THE IMPERIAL SURVIVORS: MYTHICAL GODS OF THE COUNTERREVOLUTION

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John O. Norman, B. A.
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This work provides an account of the Crimean residency of Nicholas II's mother, Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, former Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies, and other members of the Romanov dynasty, from the abdication of the tsar (March 1917) until their departure aboard the H.M.S. Marlborough (April 1919).

The first two chapters provide a background of conditions within the Imperial Family during the reign of Nicholas II. The remainder of the work traces their lives from arrival in the Crimea until the Dowager Empress accedes to the request of her sister, Dowager Queen Alexandra, to emigrate to England. The study concludes that the Romanovs played no active role in the Russian Civil War, although they were considered dangerous counterrevolutionaries by the Bolsheviks.

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PREFACE

In undertaking this work, I had in mind the modest goal of rendering an accurate accounting of several prominent Romanovs in the period following the abdication of the Tsar and terminated by their collective evacuation from Russian soil. This task proved to be rather formidable when I began to delve into the complexities involved in a period of Russian and Crimean history which was attended by unremitting social and political turmoil. Indeed, from the abdication of Nicholas II in March 1917 until the evacuation of the Dowager Empress and her party by the British in April 1919, the Romanovs rarely knew a moment of peace. Yet, the Imperial Family had envisioned the Crimea as an ideal refuge from the storm which broke out in Petrograd in the winter of 1917. Contrary to their expectations, political and social conditions in the Crimea soon proved as fast moving and frightening as the course of events to the north. As the reader will see, the Romanovs witnessed the mutiny of the Black Sea fleet, the establishment within the peninsula of a short-lived Communist regime, and a long and nerve-shattering confinement, all within a year of their arrival. The subsequent German occupation prevented their execution but proved to be a source of humiliation quite difficult to bear. Following

the withdrawal of the Germans, the Whites attempted to coordinate the defense of the Crimea with the French and several other Allied military units. The diplomatic aspects of the question became labyrinthine. Hence, I have made limited use of diplomatic and political sources which justify a lengthy and sophisticated analysis on their own merits.

A few words about the principal characters of this narrative are called for. They were the survivors of the wreck of the tsarist ship of state and, as such, they were truly men without a country. Furthermore, they were shunned by the Whites who feared the popular association of the Romanovs with the autocracy. They were also target of the pent up resentment and doctrinaire class hatred of the Reds. Following long and protracted negotiations, they were offered asylm in half a dozen lands.

It is difficult to present these unfortunates in an objective light. For my own part, it seems that these men and women were neither heroic nor villainous. As a whole, the Romanovs of this period were rather stolid and bourgeois, in short, respectable late Victorians. Such an observation will no doubt be offensive both to their antagonists and to their defenders. It is my hope that this work does not belong to the genre of hagiography as do many extant works dealing with the Romanovs. If a certain naive and old-fashioned humanism may be forgiven me, I may justify the

piece by observing that only as we view the lives of others in a relatively intimate way do their lives become truly alive for us. It is unfortunate that the sources available to me do not include the kind of detailed first person accounts which the correspondence of Nicholas and Alexandra provides.

One final observation seems in order. The question of continuity and change in history has never been put to the test more clearly than in the experience of the Russian nation. Out of the revolutionary struggle one fact seems to emerge as a constant in relation to the members of the former Imerpial Family: their experiences were severely restricted both before and after 1917. Even during the manifold complexities of the Russian Civil War, their collective fate was quite predictable, death or emigration. As a final irony, the liquidation of those who were unable to escape was conducted in a clandestine manner, never in full view of the public as in the French Revolution. In the case of the Romanovs, the past truly determined the future.

Until 1918, Russia employed the Julian calendar. In the nineteenth century, this calendar was twelve days behind the Gregorian calendar of the West. In the present century, the Russian calendar lagged behind the Gregorian by thirteen days. All dates cited in this work are according to the newer, Gregorian calendar, save those indicated as Old Style (O.S.). English equivalents of common Russian first names

are used throughout the paper. These include members of the Romanov dynasty. For patronymics and uncommon Russian proper names, the Library of Congress transliteration system has been employed. I feel certain that Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich will pose less problems to the reader as Grand Duke Nicholas. Fidelity to historical sources requires the use of the same spelling as rendered in the original text when quoting directly or citing an author or title of a work. It is sincerely hoped that this will cause only momentary confusion to the reader. In rare instances, references to individuals or place names have been spelled as given in the source cited due to the difficulty of finding obscure persons and places in Russian language publications.

CHAPTER I

A HOUSE DIVIDED AGAINST ITSELF

> Russia was threatened by complete anarchy, and this was checked by the communist dictatorship, which found the slogans to which the people agreed to submit. The dissolution of Imperial Russia had begun long before. By the time of the revolution the old regime was completely effete, exhausted and played out. The War consummated the process. It cannot even be said that the February revolution overthrew the Russian monarchy. The monarchy in Russia fell of itself. No one defended it. It had no adherents.
>
> Nicolas Berdyaev

During the reign of Alexander III (1881-1894) and that of his ill-fated son, Nicholas II (1894-1917), the disintegration and decay of the Russian aristocracy reached its apogee. Although much has been written about the Russian ruling class up to and including the Tsar Liberator's emancipation of the serfs in 1861, little attention has been given to the significant changes which took place among the aristocratic elite during the twilight of the Imperial regime. By the time of the February 1917 Revolution, these changes had reduced the Russian nobility and the Romanov dynasty itself to the level of museum pieces even more impotent than the "superfluous people" so memorably depicted in the works of the genteel Turgenev.

As the twentieth century approached and a new reign began, the shadow of the inflexible giant, Alexander III, was

lifted from Court. The weak-willed and sphynx-like new Emperor hardly cast a shadow at all. Henceforward, the Imperial Family and the members of the nobility found themselves rudderless in the midst of the vast ocean of the Russian people. This drift continued throughout the reign of Nicholas II and set the stage for the years of revolution and civil war.

In addition to the unfortunate weakness and vacillation of the last Romanov ruler, the aristocracy suffered a decline because of worsening economic conditions. The prosperity of the grand seigneurs had been based on a system of large landholding. As Geroid Tanquary Robinson has observed, the nobility failed to develop their large estates into profitable agricultural concerns with a healthy economic future. Many sold their property outright; others rented their land to the peasants. The magnitude of this transfer of land from the hands of the nobility is reflected in the fact that by 1905 the gentry held only about three-sevenths of the land they had possessed in 1877. Furthermore, by 1915 the Noble's Bank held mortgages on one-third of the land remaining in the hands of the nobility.[1] Although the aristocracy still possessed great wealth, they appeared to be unable to reverse this downward economic trend. In some cases, this no doubt reflected incompetence; in others, apathy was responsible. The fact, however, remains that landed estates were in trouble and the

[1]Geroid Tanquary Robinson, Rural Russia under the Old Regime (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1969), p. 261.

economic power base of the aristocracy was considerably undermined following the emancipation of the serfs.

An additional factor which contributed to the rapid eclipse of the Russian nobility was their peculiar education. The schooling they received often contributed to their isolation and a resultant inability to adapt to changing conditions. Although frequently learned and cultivated, an aristocratic youth was reared in a hothouse atmosphere by squads of tutors and masters who came and went with bewildering frequency. An exaggerated emphasis was often placed on religious and moral instruction. Meekness and resignation were cultivated as sublime Christian virtues. Nicholas II himself is a good example of the effects of such an education. Indeed, most isolated was the world of the Romanov family itself. The restrictive atmosphere of their upbringing spread its miasmic effects over their entire lives. Perhaps, in this way, the old free-wheeling grand dukes, inclined to violence and internecine strife, were bred out.

In the citadels of aristocratic pedagogy, such as the Empress Catherine Institute for Young Ladies of the Nobility or the Alexander Lyceum for Young Men, the young ladies and gentlemen were often deliberately kept in ignorance of important political and social conditions. Princess Zinaida Schakovskoi described such an education as "remote from reality and nearer the eighteenth century than the

twentieth."[2] The Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (the younger) put it in a different way: "I was shown the dangers of being royal but was never told how to shoulder efficiently the responsibilities which one day would be mine."[3] The business of governing the Empire gradually fell to others of less exalted rank. Positions of great prestige and importance were, to be sure, nominally held by members of the Imperial Family and the aristocracy but great statesmen and capable administrators came from the ranks of commoners.

A mere perusal of the names of public men during the last two reigns confirms this assertion. The famous old noble families had ceased to dominate the tsarist bureaucracy and the military. In their stead, were bright young men of common origin. Three distinguished prime ministers immediately come to mind: Sergei Witte, Vladimir Kokovtsov, and Alexander Trepov. Even the brilliant defender of autocracy and mentor of Nicholas II, Knostantin Pobedonostsev, was of common origin.

In politics, the liberalism of the old nobility had become disreputable. Their rural toryism linked the cause of liberalism with that of landlordism, an onus from which

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[2]Zinaida Schakovskoy, "The February Revolution as Seen by a Child," The Russian Review, 1 (1967):68-73.

[3]Grand Duchess Marie, Education of a Princess: A Memoir, trans. and ed. Russell Lord (New York: Halycon House, 1930), p. 4.

it never escaped.[4] The expansive rhetoric which could be heard at any convocation of the zemstva (established in 1864 to improve rural administration and grant a larger administrative role to the aristocracy) had become so traditional as to be innocuous. The leaders of the gentry who espoused such liberalism were deeply resented by the Tsar, despite their relative conservatism. He felt betrayed by the pressure they exerted on him to modify the autocracy at the time of the 1905 Revolution. Such figures as Prince George L'vov, a zemstvo leader who later became prime minister of the Provisional Government, were well aware that they existed on sufferance. At the beginning of the First World War, the Union of Zemstva was organized to aid the war effort. Such authority as they were granted by the Emperor was openly justified in the name of military necessity.[5] As the violent era of the Russian Revolution revealed, these men were not made of the same stuff as Lenin or Trotsky. Given power at last by the unavoidable necessity of a Provisional Government, they soon fell into their familiar role and, for a time, existed at the sufferance of the Petrograd Soviet. The old liberal nobles simply could not inspire the confidence of

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[4]Stuart Ramsay Tompkins, The Russian Intelligentsia (Norman, Oklahoma: University of Oklahoma Press, 1957), p. 183.

[5]Richard Luckett, The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement in the Russian Civil War (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. 20.

of the people. Their desire to emulate the constitutional monarchies of the West was based on a fundamentally limited understanding of their nation's needs and aspirations.

As in economic and political life, so in the military, the importance of noble birth had begun to decline greatly by the outbreak of the First World War. By 1916 seventy percent of those training as officers were of peasant origin, twenty-six of bourgeois or artisan parents, and only four percent from the nobility.[6] Just as the commoner Pobedonostsev became the high priest of Russian autocracy, so the military leaders, who later opposed the Soviet power, were mostly of common origin. Generals Denikin and Alekseev each served as commander-in-chief during the course of World War I. Both came from peasant stock. Also of humble birth was Admiral Alexander Kolchak, who commanded the Baltic and, later, the Black Sea fleet.

