapit, Archbishop, 73, 90-2
 Akimoff, 110
 Alexander I, Emperor, 3, 150
 Alexander III, Emperor, unveiling
 of memorial to, 63
 Alexander Mikhailovitch, Grand
 Duke, 125, 206-7
 Alexandra Feodorovna, Empress ;
 tendency towards mysticism, 1-2 ;
 falls under Rasputin's influence,
 10 ; unbounded influence over
 Emperor, 34-5 ; insists on dis-
 solution of Duma, 35 ; letter to
 Rasputin, 37 ; alleged intimacy
 with Rasputin, 51 ; despair at
 Rasputin's dismissal and anger
 with Rodzianko and Gutchkoff,
 55-6 ; opposes reception of mem-
 bers of Duma by Emperor, 63 ;
 nominal president of Supreme
 Council, 114-5 ; Grand Duke
 Nicolai Nicolaevitch complains of
 her influence, 118 ; desire for
 Grand Duke's dismissal, 148 ;
 protests against Emperor's visit
 to Duma, 179 ; condemns Polish
 autonomy scheme, 196 ;
 demands liberation of Sukhom-
 linoff, 199 ; attacked by
 Miliukoff in Duma, 225-7 ;
 vindicated against " treason "
 charge, 239 ; necessity of
 removal, 248-50, 252-3 ;
 rumoured desire for separate
 peace, 258
 Alexeieff, General, 148, 150, 183,
 185, 194-6, 216, 221
 Alexeyenko, 87, 95
 All-Russian Zemstvo Union, 165
 Altshuller, 124
American Magazine, 180
 Andronikoff, Prince, 157
 Anglo-Russian Flag Association, 219
 Anthony, Metropolitan, 12, 19,
 27, 28
 Anthony, Bishop of Tobolsk, 43,
 56-8
 Antioch, Patriarch of, 75
 Archangel, 142-3, 161-2
 Army Medical Department, 113-7
 Artillery Department, 40, 129-131,
 142-4
 Aviation Department, 207-8
 Badmaieff, 35
 Bakhmetieff, 180
 Balashoff, 60, 69
 Balkan war, 78-83
 Baranovitchy, 193
 Bark, 112
 Barnabas, Bishop, 18, 19, 51, 157
 Beatty, Admiral, 103
 Beliaeff, 240, 257, 259
 Benckendorff, Count, 192
 Beresina, battle of, 115
 Berezkin, 57-8
 Besobrasoff, General, 201, 203, 205
 Bethmann-Hollweg, 170
 Bieletsky, 180
 Bobcheff, 78-9
 Bobrinsky, Count A., 230, 232, 240
 Bobrinsky, V., 141, 178
 Borodino, anniversary celebrations,
 65-7
 Brasova, Madame, 165
 Bratoliuboff, 164-5
 Brest Litovsk, 118, 147
 British squadron at Reval, 103-4
 Brusiloff, General, 125, 191, 193-4,
 201, 208
 Buchanan, Sir George, 161, 247, 249
 Budkevitch, 256
 Bulgaria, Russian sympathy with,
 78-83
 Cadet Party, 67, 70, 83, 134-5,
 145-6, 262
 Castelnau, 258
 Caucasian front, 191
 Constantine, King, 217
 Constantinople, 81, 86, 191
 Cyril Vladimirovitch, Grand Duke,
 246
 Damansky, 12, 50-53, 56
 Daneff, 78-9
 Daniloff, General, 116, 130