As noted before, by the nature of the tsarist power the Imperial Family had to play a role in the direction of the military. However, with the exception of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, they appear to have been more adept at exercising their royal privileges than at practicing the martial arts. Their modest accomplishments were, nevertheless, jealously regarded by the Emperor Nicholas II and his paranoic spouse, Alexandra Fedorovna. Realizing that her husband was fundamentally ill-suited to his exalted position, she encouraged

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[6] Ibid., p. 12.

the Tsar to assign his relatives to posts which gave them little real power while outwardly preserving their dignity. The least sensible of the grand dukes was likely to get the most willing cooperation of the Empress and the Tsar. Mikhail Rodzianko, President of the Imperial Duma, tells of a pet project advanced by the Tsar's younger brother, Grand Duke Michael Aleksandrovich, in the winter of 1915. The scheme involved a flame thrower which projected a highly flammable liquid for quite some distance, or at least so one Bratoliuboff claimed. The Grand Duke was quite impressed with the idea and immediately went to his brother in order to acquire a rescript which would allow the proud inventor to draw funds from the State Bank. The Emperor complied with his wishes although the apparatus had not been properly tested. When the moment of reckoning finally arrived, not only did the machine fail to project the flammable liquid, but five soldiers who manned the device received fatal injuries. For this worthy project 2,000,000 rubles had been advanced.[7] Of course, not all Romanovs were lacking in courage and foresight. Many distinguished themselves on the battlefield during the Great War. Most of the grand dukes, however, had little to offer the military. They were given commands which were based on tradition and the tsar's personal favor; commands which were frequently exercised in

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[7]Mikhail V. Rodzianko, The Reign of Rasputin: An Empire's Collapse, trans. Catherine Zvegintzoff (New York: Frederich A. Stokes Company, 1927), pp. 164-5.

absentia or through more capable and less blue-blooded subordinates.

As a result of the stultifying and debilitating conditions previously described, coupled with a general feeling of aimlessness or aristocratic ennui, many of the great old families retreated into a phantasmal world of purely private self-indulgence. It is only just to point out that many of these aesthetes were highly cultivated and even brilliant, but such notable defections from external reality became increasingly common among the Russian aristocracy. The obligations of their position were condensed into formal, ritualized ceremonies which took place only upon "occasions." Within their own domains, they lost themselves in a maze of drawing rooms hung with paintings by Watteau and Boucher, petits salons exquisitely graced with Fragonards and priceless antiques from the apartments of Mm. de Pompadour. Much of the day was spent in boudoirs littered with French novels and knick-knacks set with precious and semi-precious stones. Such chambers were dominated by immense and luxurious beds never slept in without a change of fresh monogrammed linen. At its worst, this luxurious life bred perversity and unabashed hedonism which, nevertheless, possesses a certain fascination in our own mundane age. The memoirs of Prince Felix Iusupov offer a glimpse into this rarefied atmosphere. The following is a description of a favorite diversion indulged in while ensconced in his father's Moorish study:

> In my father's absence I would get up tableaux vivants, assemble all the oriental servants, and disguise myself as a sultan. Seated on a divan, wearing my mother's jewels, I fancied myself a satrap surrounded by his slaves.[8]

A descendant of Tatar khans whose family was one of the greatest landowners in all of Russia would seem to have little reason to envy a satrap. Even if, unlike the Iusupovs, a particular house prided itself on avoiding such "conspicuous consumption," it was very difficult for the aristocracy to approach the ordinary world with confidence and a real sense of personal worth. The last years of the monarchy were especially difficult for the more intelligent and patriotic members of the nobility. The best of them had a feeling of being out of balance. They knew that their apparent stability was only an illusion. Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna remembers trying to button her own boots as a child, thinking that she would have to shift for herself come the revolution.[9] The cause célèbre, the great self-sacrifice of the noble Decembrists, and the selfless reformers who helped implement the liberation of the serfs, were all in the past. The impersonal, international forces of the Industrial Revolution had placed wealth on an equal, if not superior, footing with nobility. The future seemed menacing, the present unsatisfactory. For the gentry, only the past offered a welcome

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[8]Prince Felix Youssoupoff, Lost Splendor, trans. Ann Green and Nicholas Katkoff (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), p. 61.

[9]Grand Duchess Marie, Education, p. 5.

relief from the sense of impotency and spiritual desolation they experienced. Hence, it should come as no surprise that two outstanding members of this lost generation were a nun, Grand Duchess Elizabeth, who retired to a convent after the assassination of her husband, Grand Duke Sergei, and a noted historian, Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich.

The history of the Romanov dynasty, founded in 1613, is hardly one of consistent excellence. Yet, on the whole, theirs was an impressive record, dating from Ivan The Terrible's marriage to Anastasia Romanovna, through Peter and Catherine the Great, to the Tsar Liberator Alexander II, and, at length, to the undisputed autocrat, Alexander III. Yet, the dynasty's penchant for producing strong men in difficult times seems to have come to an end with the nineteenth century. After the death of Alexander III in 1894, the Romanovs began to undergo a series of internecine disputes which alienated the several branches from one another, caused public scandal, and ended with the Emperor and his straight-laced wife reigning in none too splendid isolation. From the early years of his reign, the Romanovs knew that Nicholas II could never maintain the dictatorial supervision of his predecessor. Despite the prohibitions of Church and State, they began to marry divorcées and commoners. Grand Duke Michael Mikhailovich married a commoner quite soon after Nicholas mounted the throne. Later, Princess Anastasia of Montenegro divorced the Duke of Leuchtenberg to marry Grand Duke Nicholas

Nikolaevich. The widowed Grand Duke Paul, sixth son of Alexander II, married a commoner and divorcée, Mme. Pistolkors, for which he was exiled from Russia for quite some time. To the extreme consternation of Empress Alexandra, Grand Duke Cyril Mikhailovich wed Princess Victoria Melita, the divorced wife of her own brother, Ernest of Hesse. Only eleven years later Nicholas II would bequeath his crown to Michael.[10]

The real head of the Imperial Family was Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna, a daughter of King Christian IX of Denmark. The vivacious Dane was so popular that her daughter-in-law's unpopularity was set off in sharp relief. Clashes between the Emperor's mother and his wife were eagerly recounted by Court gossips. The Dowager Empress withdrew into the circle of her immediate family. She insisted on the constant attendance of her daughter Xenia. The Grand Duchess' marriage to Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich had been arranged in accordance with her mother's wishes. Thereafter, Xenia served as a buffer between her mother and the world at large.[11]

Alexandra replaced Maria Fedorovna as Nicholas' close advisor and the center of court life. Her success was her undoing. She proved to be utterly incapable of winning the

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[10]Noble Frankland, Imperial Tragedy (New York: Coward-McCann, 1960), p. 28.

[11]Edward J. Bing, ed., The Letters of Tsar Nicholas and Empress Marie: Being the Confidential Correspondence between Nicholas II, Last of the Tsars, and His Mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1937), p. 192.

praises of society. The once scintillating balls and receptions took on a strained and lifeless aspect when she presided over them. Her intense shyness was translated into haughtiness by the courtiers. Scarcely a decade after Alexandra became Empress, grand dames like Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna had quite eclipsed Tsarskoe Selo in the elegance and social desirability of their salons.

Maria Fedorovna's daughter Olga contracted an unfortunate marriage with Prince Peter of Oldenburg which ended in divorce. She volunteered as a nurse during the First World War and made a whole new life for herself. Her love affair with Colonel Kulikovskii was the cause of yet another family crisis. Around this time the Dowager Empress felt the need to retire from Petrograd (the Russianized name for St. Petersburg, adopted after the outbreak of World War I). The embarassment of Olga's liaison was far less painful than the scandalous predominance of Rasputin at the Imperial Court. Attempts at cautioning her reigning son having failed, and with no prospect of obtaining a hearing from the daughter-in-law, Maria Fedorovna decided to leave her residence, the Elaguin Palace, and journey to Kiev in the winter of 1916. She wished to be nearer Michael who was at the Galician front.[12] In addition, Grand Duchess Olga practiced nursing at a hospital in that venerable Ukrainian city. Soon, Grand Duchess Xenia and her children joined the party. Xenia's

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[12] Ibid., p. 314.

husband was in the vicinity for a projected offensive of General Brusilov.[13] Subsequent letters from mother to son indicate that Maria Fedorovna was happy to be in Kiev, away from the stench of Petrograd gossip.[14]

The Tsar went to visit his mother in early November 1916. The Imperial train took Nicholas II from Supreme Headquarters, known as Stavka, to Kiev. In his correspondence with his wife he declared himself well pleased with his reception. Olga had discovered her pregnancy which presented a problem since she was unwed. She asked her brother for permission to marry Kulikovskii on November 18. The Emperor simply noted to his wife that "the affair should be ended as soon as possible."[16] Alexandra seemed pleased with his report. She wrote: "It is much better Mother dear stays on at Kiev where the climate is milder and she can live more as she wishes and hears less gossip."[17]

The Emperor's Kievan visit coincided with that of the formidable Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna (the elder), a former

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[13]Grand Duke Alexander, Once a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1932), p. 272.

[14]Bing, Letters, p. 290.

[15]Ian Vorres, The Last Grand Duchess (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 148.

[16]Nicholas to Alexandra, 28-30 October 1916 (O.S.), The Letters of the Tsar to the Tsaritsa, 1914-1917, ed. C. E. Vulliamy, trans. A. L. Hynes (London: John Lane, 1929), pp. 285-6.

[17]Alexandra to Nicholas, 1 November 1916 (O.S.), Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar, 1914-1916 (London: Duckworth & Company, 1923), p. 430.

Duchess of Mecklenburg-Schwerin, married to the third son of Alexander II, Grand Duke Vladimir. The Vladimirovichi, including three surviving sons, Cyril, Boris, and Andrei, were in a position to inherit the throne should the reigning Emperor's descendants be passed over in the line of succession. Maria Pavlovna, known to the family as Aunt Michen, was a strong critic of Empress Alexandra. The Emperor's toleration of Rasputin was viewed by her as a crime. She led the none too loyal opposition to the reigning monarchs. When present at tea with the Emperor and his mother, she made him very uncomfortable by openly expressing her disgust at the state of things in Russia.[18] After the frosty tea party, the Tsar left Kiev and Grand Duchess Olga married her ordinary soldier.[19] The indomitable will of Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna served her well. She escaped the Revolution in her private train, with all of her servants in tow. In 1924, her son Cyril was declared heir apparent to the Russian throne.

Still another branch of the Romanovs out of favor with Nicholas and Alexandra was the descendants of the third son of Nicholas I, Grand Dukes Nicholas and Peter. The brothers married two sisters, Princesses Militsa and Anastasia, daughters of King Nicholas of Montenegro. As young girls

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[18]Nicholas to Alexandra, 30 October 1916 (O.S.), Tsar to the Tsaritsa, p. 288.

[19]Bing, Letters, p. 298.

they had been consigned to the care of the Dowager Empress, who was the special patron of the Institute for the Young Ladies of the Nobility. In subsequent years, the Montenegrin Grand Duchesses became renowned for their interest in the occult. In the first years of the twentieth century they gathered a circle about them. An introduction to Gregory Efimovich Rasputin was made by Bishop Feofan, Rector of the St. Petersburg Theological Academy and confessor to the Empress. The good prelate had been impressed by Rasputin's faith and evident simplicity. The Nicholaevichi introduced Rasputin to the Sovereigns. This, of course, was a fatal mistake which the principals became aware of as soon as they became acquainted with the daemonic side of "Father Gregory."[20] The Montenegrin princesses have frequently been blamed for their religious mysticism. The fact remains, however, that Grand Duke Nicholas' father was so devout that he had a subterranean chapel built on his estate. It was modeled after the cave at Bethlehem. His mother, Grand Duchess Anna, ended her days as a recluse in a convent in Kiev.[21] Alexandra particularly detested those who had fallen away from her revered seer and prophet.

Grand Duke Nicholas was also feared because of his military talent which immediately set him apart from his

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[20] Alexandra Fedorovna, Tsaritsa to the Tsar, Introd., Pares, p. xx.

[21] Bing, Letters, p. 188.

cousins and nephews. His father had been Commander-in-Chief during the Russo-Turkish War (1877-78). The Grand Duke headed the Council of Imperial Defense during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5. During the crisis of October 1905, Nicholas II wanted him to assume dictatorial powers. The Grand Duke refused point blank. He threatened to shoot himself if the Tsar commanded him to accept the delegation of authority.[22] Despite this refusal, the Empress continued to regard Grand Duke Nicholas as a potential replacement for her ineffectual husband. Estimates of the Grand Duke's capabilities vary. Sir Bernard Pares, who had frequent occasion to converse with him and to observe him in his military duties, concluded that he was gifted but limited. His military mentality caused him to oversimplify complex issues. This flaw gave rise to considerable controversy after he was appointed Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies in the first days of World War I. He interfered in the life of the civilian population and behaved as if they, too, were subject to strict military discipline.[23]

Empress Alexandra was determined to see the Grand Duke ousted from his new command. Her letters to the Tsar are full of accusations against Nicholas Nikolaevich. Not only did she fear his alleged designs on the throne, she hated the

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[22]Alexandra Fedorovna, Tsaritsa to the Tsar, Introd., Pares, p. xx.

[23]Ibid., pp. xx-xxi.

Grand Duke for his opposition to Rasputin. Furthermore, the immense respect and popularity which he received from the rank and file soldiers infuriated her.[24] That popularity was put to the test by the military reverses which the Russian army experienced in the first year of the war. By late summer 1915 the Russian armies were in full retreat. Their Commander-in-Chief was energetically attempting to restore stability to the front.[25] However, a decision was made which soon ended his tenure as supreme commander.

The Tsar's dismissal of Nicholas Nikolaevich was made known to the Imperial Council in the aftermath of a heated debate over the immediate necessity for a responsible popular ministry. Prince Nicholas Scherbatov, Minister of Internal Affairs, exhorted his colleagues:

> One must submit a written report to his Majesty and explain that a government which has neither the confidence of the bearer of supreme power the Emperor , nor of the army, nor of the towns, nor of the gentry, nor of the merchants, nor of the workers--not only cannot work, it cannot even exist! It is an evident absurdity! We, sitting here, are like Don Quixotes![26]

The aged Prime Minister Goremykin listened patiently. However, his venerable countenance bore no signs of perturbation or

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[24]Luckett, White Generals, p. 15.

[25]Ibid.

[26]Michail Cherniavsky, Prelude to Revolution: Notes of A.H. Iakhontov on the Secret Meetings of the Council of Ministers, 1915 (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1967), p. 154.

new-found resolution. A responsible ministry was not granted. Quite the contrary, the Emperor made known to the Imperial Council his "irrevocable decision" to assume the supreme command himself. This announcement was made to the stunned ministers at Tsarskoe Selo on August 24. The campaign of the Empress had at last born fruit.[27]

Nicholas and Alexandra continued to lead the monarchy toward ruin. They regarded all those who warned them of their folly as opportunists out to advance their own cause. Even when advice came from within the Imperial Family itself, or from traditional supporters of the autocracy, their response was negative. Service in the Tsar's government became tantamount to disgrace. When the Minister of Agriculture, Count Bobrinskii, a descendant of Catherine the Great, was congratulated on his appointment by the Princess Cantacuzène, he responded in despair: "You cannot imagine what it means now to be in the cabinet; and if I am not dismissed soon, I shall resign myself and go back to my collections."[28] For years, the Count had been Curator of the Imperial Archaeological Collection.

Those loyal to the Crown continually sought to avoid impending disaster. When Prince L'vov and M. Chelnokov,

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[27]Alexandra Fedorovna, Tsaritsa to the Tsar, Introd., Pares, pp. xxviii-ix.

[28]Princess Cantacuzène (Countess Spéransky, née Grant), Revolutionary Days: Recollections of Romanoffs and Bolsheviki, 1914-1917 (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1919), p. 85.

acting as representatives of the Zemstvo Union and the Union of Town Councils respectively, sought an opportunity to present representations before the Tsar, they were refused audience. The Emperor had learned that they had been charged by their colleagues with the task of criticizing the present government, or lack of it. Nevertheless, even after the Tsar's refusal, Prince Scherbatov, Minister of the Interior, heard their report. He warned Nicholas that these two patriotic organizations, so active in aiding the war effort, interpreted his refusal to grant them audience as a distinct break between the people and the monarchy. For his trouble, Nicholas dismissed him.[29] The only excuse the Tsar could muster for his failure to respond to the entreaties of these loyal officials was "that the ministers, always living in town, know terribly little of what is happening in the country as a whole. Here at Headquarters I can judge correctly the real mood among the varied classes of people."[30]

Those who had been alienated by some aspect of the current situation began to congregate at the residence of Grand Duke Vladimir and his wife, Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. The Grand Duchess, as noted earlier, had been one of

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[29]Sir George Buchanan, My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memoirs, 2 vols. (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1919), 2:248-9.

[30]Nicholas to Alexandra, 9 September 1915 (O.S.), Tsar to the Tsaritsa, p. 85.

Alexandra's sharpest critics for some time. She bore a lasting grudge against the Empress for refusing the hand of Grand Duchess Olga to Grand Duke Boris, her son.[31] In the case of Grand Duke Boris, the Empress had good reason to reject his marriage offer. He was the personification of the effete aristocrat, a spendthrift dilettante who refused to interrupt the rounds of his pleasures even in time of war.[32] As the Revolution drew near, the family of Grand Duke Vladimir seemed poised to take over the throne, despite the obvious fact that, had the opportunity been realized, the real ruler of Russia would have been Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, as none of her sons possessed any real qualities of leadership.

Another critic of Nicholas II was Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich, the historian mentioned previously. His was precisely the type of liberalism which had become associated with landlordism. The most dramatic result of his political criticism was the sobriquet "Nicholas Egalité" applied to him within the circle of the Imperial Family.[33] Of course, moderate criticism came from such responsible sources as the devout Grand Duchess Elizabeth, Abess of a convent. Futility,

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[31]Sir Bernard Pares, The Fall of the Russian Monarchy (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), p. 426.

[32]Maurice Paléologue, An Ambassador's Memoirs, 3 vols., trans. F.A. Holt (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1925), 2:279.

[33]Ibid., 1:343.

extravagance, and debauchery were by no means the universal rule among the last generation of the Romanov dynasty prior to the Revolution.[34] Nevertheless, young and old alike seemed to sense that the end of an era was at hand with the reign of Nicholas II. It was recalled that he had been born on Job's day according to the Russian liturgical calendar. The Grand Mistress of the Court and Maid of Honor to both Maria and Alexandra Fedorovna, Madame Naryshkin, related such a feeling to the French Ambassador at the end of 1916:

> To reach my room I have to pass through the endless series of huge rooms you have seen at Tsarskoe Selo . At long intervals there is an electric light. An old servant goes in front of me to open the doors. It's a long walk and anything but enlivening. I often wonder whether these rooms will ever see the splendours and glories of other days again. What a multitude of things are coming to an end, Ambassador![35]

The last, desperate attempt to restore the glories was the sordid plot to murder Rasputin which involved both Prince Felix Iusupov, a favorite of both Tsar and Tsarina, and Grand Duke Dimitrii Pavlovich, a distinguished and much decorated war hero who had been reared by the Empress' sister, Grand Duchess Elizabeth, due to the early death of his mother.

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[34]Edith M. Almedingen, An Unbroken Unity: A Memoir of Grand Duchess Serge (London: The Bodley Head, 1964), pp. 132-33.

[35]Paléologue, Memoirs, 3:75-6.

CHAPTER II

MURDER AND ABDICATION

My poor daughter-in-law does not perceive
that she is ruining both the dynasty and herself.

Maria Fedorovna to
Count V. Kokovtsov

Opposition to Rasputin increased within the Imperial Family and among the Tsar's entourage. Trusted friends and advisors, such as Prince Vladimir Orlov, Head of the Military Chancery of the Emperor, risked their positions in order to prevent Rasputin's alleged dictates from toppling the throne. The Prince, affectionately known as "fat Orlov," was a favorite of the Tsar. Although a general of the cavalry, he was unable to mount a horse and contemporary photographs show him dutifully trudging along as the Tsar reviewed his troops. Alexandra distrusted Orlov, believing him to be a supporter of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich. In September 1915, after the demotion of the Grand Duke, Orlov learned that his name had been struck off the list of those who were to accompany the Tsar to Headquarters. Deeply grieved, he addressed a letter to the aged and highly respected Minister of the Court, Count Vladimir Frederiks, entreating him to open the eyes of the Emperor to the destructive work of Rasputin and his appointees. He ended by predicting that, if the Tsar did not

rid himself of this infestation of adventurers and incompetents, "it will be all up with the Romanovs and Russia."[1]

Public hatred of Rasputin and, by association, the Empress, reached fever pitch in late 1916. The ardent monarchist, V. M. Purishkevich, thundered his denunciation of the "dark forces" surrounding the throne to a packed session of the Imperial Duma. After describing the present government as "ministerial leapfrog," he went on to warn the Tsar's ministers who were in attendance:

> If you are truly loyal, if the glory of Russia, her mighty future, her mighty future which is closely and inseparably bound up with the brightness of the name of the Tsar, is dear to you, be off to Headquarters, throw yourself at the feet of the Tsar and beg him leave to open his eyes to this awful reality.

Among the spellbound audience was young Prince Felix Iusupov, husband of the Emperor's niece Irina.[2]

Further warnings ensued. On November 14 the historian Nicholas Mikhailovich visited the Emperor at Headquarters. He brought with him a letter which he pressed into the hand of the Tsar before departing. The Grand Duke, head of the Imperial Historical Society, put the matter succinctly:

> You are on the eve of an era of new troubles, on the eve of an era of attentats. Believe me, if I insist so much on your freeing yourself from the chains that have been formed, I do so . . . only in hope of

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[1]Maurice Paléologue, An Ambassador's Memoirs, 3 vols., trans. F. A. Holt (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1925), 2:73-4.

[2]Sir Bernard Pares, The Fall of the Russian Monarchy (New York: Vintage Books, 1939), pp. 396-7.

> saving you and saving the throne of our country from the irreparable.

As with the letter of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, the Emperor forwarded the correspondence to the Empress without reading it himself.[3] In January 1917, the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, received a pathetic farewell note from Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich informing the diplomat that he had been banished to his estate, Grouchevka, near Kherson in the Ukraine.[4] On November 11, Nicholas' brother Grand Duke George Mikhailovich wrote a similar letter to the Tsar.[5] Even Grand Duke Michael Mikhailovich, resident in London since 1891, cautioned the Tsar that "Georgy" (King George V) was very concerned over political conditions in Russia.[6]

Only a few short days before the murder of Rasputin, a truly conservative institution, the Council of the United Nobility, issued a protest against the "dark forces" behind the throne and discussed an address to the Emperor.[7] All warnings went unheeded. The Tsar placed all his faith in his wife and she, in turn, in Rasputin. However, one would be mistaken to see the Empress as the obedient servant of Rasputin's every whim. The evidence strongly points to a quite

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[3] Ibid., pp. 389-90.

[4] Sir George Buchanan, My Mission to Russia and Other Diplomatic Memoirs, 2 vols. (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1919), 2:50.

[5] Grand Duke Alexander, Once a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Co., Inc., 1932), p. 185.

[6] Ibid., p. 186.

[7] Pares, Fall, p. 404.

different conclusion: the "mad monk" reinforced the Empress' own peculiar preconceptions and prejudices. Therefore, it is not surprising that no significant examples exist of his having successfully opposed her will. It was not difficult to anticipate the wishes of a woman who held such rigid views as Alexandra. Rasputin's advice almost invariably pleased her because it concurred with her own opinions. The Empress' dependency upon Rasputin was really confined to his services as protector and faith healer of Tsarevich Alexis. It is difficult to estimate how many persons were aware of the extent to which the Empress dominated her husband. Ironically, the ardent monarchists who murdered Rasputin might have done better to remove his imperial patron.

The murder took place during the night and early morning of 30/31 December 1916. An almost theatrical account of this deed has been related by Prince Iusupov in his memoir, Lost Splendor. It is sufficient to note that both Prince Felix and Grand Duke Dimitrii were active participants in the assassination, a rather long drawn out affair, which included the administration of a liberal dose of potassium cyanide, several shots fired at close range, and a subsequent bludgeoning.[8]

At first, Iusupov denied he was implicated in the crime. Grand Duke Dimitrii merely denied that he had struck the

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[8]Prince Felix Youssoupoff, Lost Splendor, trans. Ann Green and Nicholas Katkoff (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), pp. 230-46.

fatal blow. The ghastly event brought to the fore a series of tensions within the Imperial Family. First, there was the obvious problem of punishing the offenders. Grand Duke Dimitrii's father was the Tsar's Uncle Paul. To make matters worse, Grand Duke Paul had recently established quite cordial relations with Alexandra. His second wife, now Princess Paley, was herself a devoted follower of Rasputin. Thus, his son was charged as an accomplice to the murder of his second wife's spiritual mentor. Further bitterness was caused by the report that the Tsarina's sister, Grand Duchess Elizabeth, had given her blessing to the assassination of Rasputin when visited by Prince Felix at her convent in Moscow.[9]

The Imperial Family divided into two hostile camps, one defending the actions of Felix and Dimitrii as the liberators of Russia, the other excoriating them for committing a brutal murder and taking justice into their own hands. Understandably, the former camp was led by Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna. Her palace became the scene of a mass meeting of anti-Rasputin Romanovs. Anticipating strong punishment for the participants, on 11 January 1917 they appealed directly to the Sovereign to pardon Grand Duke Dimitrii. They also took advantage of the occasion to express their conviction that the domestic policy of the government was leading to

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[9]Noble Frankland, Imperial Tragedy (New York: Coward-McCann, 1960), pp. 81-2.

disaster for Russia and the dynasty. The Emperor's reply made his position perfectly clear.

> It is given to nobody to occupy himself with murder. I know that the conscience of many gives them no rest, as it is not only Dimitri Pavlovich who is implicated. I am astonished that you should address yourselves to me.[10]

The murder of Rasputin not only failed to restore order to the nation, it revealed that directives came from the Empress herself. No longer could she be shielded and Rasputin blamed for the disastrous appointments and do-nothing policies of the government. The Emperor came under increasingly severe criticism.

The nobles who would have saved Russia by taking justice into their own hands only hastened the downfall of the monarchy. Witnesses to the results of the murder confirm this assertion.[11] Years after the event the Tsar's sister, Grand Duchess Olga, concluded that the crime marked the eclipse of the Romanov dynasty. She recalled Trotsky's observation that the murder "was carried out in the manner of a scenario designed for people of bad taste." That cold-blooded murder had been perpetrated by Dimitrii Pavlovich, one of the grandsons of the Tsar Liberator, and by Prince Felix Iusupov,

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[10]Buchanan, Mission, 2:38.

[11]Of particular interest is Sir John Hanbury-Williams' observation: "Instead of saving Russia, by another irony of the ironies of fate which have pursued that great and unfortunate country, it [the murder of Rasputin] helped ruin it." Nicholas II as I knew Him (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1922), p. 142.

offspring of one of Russia's most eminent families and the husband of the Emperor's niece, bespoke to her a real degeneration.[12]

Predictably, the domestic state of the country continued to worsen after the removal of Rasputin. Perhaps never before had a monarch received so many plain-spoken warnings of incipient revolution. On 16 January 1917 the President of the Council of the United Nobility, A. D. Samarin, former Procurator of the Holy Synod, was summoned from Moscow by Mikhail Rodzianki, President of the Imperial Duma. Their conference resulted in an agreement that the grave situation must be brought to the Emperor's attention.[13] A contemporary attempt to propose basic reforms to the Tsar did not augur well for the success of Rodzianko and Samarin's proposed intervention. I refer to a resolution which was unanimously passed by the Novgorod nobility with the aim of prompting Nicholas II to reorganize the government. Budkevich, as Marshal of the Novgorod nobility, was charged with the task of presenting the document to the Tsar. He arrived in Petrograd and waited in vain for an audience with the Emperor. The resolution, however, finally reached the Tsar through the usual bureaucratic channels. Governor Islavin of Novgorod

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[12] Ian Vorres, The Last Grand Duchess (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 142.

[13] Mikhail V. Rodzianko, The Reign of Rasputin: An Empire's Collapse, trans. Catherine Zvegintzoff (New York: Frederich A. Stokes Company, 1927), p. 255.

was immediately ordered to report to Petrograd to make an explanation. He was unable to do so to the satisfaction of the Crown and was therefore dismissed.[14]

Rodzianko himself made repeated efforts to alert the Emperor to the rapidly approaching debacle. Born in 1859 of a distinguished noble family, he was educated in the aristocratic Corps des Pages, served in Her Majesty's Regiment of the Cavalry of the Guard, and was appointed Kammerherr of the Imperial Court. Subsequently, he served as Marshal of the Nobility and as Chairman of the Ekaterinoslav Zamstvo. He was married to a descendant of one of Russia's finest families, Princess Irene Golitsyn. Nevertheless, the Tsaritsa despised him. She expressed herself most candidly on the matter in a letter to the Tsar dated 17 September 1916 (O.S.): "How I wish one cld. hang Rodzianko, awful man, & such an insolent fellow."[15] The deluded Empress saw constitutional monarchists like Rodzianko as the real danger to the throne because she clung heart and soul to the principle of autocracy. His last audience with Nicholas II was a painful and profitless endeavor. Having warned that a state of anarchy was awaiting Russia, the portly statesman waited breathlessly

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[14] Ibid., p. 256.

[15] Alexandra to Nicholas, 17 September 1916 (O.S.), Letters of the Tsaritsa to the Tsar, 1914-1916 (London: Duckworth & Company, 1923), p. 401.

for the Emperor's reply. The Tsar said nothing but curtly bade him farewell.[16]

By the last year of his reign the fatalism of the Tsar was well nigh unshakable. Every complaint, every entreaty, every friendly admonition, was met with cold silence or apparent indifference. This man whose moods were so subtle and puzzling, whose manners were so exquisite, remained a paradox to those who approached him from the "outside world." Only his immediate family really knew him. It was their approbation that he found essential to his peace of mind. Russia he loved deeply but he increasingly consigned her fate to the Almighty.

By January 1917 many members of the Imperial Family had become convinced that further warnings were pointless. A difficult decision was facing them: should they trust in divine providence and strictly observe their oath of loyalty to the Tsar or should they act now to save the dynasty and Russia? Naturally, those who had the deepest grievance against the Tsar and Tsarina were the leaders in planning a palace revolution or coup d'état. Ambassador Paléologue learned of an attempt of grand dukes Cyril, Boris, and Andrew Vladimirovich to involve Grand Duke Dimitrii Pavlovich in such a scheme. Their plan was to lead certain regiments of the Guard to the palace at Tsarskoe Selo and seize the

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[16]Rodzianko, Reign, p. 261.

Emperor and Empress. Nicholas was to abdicate in favor of his son, Tsarevich Alexis, with Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich as regent. Grand Duke Dimitrii, however, refused to break his oath of fealty to the Tsar.[17] A very similar plan was discussed by the millionaire munitions manufacturer, Putilov, with Prince Gabriel Konstantinovich. Far from recoiling in horror, the Prince simply put forward certain practical objections. Moreover, he promised to take up the matter with his father and his uncles.[18] On 8 January 1917, at a dinner given for the actress who was his mistress, Prince Gabriel proposed a conspiracy against the crown to his brother Igor, Putilov, and Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich. In full hearing of the servants, gypsies dutifully providing a musical backdrop, amidst the aroma of Moët and Chandon, the Romanovs present, together with a squad of elegant courtesans, toasted the salvation of Holy Russia.[19]

Boris' mother Maria Pavlovna, went so far as to summon to her palace the man the Empress wished to hang. Rodzianko found the Vladimirovichi assembled in a sort of family council. The conversation was casual until they withdrew to the Grand Duchess' boudoir. There followed an extraordinarily venomous denunciation of the Empress by Maria Pavlovna. Rodzianko was very much taken aback when the Grand Duchess launched into a diatribe. Finally, she declared that

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[17] Paléologue, Memoirs, 3:140-1.

[18] Ibid., 3:140.

[19] Ibid., 3:157-8.

Alexandra "must be annihilated." This was too much for Rodzianko who informed the Grand Duchess that he would treat the conversation as if it had never taken place, lest he be forced to make an immediate report to His Majesty of the treason he had just heard.[20]

Even Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich was approached about a palace coup. The occasion was a reception which he gave on New Year's Day 1917 in the city of Tiflis. The proposal was made by the mayor of the city who claimed to have wide support from Duma and Zemstvo representatives. Although the Grand Duke declined to participate in the plot, he did not defend the Emperor or report the conspiracy to the proper authorities.[21] The Imperial Family was unable to present a united face to the world. They failed to check the scandals and gross incompetencies which marked the end of Nicholas' reign. The Tsar himself preferred to ignore all criticism. Urged on by the Empress, however, he took steps to insure an offender's removal from Petrograd as he did with grand dukes Cyril and Andrew at the end of January 1917.[22]

As revolution grew imminent, Nicholas withdrew into himself. He preferred to think that the ministers were grossly

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[20]Rodzianko, Reign, pp. 245-7.

[21]Richard Luckett, The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement in the Russian Civil War (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), pp. 25-6.

[22]Paléologue, Memoirs, 3:170.

exaggerating popular discontent with his government. It is not difficult to understand the Tsar's point of view when one takes into consideration his conviction that the peasantry was the mainstay of the monarchy. He imagined those millions of souls to be industrious, religious, and patriotic in contrast to the worldly, effete, and irresponsible nobles and city dwellers. Of peasant life he knew nothing; but, with the help of his wife, he knew a great deal about the life of Petrograd high society. He was disgusted by it and indifferent to its disdain for him and his wife. From the opposite point of view, the nobility felt utterly betrayed by the Tsar who had exposed the monarchy, the historical source of all their rights and privileges, to the most severe criticism and even mockery. By refusing to make any concessions to the necessities of the day, he subjected the monarchy to the full brunt of the onslaught of socialism and republicanism. Even those who could overlook the natural weakness of the Tsar and his habitual changes of mind could not bear his dependence on the Empress who cordially referred to "rotten St. Petersburg" in such a way that there could be little doubt that she included all those who were not members of her coterie in that category.

Small wonder that less heroic souls chose to enjoy their advantages while they still possessed them. The last days of Imperial Russia were days spent in this atmosphere. On 17 March 1917 the great ballerina Kschessinska, formerly the

mistress of Nicholas II, subsequently attached to several other grand dukes, gave a gala dinner party at her house in Petrograd. The table sparkled with gilt cutlery, the finest Limoges, and her "precious trinkets" such as a small gold fir tree, its branches shimmering with tiny diamonds. The happy chatter went on for hours as course after course was served by the impeccable servants.[23] Some months later the same residence became the headquarters of Vladimir Lenin, who was dedicated to a more radical form of socializing.

As demonstrations broke out in the region of Our Lady of Kazan, the French Ambassador, Paléologue, was driving cautiously along the quay. He noticed one great house all ablaze with lights; Princess Léon Radziwill was giving a party. A long line of sleek carriages and limousines stretched out along the drive; prominent among them was the automobile of Grand Duke Boris.[24] Even at this late stage, it became apparent that the Russian aristocracy could not bring itself face to face with radical change. The habit of mind which young Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna perceptively defined as "the lack of a conscious attitude toward life"

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[23] Mathilde Kschessinska, Dancing in Petersburg: The Memoirs of Kschessinska, trans. Arnold Haskell (Garden City, New York: Doubleday & Company, 1961), p. 163.

[24] Paléologue, Memoirs, 3:217.

prompted the nobility to passively accept the establishment of the new order.[25]

On 8 March 1917 food riots broke out in Petrograd. One of the many acute problems which the Tsar's government seemed unable to cope with was the provisioning of the major cities in time of war. The overburdening of the antiquated and under-developed Russian railway system with troop transferals and military shipments made it extremely difficult to promptly supply the needs of urban consumers. But these so-called bread riots were only symptomatic of the overall disgust which the populace felt toward Nicholas II and his government. Two days later the first demonstrators were killed. By the eleventh, famous guards divisions, like the Pavlovskii, were holding mass meetings at which anguished officers appealed to the men to support the government. But these divisions, by now no longer aristocratic in their composition and, for for the most part, simply reserve units which bore the names of famous military units, showed little inclination to fire on the demonstrators and would-be revolutionaries. On 12 March, Nicholas II prorogued the Duma. During the night he ordered his train to return to Tsarskoe Selo from Headquarters.

Early in the morning Nicholas was informed that the way was not safe. Revolutionaries were in control of the track

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[25]Grand Duchess Marie, Education of a Princess: A Memoir, trans. and ed. Russell Lord (New York: Halycon House, 1930), p. 308.

ahead. The Tsar decided to head for Pskov' where he would confer with General Ruzskii who commanded the Northern Front. Even while the Tsar was attempting to make his way to the capital, the Duma was beseiged by an amazing array of individuals and military units. All demanded revolutionary changes. One of these military delegations, complete with colors and regimental band, was comprised of the sailors of the Guard. Grand Duke Cyril himself headed up the column.[26] Nicholas II was astounded by such disloyalty.

As we have seen, the Tsar believed he was loved and revered by the common people. The military, too, ranked very high in his estimation. Hence, he was often glad to leave Petrograd for Headquarters where he could be with his soldiers whom he loved and respected. The commanders of the various fronts, the generals who were his aides and who bore his monogram on their epaulettes, had come to know him quite well. In addition, there had long been intimate ties between the Russian military and the monarchy. Predecessors, such as Peter the Great and Nicholas I, had lavished their attentions on the army. Nicholas had counted on that inheritance and upon the personal allegiance which each soldier swore to him. Always a man of honor, he found it inconceivable that he could be abandoned by his armies.

Nevertheless, Aide-de-camp and Chief of the General Staff General Alekseev, was the first to urge Nicholas to

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[26]Pares, Fall, p. 460.

abdicate after learning of conditions in Petrograd. He requested the other commanders to submit their opinions by telegram so that he could convey them to His Majesty. Not one of the Tsar's general supported him. The cruelest blow must have been the telegram of his cousin, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich:

> As a faithful subject I consider it necessary, in accordance with the duty of allegiance and in the spirit of allegiance, to fall on my knees and implore Your Imperial Majesty to save Russia and your heir. . . . Making the sign of the cross, transmit to him [Alexis] your heritage. There is no other solution.[27]

The desertion of the military had a great effect on Nicholas' willingness to abdicate. Furthermore, he faced the crisis alone. Although the Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna was in Pskov at the time, she was too embittered at the treatment of her brother, Grand Duke Dimitrii, to go the Emperor's salon car.[28]

He sat alone in the railway carriage, the blinds drawn, tormented by the decision he must make, deserted by his soldiers and his family. The night that Nicholas II, last Tsar of Russia, decided to give up his crown, a brief entry in his diary distills the sense of betrayal which he felt: "All around treachery, cowardice and deceit."[29]

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[27]Alexander F. Kerensky and Robert Paul Browder, eds., The Russian Provisional Government, 1917: Documents, 3 vols., 1:95.

[28]Marie, Education, p. 288

[29]Pares, Fall, p. 469.

By the time representatives of the Duma, the ardent monarchists Vasilii Shulgin and Alexander Guchkov, had arrived at Pskov' and were ushered into the Emperor's presence, they found a calm and composed man whose courtesy and graciousness seemed to argue against the revolutionary reality which they had come to acquaint him with. But, they soon discovered that the Tsar was fully informed on the state of affairs and that he had already composed an abdication manifesto. This came as a great shock. Even more surprising was the news that the Emperor had decided to abdicate in favor of his brother, Grand Duke Michael Alexksandrovich, to the exclusion of his son Alexis, a hemophiliac. Although the Emperor's reasons were obviously sound, Russian monarchists had been prepared for Michael as regent. In addition, the very manifesto was in violation of the Fundamental Laws of Succession which dictated that a tsar could not abdicate for his own heir, only for himself. This had been established in 1801 by Emperor Paul. Now, Shulgin and Guchkov were faced with the duty of proclaiming the unpopular and flighty Grand Duke Michael as tsar. Moreover, the opportunity of a long regency with significant constitutional reforms had vanished.[30] Hence, the unexpected form of Nicholas' abdication made the task of Russian monarchists much more difficult and placed the crushing burden of power on an unsuitable candidate.

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[30] Ibid., p. 466.

Before abdicating, in order to insure a peaceful transfer of power, Nicholas II signed two orders. First, he appointed Prince George L'vov, the zemstvo leader, as President of the Council of Ministers. This order caused many radicals to complain that L'vov was nothing but a continuation of the old regime and contributed to his eventual resignation and replacement by Alexander Kerensky. Secondly, he appointed Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich as Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Armies. This appointment also proved to be highly unpopular with the anti-monarchist forces.[31] It is evident that Nicholas acted out of the most sincere patriotism. After all, he had cause to resent both men. But, as would be the case with so many others in the first period of the Russian Revolution, he underestimated the desire of politicians, especially socialists and Marxists, to divorce themselves completely from anyone connected with tsarism. He did not realize that his approval was far more injurious to both men than his denunciation could have been. As the Revolution unfolded, this desire to totally eradicate the past led to a number of needless and brutal excesses. The aristocracy, particularly the members of the Romanov dynasty, were the prime targets of this historical abortion.

On the morning of March 16, Grand Duke Paul traveled to Tsarskoe Selo to see the Empress and her children who were

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[31] Luckett, White Generals, pp. 41-2.

sick with the measles. Alexandra knew nothing of the abdication. When she heard the news, to the Grand Duke's surprise, she took it all very calmly. They spoke of the possibility of the family going to their estate in the Crimea, Livadia.[32] Reduced to the status of wife and mother, Alexandra took on a new dignity which she never possessed in her days as interfering Empress. Although she never resigned herself to Nicholas' loss of power, she accepted the change of regime as a fait accompli.

Despite discouraging conditions, the monarchists were still hoping for a continuation of the dynasty. They saw the crown as the major unifying factor among all the heterogeneous peoples of the Empire. The decision rested on the none-too-broad shoulders of Grand Duke Michael. The difficulties posed by the unexpected form of abdication prompted Grand Duke Nicholas to telegraph General Alekseev that "the manifesto in favor of Grand Duke Mikhail Aleksandrovich will inevitably provoke a slaughter."[33] The ex-Emperor's brother was hardly cheered by this prospect. He had never thought in terms of ruling Russia. Even had he simply been appointed regent, he might have had strong reservations about accepting. But, as the revolutionaries angrily tore down imperial eagles from public buildings, the thought of assuming the throne was terrifying. In a tense meeting

[32]Marie, Education, p. 303.

[33]Kerensky and Browder, Provisional Government, 1:113.

which included Professor Paul Miliukov, Mikhail Rodzianko, and Alexander Kerensky, the fate of the dynasty was sealed. Despite the ominous signs, Miliukov begged the Grand Duke to assume the throne. He warned that the whole future of Russia hung in the balance; that the country was lost without a tsar. On the other hand, Rodzianko, who was aware of the mounting revolutionary hatred of the dynasty, warned that he could not be responsible for the Grand Duke's personal safety. Kerensky argued persuasively that such a step would have the direct consequences for the Grand Duke and for the Provisional Government. Finally, a manifesto was composed on a typewriter in the children's nursery. It read:

> A heavy burden has been laid upon Me by the will of My Brother. . . . I have taken a firm decision to assume the Supreme Power only in the event that such is the will of our great people, . . . Therefore, invoking God's blessings, I ask all citizens of the Russian State to pay allegiance to the Provisional Government, . . .[34]

The long reign of the Romanovs was at an end. A dynasty which had begun with Michael in 1613 ended with a Michael in 1917.

Although the hope was held out that an upcoming Constituent Assembly would reinstate the monarchy within constitutional limitations, few realists expected this to take place. The crushing burdens of the throne had virtually destroyed Nicholas. Michael did not wish to become the first martyr

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[34] Ibid., 1:116.

of the Russian Revolution. However, his departure from the field of battle neither insured popular democracy nor secured his own personal safety. No amount of goodwill towards the new order(s) could make it otherwise. As the privileges had come by birth, so the persecution would come by birth.

Nicholas II, now Citizen Romanov, had the consolation of a visit from his mother, the Dowager Empress, shortly after the abdication. He had returned to Headquarters to bid farewell. General Sir Hanbury-Williams was impressed by the ex-monarch's continued devotion to the Allied cause. His last words to the Englishman were: "Remember, nothing matters but beating Germany."[35] The elderly Count Frederiks, Minister of the Court, appeared broken in spirit. He confided his fear of arrest and execution to the British Military Representative. The Count hoped to avoid these eventualities by going to the Crimea.[36] Such a conversation was extraordinary at that point in the Russian Revolution but it was to become quite commonplace. As it happened, Count Frederiks was one of the few survivors of the coming Red Terror. He remained free in the revolutionary cradle of Bolshevik Russia, later known as Leningrad, until he died of natural causes.

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[35]Hanbury-Williams, Nicholas II, p. 170.

[36]Ibid., p. 164.

Now that the Tsar had abdicated, the Romanovs could no longer blame all their failings upon him. Nevertheless, few stepped forward to serve their country. Grand Duke Nicholas was an exception to the rule. Admired by the soldiers in the ranks, victimized by the jealousy of Alexandra, his immense height and majestic deportment immediately set him apart from other tsarist generals and the remaining grand dukes. If any man could have restored confidence in the Romanovs, he was the man. Nicholas II's ukaz appointing him Commander-in-Chief offered Nicholas Nikolaevich the opportunity to restore the soldiers' confidence in the war effort and to rally the increasingly disparate elements of the civilian and military population to the common cause. Perhaps because the Grand Duke was so absorbed in making plans for his new command, he appeared oblivious to the growing disorder in the towns his train passed through on the way from the Caucasus to Headquarters. Surrounded by his devoted aides-de-camp and cheered on by the soldiery, he proceeded serenely.[37]

As early as 23 March 1917 the press reported that the newly appointed Commander-in-Chief gave his full allegiance to the Provisional Government. He opposed the return of the old order which had apparently hindered the successful prosecution of the war and the internal stability of the nation.[38]

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[37] Alexander, Once, p. 143.

[38] The New York Times, 23 March 1917, p. 3.

Of course, it is certain that such a man as Nicholas Nikolaevich, a grandson of the iron-willed Autocrat Nicholas I, remained an ardent monarchist at heart. However, in this period of intense struggle against the Central Powers, he concluded that the nation's honor and her commitment to her allies came first, not the type of government in Petrograd. Accordingly, he ordered the troops to pledge allegiance to the new government as soon as he arrived at Headquarters. The terms were simple and straightforward, without reservations: "I order all ranks of our valiant army and navy to submit to the established government unfailingly through their direct superiors."[39] Like the ex-Tsar, the Grand Duke apparently believed that the defeat of Germany was all that really mattered.

While Grand Duke Nicholas was composing the order to take the oath of allegiance to the Provisional Government, objections were being raised to his candidacy by revolutionary elements in Petrograd and Moscow. So hostile were the garrisons in Petrograd to the idea of a Romanov playing any active role in the new revolutionary army, that the existence of Nicholas II's ukaz, appointing his cousin Supreme Commander, had to be concealed from them.[40] Before the Grand Duke's

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[39]Dimitry V. Lehovich, White against Red: The Life of General Anton Denikin (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1966), p. 94.

[40]Victor Chernov, The Great Russian Revolution, trans. Philip E. Mosely (New York: Russell & Russell, 1966), p. 94.

train arrived from the Caucasus, the Petrograd Soviet had passed a resolution calling for his arrest.[41] When Kerensky, acting as the go-between from the Provisional Government to the Moscow Soviet, addressed the "comrades" on March 20, they angrily shouted him down. He was accused of continuing the government of Nicholas II by permitting the appointment of Grand Duke Nicholas to be carried out. The mood was bellicose as they charged the government with aiding and abetting counter-revolutionaries.[42] This and other public manifestations of discontent at the Grand Duke's appointment provoked the Provisional Government, now headed by Prince George L'vov, to take the matter under consideration. The members of the Provisional Government were in a difficult position for several reasons: first, the Grand Duke had shown every sign of giving his full support to the new order; second, he was immensely popular with both the officer class as well as the rank and file soldier; third, he was an experienced and competent military strategist. Although the Eastern Front was in a perilous state, the protestations of radical revolutionaries seemed to carry the day. The military, they reasoned, would obey any competent general but what of the civilian population? Nicholas Nikolaevich would have to go. It was the duty of the Prime Minister to inform him by telegram of

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[41] Vice-Admiral Sir Francis Pridham, Close of a Dynasty (London: Allan Wingate, 1956), p. 31.

[42] Alexander Kerenskii, Russia and History's Turning Point (New York: Duell, Sloan & Pierce, 1965), pp. 237-8.

the government's decision. Received by an incredulous Grand Duke Nicholas on 15 March 1917, the text read: "the national opinion decidedly and persistently expresses itself against the employment of members of the House of Romanov in any state post whatsoever."[43]

The telegram struck Nicholas like a thunderbolt. A man of great pride and dedication, he felt that this insult was a definitive end to his public life. He gave orders that his bags should be packed and his train readied. He removed his epaulettes, the emblems of his life-long service in the military. General Sir Hanbury-Williams and other representatives of the Allied military mission bade him an affectionate farewell.[44] When Baron Wrangel was informed of his removal by Colonel Count Mengden, an aide-de-camp to Nicholas Nikolaevich, he expressed his conviction that this would have disastrous results on the Russian military: "He alone would have been able to save the army from imminent ruin."[45] The Grand Duke requested permission of the Provisional Government to retire to his estate in the Crimea.[46] His legal status was now uncertain. The Provisional Government

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[43]Denikin, Anton Ivanovich, Ocherki russkoi smuty [Sketches of the Russian Turmoil], 5 vols. in 6 (Paris: J. Povolozky & Company, 1921-1926, vols. 3-4 bear the imprint, Berlin: Slovo, and vol. 5, Berlin: Medny vsadnik), 3:255.

[44]Hanbury-Williams, Nicholas II, p. 256.

[45]Baron Peter Wrangel, Always with Honour, Makers of History Series (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1957), p. 17.

[46]The New York Times, 26 March 1917, p. 4.

sent two agents to conduct him into exile under an informal kind of house arrest.

The long trip to the Crimea was as heartening to the Grand Duke as it must have been disconcerting to the Provisional Government and their unruly competitor, the Petrograd Soviet. At each station, as the Grand Duke's train steamed in, crowds massed, not to harass him but to cheer him. They clamored for him to show himself and, when he did, accorded him the acclaim due to an old soldier and a national hero.[47] Comforted by these demonstrations, but embittered by L'vov's telegram, the Grand Duke resolved to live a life of absolute privacy. Thus, without any prior consultation, he began the great aristocratic exodus from the centers of revolutionary Russia--Petrograd and Moscow. When his train arrived in the Crimea at the beginning of April 1917, there began a new era for the Romanovs, who were no longer rulers but helpless pawns seeking to find peace and retirement from the public arena, immersed in the series of tidal waves which ended the First World War and solidified the Revolution.

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[47] Princess Cantacuzène (Countess Spéransky, née Grant), Revolutionary Days: Recollections of Romanoffs and Bolsheviki, 1914-1917 (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1919), p. 408.

CHAPTER III

ROMANOVS IN THE CRIMEA:

TROUBLE IN PARADISE

> The revolution seemed impossible in this paradise. No wonder invalids came, and that so many poor exiles now chose it as their refuge.
>
> Princess Cantacuzène

The Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich arrived in the Crimea when the first blush of April was beautifying the peninsula. Considered the Riviera of Russia, the Crimea possessed a serene Mediterranean climate and an amazing wealth of natural beauty. The peninsula juts out into the Black Sea in a continuation of the immense plateau of the steppe country. The southeastern side descends sharply to the sea, and the undercliff at the base forms a strip of land which is protected from wind and storm. A tremendous variety exists within an area approximately the same size as the state of Vermont. The narrow valleys, separated by sharp ridges, are heavily wooded and laden with subtropical vegetation. Fir trees and pomegranates are complemented by lush orchards and abundant gardens, rich with flowering shrubs and bright-colored blossoms. Vineyards produce grapes used in making a number of fine wines. The bright blue of sea and sky provides a splendid contrast to the verdancy of the landscape.

Not unlike variegated geographical features, the ethnic composition of the Crimea in this period was quite extraordinary. According to the All-Russian Census of 1897, the population of the Crimea amounted to 564,592, of which 35.1 percent were Tatars, a people who practiced the Moslem faith. After the disintegration of the Golden Horde in the fifteenth century, these Tatars were taken under the protection of the Ottoman Empire. They were conquered and made subject to the Russian state at the end of the eighteenth century. In addition to the Tatars, the peninsula contained a sizeable number of Russians, Ukrainians, Germans, and smattering of other ethnic groups.[1]

Wealthy Russians often sought out the Crimea for rest and recuperation. Everyone of note had a summer house or estate there. Before the February Revolution, Madame Naryshkin, Mistress of Robes, suggested the Nicholas' children should recuperate from the measles at Livadia, an estate which he had built in 1911 to replace an earlier wooden structure. The splendid new Italianate palace was constructed of white stone, surrounded by immense beds of pink roses sloping down toward the sea. Here, too, were the Tsar's famous botanical gardens and hothouses, which supplied lilacs for the Empress' boudoir and bouquets for receptions in

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[1]Oleh S. Fedyshyn, Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1918 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971), p. 196.

Petrograd. In March 1917, the Tsar was considering Madame Naryshkin's proposal.[2] Then, with lightning speed, came revolution and abdication. Afterwards, Nicholas II was no longer free to determine his own residence. While still at headquarters, the Emperor had indicated to the British Military Representative that he thought there would be no objection to his going to the Crimea.[3] This proved to be a naive assumption on Nicholas' part. The Petrograd Soviet had no intention of permitting "Nicholas the Bloody" to put any distance between himself and its jurisdiction. For the time being, however, they had to be satisfied with arrest and confinement at Tsarskoe Selo. Later, of course, the family was sent to Tobolsk in Siberia and thence to Ekaterinburg where they were murdered.

In 1917, the Crimea was still divided into estates which were located, for the most part, in the protected land which ran from the foothills to the Black Sea. Most of the royal villas were on the eastern seacoast near Yalta. The Iusupov villa, Koreiz, was not far from Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich's Tchaire. The Dowager Empress usually stayed nearby at Ai-Todor, the estate of Grand Duke Alexander and Grand Duchess Xenia, with its huge veranda and extensive gardens.

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[2]Edith M. Almedingen, The Empress Alexandra: A Study (London: Hutchinson, 1961), p. 191.

[3]Sir John Hanbury-Williams, The Emperor Nicholas II as I Knew Him (London: Arthur L. Humphreys, 1922), pp. 169-70.

Grand Duke Peter Nikolaevich, Nicholas' brother, and his wife Militsa, owned a fortress-like Moorish style castle called Dulber. The Dolgorukii princes maintained an estate known as Mishor, not far from Livadia. In addition to the royal villas, smaller dachas, or summer villas, belonged to celebrities such as the great basso Chaliapin. In this way, the wealthy and the famous could rub elbows with the aristocracy who were provided with an interesting social milieu for entertainments and theatricals.[4]

It was to this familiar and charming retreat that Nicholas Nikolaevich and his suite retired, speeding away from the centers of revolutionary strife, away from the violent and painful denunciations of the Left, away from the search and seizure which became a standard feature of life for the Romanovs remaining in Russia. The Grand Duke and his wife Stana disappeared into the privacy of Tchaire. A few faithful attendants remained nearby, such as Prince Nicholas Orlov and his wife, Princess Nadezhda, a daughter of Nicholas' brother Peter. Grand Duke Peter and his wife Militsa also provided companionship. The brothers Peter and Nicholas formed an unusually tight circle with the sisters Militsa and Anastasia. Peter and Militsa had two other children besides Princess Nadezhda, Prince Roman and Princess Marina. Also in attendance were the sentinels whom the Provisional

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[4]Princess Sofka Skipwith, Sofka: The Autobiography of a Princess (London: Hart-Davis, 1968), pp. 37-8.

Government had placed at the gates of Tchaire in order to keep a close watch on the Grand Duke and to prevent any counter-revolutionary plots from being hatched in the relative seclusion of the Crimea.[5] Nevertheless, the grand ducal brothers maintained a large staff of servants and observed all the traditional social rituals that had become a way of life for the Russian aristocracy. So, despite the fact that all were technically under arrest, in the midst of the accustomed luxuries of their respective estates, surrounded by a profusion of magnolias, acacias, wisteria, and strawberry trees, house arrest must have been more of an annoyance than a painful reality. In the coming months, as more of the Imperial Family followed suite and arrived in the Crimea, the delight of returning to a beloved family resort, with its familiar and beautiful surroundings, extended the soothing influence of the past into the present and obscured the fearful and unfamiliar future. While the Provisionsl Government struggled to make Russia a democracy on the Western pattern and the socialists opposed them with equal vigor and far superior leadership, the former rulers of the Russian Empire remained quietly in their country estates, suspended in a limbo between their former existence and the ignominy that was to follow.

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[5]Princess Cantacuzène (Countess Spéransky, née Grant), Revolutionary Days: Recollections of Romanoffs and Bolsheviki, 1914-1917 (Boston: Small, Maynard & Co., 1919), p. 327.

When Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna returned to her residence in Kiev following her interview with the fallen Emperor, she did so with a heavy heart. Her worst fears had been realized: the weakness of her son had finally caused him to yield his throne. In turn, her flighty Misha had forsaken the dynasty by refusing to accept power without the approval of a non-existent popular assembly. This surrender to the passions of the mob, which she deemed her children guilty of, was incomprehensible to her. Popular with the Russian people since she came to Russia to marry Tsarevich Alexander in 1865, this dark-eyed little Danish princess became every inch an Empress of Russia. The endless series of court balls and receptions depressed and disgusted her successor, the neurasthenic Alexandra, but they were Maria Fedorovna's great delight. At these functions, her laughter, her nimble dancing feet, her unfailing courtesy, and her phenomenal memory for names and faces, made her a perfect complement to her enormous, awe-inspiring husband, Alexander III. She was one of those rare persons who never doubted for a moment the purpose of her existence nor the way in which she could best serve society. By the age of thirty she had produced five children. Of the three boys, she lost one to tuberculosis. The eldest, Tsarevich Nicholas, adored her and depended on her greatly. This dependence grew with his responsibilities. Those who were privy to the Russian Court

knew that the Dowager Empress was a very powerful woman and that Nicholas rarely opposed any wish expressed by her. Mention has already been made of the coldness which arose between Alexandra Fedorovna and her mother-in-law, and of Empress Maria's departure from Petrograd to Kiev. Upon learning of the tragic denouement of Nicholas' reign, she hastened to his side. Having provided such support and consolation as she was able, she ordered her train to return to Kiev. It was only as the sleek train, with its gleaming brass double eagles, rolled into the railroad depot at Kiev that the existential reality of the immense change in her status began to descend upon her. For the first time in her life, Maria Fedorovna, Dowager Empress of Russia, beheld a desolate station. Her own platform was now cordoned off. No beaming officials awaited her. No obsequious footmen dashed for her trunks and packages. There were no immaculate officers to push back the crowds and form a sanitary cordon to her carriage or limousine. She emerged onto the platform, a solitary little old lady with a traveling case on her arm. Her head held high, with a purposeful step, she made her way to the front of the depot and hailed a cabby to take her to her home, paying fare just as any ordinary matron.[6] Perhaps, after all, revolutions are made of just such human stuff.

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[6]Ian Vorres, The Last Grand Duchess (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 149.

Determined to uphold the honor of the House of Romanov, the Empress refused to confine herself to her mansion. Now, as before, the people were her concern. She felt she had nothing to fear from them. In the weeks after Nicholas' abdication and the fall of the monarchy, the Dowager Empress took a stance which might be described as "business as usual." She lived with her daughter Olga and her son-in-law Alexander. Since Olga was a nurse, she was constantly at the hospital. The Empress, too, had established a regular order of visitation to the wounded. Her car would drive up to the gates of the hospital, where she would alight with the help of two immense Cossacks, her personal attendants and bodyguards. Then she would be conducted through the wards by the chief surgeon or some other person of authority. At each bed she would stop and say a few words, bestow a small gift or a box of chocolates. Those who were in pain received her special attention. Each petition for assistance was received with sympathy and tact. Like her son, she felt herself to be very close to the people. It came as a terrific shock to her when the hospital director ordered the gates to be closed to her car and she was told that her presence was no longer desired. Public opinion no longer tolerated royal visitations.[7] Her frustration was immense and her resentment great. After all, the men in the wards seemed to want her to come. How dare

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[7] Ibid., p. 150.

the doctors warn her of public opinion, she who spent her life basking in public adoration! Even now, some people saluted her on the street and showed her all the accustomed courtesy. Of course, there were a few who jeered at her or snubbed her, but these there had always been. The police had simply silenced them in the old days.

That spring, her privacy was invaded for the first time by the new government. Her correspondence was confiscated: all the letters from Nicholas II, the messages from her grandchildren carefully printed in childish script, three of her diaries with a treasure trove of memories. Although she was informed that the old Imperial Government was under investigation, she refused to accept this explanation and never viewed the confiscation as anything but a wanton violation of her privacy and a cruel and vindictive peronsal affront.[8] Maria Fedorovna saw the new order as a conspiracy to destroy her good name and that of her family. She failed to grasp the dynamics of the Russian Revolution. Its real causes were hidden from her by her own preconceptions and her years of rigorous training. The impersonal forces at work in the transformation of old patriarchal Russia into a modern socialist state were reduced to comfortable old misconceptions and precious but romantic illusions.

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[8]Maria Fedorovna to Nicholas II, 4 December 1917 (O.S.), The Letters of Tsar Nicholas and Empress Marie: Being the Confidential Correspondence between Nicholas II, Last of the Tsars, and His Mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, ed. Edward J. Bing (London: Ivor Nicholason & Watson, Ltd., 1937), p. 303.

Finally, urged on by Olga and Alexander, she decided to ask for permission to leave the Ukraine for the Crimea.[9] She did so with the most extreme reluctance. Although she loved the Crimea, she feared its remote location, away from Nicholas, Michael, and her grandchildren who might have need of her. At the end of March 1917 the Provisional Government granted her request to reside in the Crimea.[10] Grand Duke Alexander had to use all of his ingenuity to engineer a safe departure from Kiev. He commandeered a small unit of loyal sappers who were building a bridge across the Dnieper to guard the train. Each member of the Imperial Family left the house separately under cover of darkness. Finally, the Dowager Empress, Grand Duchess Olga (heavy with child), her new husband, Colonel Kulikovskii, and a considerable retinue of attendants and servants, were all ensconced in the train. The fear, of course, was that those who were proclaiming "death to the aristocrats" would discover their departure and proceed to rid the country of these detestable Romanovs. The Provisional Government sent along a gentleman who bore the resounding title of Special Commissioner of the Provisional Government, along with an extensive list of prohibited

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[9]Vladimir Poliakoff, Mother Dear: The Empress Marie of Russia and Her Times (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1926), p. 318; Grand Duke Alexander, Once a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1932), p. 289.

[10]The New York Times, 30 March 1917, p. 3.

activities.[11] Grand Duchess Olga remembered: "I had a very small dressing case in my hands. I remember the moment when, looking upon that small case and my crumpled skirt, I realized that I owned nothing else in the world."[12]

The trip was a harrowing experience for all. At every station there were scenes of wild confusion. The loyal sappers bravely guarded entrances to the train as crowds of people surged forward, eager to find a seat because of the disrupted transportation which followed upon the February Revolution. Finally, they crossed the Perekop Isthmus into the Crimea. The train moved on to the outskirts of Sevastopol' in the southern part of the peninsula. Here waited several cars driven by monarchist cadets from the Military Aviation School which Grand Duke Alexander had formerly commanded. The little caravan drove on to Ai-Todor, Alexander's estate, about twelve miles from Yalta on the eastern coast of the peninsula. A few days later, Grand Duchess Xenia and her large family arrived from the north to join her husband.[13]

The Dowager Empress' favorite granddaughter Irina and her husband, Prince Felix Iusupov, also made the decision to go to the Crimea. After the controversy of the Rasputin affair and the February Revolution, the Tatar peasants, with

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[11]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 151; Alexander, Once, p. 298.

[12]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 151.

[13]Ibid., pp. 151-2.

their donkeys and their devout recitation of prayers at the call of the muezzin, made the passions and turmoils of the North seem a world away.[14] The Iusupov's charming estate, Koreiz, neighbored that of Ai-Todor. As the summer began, its calm and lazy atmosphere descended on the Romanov households. The 175 acres of Ai-Todor gave the Grand Duchess Olga a good opportunity to exercise before the birth of her expected child.[15]

In May, Princess Dolgorukii and her granddaughter Sofka arrived at their estate of Mishor. The Princess was the widow of the Lord High Marshal of the Court and Lady-in-Waiting to Maria Fedorovna. Her granddaughter was the child of Prince and Princess Peter Volkonskii. Both families are among the most celebrated in Russian history. The Dolgorukii's trip to the Crimea was made in the usual style; an entire coach with eight compartments reserved for their use and that of the maids and governesses. The cooks and pantry boys, footmen, and maids with their families had been dispatched in advance.[16] Very shortly after their arrival, they were informed that Princess Irina Dolgorukii, wife of Prince Sergei Dolgorukii, Equerry to the Dowager Empress, had committed

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[14]Prince Felix Youssoupoff, Lost Splendor, trans. Ann Green and Nicholas Katkoff (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), p. 273.

[15]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 153.

[16]Skipwith, Sofka, p. 36.

suicide. This caused quite a stir among the little community of aristocrats because it was well known that her husband had been carrying on a long-standing affair with a certain grand duchess. The funeral was elaborate, with blankets of white roses framing the casket and priest and choir chanting the Orthodox prayers for the dead, thick clouds of incense wafting in the sea breeze as the procession majestically wound its way to the cemetery.[17]

The Dowager Empress was delighted to find some companionship in her contemporary, Princess Dolgorukii. When unable to attend the Empress, the old lady played endless games of solitaire behind a protective screen on a black and white marble terrace which looked out over rose gardens and thence to the sea.[18] When deprived of her companion, the Dowager Empress would sit out on the veranda at Ai-Todor, reading her old family Bible which she had taken with her from Denmark in the early sixties of the last century.[19]

Nearby at Tchaire, Grand Duke Nicholas was suffering from sciatica and, according to the Cantacuzènes who lived at the nearby estate of Simeiz, he had grown very thin and fragile looking.[20] Although a deceptive harmony reigned among the various Romanovs, Grand Duke Alexander blamed

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[17] Idib., pp. 37-8.

[18] Ibid., p. 38

[19] Alexander, Once, p. 300.

[20] Cantacuzène, Days, p. 404.

Nicholas Nikolaevich for many of the disasters which had befallen the Russian armies in the first years of the war. The former Commander-in-Chief, in turn, had a very low estimation of Alexander's military competence.[21] But, such tensions having existed within the family for so long, no one was surprised at the coolness between the two. Much more serious was the absence of news from the ex-Emperor and other relatives in the north. It was known that Nicky, Alicky, [Alexandra] and the children were living at Tsarskoe Selo under guard.[22] Also, a cause of alarm were patrols of armed sailors who began to appear in the vicinity.[23]

The situation in the Crimea was rather complicated in the period from the February Revolution to the Bolshevik Revolution. The Provisional Government coexisted with the old zemstvo municipal councils (zemgor) and the more revolutionary sovdeps (soviets of deputies). The political orientation of all three organizations tended toward the moderate Left, most officials being either Social Revolutionaries (SRs) or Menshevik Social Democrats (SDs).[24] To put it simply, the majority political opinion was in favor of basic reforms,

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[21]Alexander, Once, pp. 219-22.

[22]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 152.

[23]Alexander, Once, pp. 298-9.

[24]Anton Ivanovich Denikin, Ocherki russkoi smuty [Sketches of the Russian Turmoil], 5 vols. in 6 (Paris: J. Povolozky & Company, 1921-1926, vols. 3-4 bear the imprint, Berlin: Slovo, and vol. 5, Berlin: Medny Vsadnik), 3:255.

like the requisition of land from the gentry and its more equitable distribution, but against the suppression of all political opposition and the "dictatorship of the proletariat" which the Bolsheviks were already espousing. The existence of the Russian Black Sea fleet at Sevastopol', with large contingents of sailors there and at other Crimean ports such as Yalta, Feodosia, and Evpatoria, made the Crimea a very explosive region. In late May, Ambassador Francis reassured the U. S. Department of State as to the Black Sea fleet. He had attended a mass meeting with Admiral Kolchak where representatives of the fleet made stirring declarations of fidelity to the Allied cause and against a separate peace.[25] But the Ambassador's prompt reassurances were premature. Work among the sailors by the Bolsheviks was even then proceeding apace. Lenin, quick to seize on an effective way of discrediting the Provisional Government, declared it to be in league with the monarchists. In April 1917 he warned: "The Romanov gang continues to hatch monarchist intrigues. The vast landed possessions of the feudal landlords have not been abolished." He even went so far as to claim that the Provisional Government had begun to negotiate with "Nicholas the Bloody" in order to bring about a restoration of the Romanov dynasty.[26]

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[25]Francis to Lansing, U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Supplement, Russia, 1918, 3 vols., 1:73.

[26]Vladimir Ilyich Lenin, The Essentials of Lenin in Two Volumes (Westport, Conn.: Hyperion Press, Inc., 1973), 2:25.

Although Lenin's assertion has never been buttressed by so much as a scrap of evidence, it was thoroughly sound strategy. As a revolutionary, at least in this regard, Vladimir Lenin was quite traditional. He knew that the hatred, fear, and resentment of the people had to have a concrete target and that a conspiracy theory was the best way to break down loyalties to the inefficient new liberal order.

By June 1917 that same Black Sea fleet, which had so edified the American Ambassador with its protestations of loyalty and devotion to duty, broke out in a violent and unexpected mutiny. The naval element became almost totally Bolshevized. There now existed a state of intense rivalry between the remains of the Provisional Government and the large Sevastopol' and Yalta Soviets.[27] Around this time the Sevastopol' Soviet forced the Provisional authorities to issue a search warrant for Ai-Todor, now the residence of the Dowager Empress, Grand Duke Alexander, Grand Duchess Xenia, and their brood, as well as Grand Duchess Olga and Colonel Kulikovskii. It became the habit of search parties to awaken the inhabitants at the most unexpected times. They arrived at Ai-Todor before dawn. Colonel Kulikovskii and Olga were awakened in their boudoir by two sailors and told to keep silent. The room was thoroughly searched. At length, one sailor condescended to inform them that the

[27]Dimitry V. Lehovich, White against Red: The Life of General Anton Denikin (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1974), p. 278.

search was being conducted for firearms and a "secret telegraph." Some time had passed before they were informed by the sons of Grand Duke Alexander that the Dowager Empress' apartment was swarming with Red sailors. Hearing loud voices and protestations from that area of the house, Olga pushed past the guards into her mother's boudoir where she beheld an unforgettable sight. The room was in total disarray with clothes and personal effects covering the floor. Pieces of wood from the wardrobe, desk, and table were littered here and there. In certain places the carpet had been torn up, revealing the bare floor boards. In the midst of all this bedlam, wrapped tightly in her nightclothes, was the old Empress, sitting bolt upright, pouring forth a steady stream of biting sarcasm. Her black eyes were ablaze.[28] The sailors were finally convinced that there was nothing of a subversive nature in her room. They had, however, confiscated on the spot all the correspondence of Maria Fedorovna which they could locate. Worse still, they had taken her precious Bible, a gift of her father King Christian IX. As much pain as this caused her, it was nevertheless a consolation that they did not take her jewel case which contained a fortune in precious gems.[29] They also confiscated Grand Duke Alexander's correspondence before their ultimate departure.

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[28]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 153; Youssoupoff, Splendor, pp. 276-7.

[29]Alexander, Once, pp. 301-3.

The advent of violence in the Crimea caused all the tensions to increase: worry for their relatives elsewhere, fear that they would never be able to lead unmolested lives again in their native land, even concern for material provisions in the future. Near Ai-Todor the Goujons, prominent Petrograd industiralists, were visited by a band of sailors. They murdered the husband and beat his wife into unconsciousness.[30] Fear began to set in regularly as dusk heralded summer nights. Maria Fedorovna began to complain that she should never have come to the Crimea. She emphasized that her duty was to go to Petrograd and support her son who, she bitterly emphasized, had been abandoned even by his own.[31]

Even after these incidents, however, the isolation of the various villages and towns scattered throughout the peninsula was sufficient to insure that harassment remained uncommon. Worker and soldier garrisons, excluding the sailors, were moderate at this time.[32] Although certain members of the Imperial Family were forbidden to leave the area, others like Prince Felix were free to come and go. Accordingly, Iusupov returned to Petrograd and brought back two valuable Rembrandts--"The Man in the Large Hat" and "The Woman with the Fan." He returned to the Crimea at the same time as the

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[30]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 153.

[31]Ibid., p. 152.

[32]Denikin, Ocherki, 3:40.

famous Katerina Breshkovskaia, popularly known as "the little grandmother of the Russian Revolution." She had been imprisoned in Siberia for many years. Earlier, Kerensky had placed the Tsar's train at her disposal and, after a tremendous reception in Moscow where she was placed in the Emperor's coach and feted in the Imperial reception rooms, she was packed off to Livadia for a rest. When Prince Felix, accompanied by Grand Duke Alexander's son Theodore, returned to Yalta, the streets were decorated in her honor with tons of red bunting. Madame Breshkovskaia was understandably jubilant.[33] In a letter to one of her English friends, posted from the Crimea, she wrote: "A new history of the world is beginning, and here we are in the first steps of a march always difficult, but promising the most desirable results."[34] Eventually, a revolutionary would be redefined to exclude bourgeois liberals like Breshkovskaia. The inevitable radicalization of the Russian Revolution prompted a highly respected thinker to remark that, far from a brand new and unprecedented revolution, the events in Russia were "the perfect commonplace of revolutions."[35]

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[33]Catherine Breshkovsky, The Little Grandmother of the Russian Revolution: Reminiscences and Letters of Catherine Breshkovsky, ed. Alice Blackwell (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1919), pp. 310-11; Youssoupoff, Splendor, pp. 273-4.

[34]Breshkovsky, Grandmother, p. 324.

[35]José Ortega y Gasset, The Revolt of the Masses, (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1960), p. 93.

In July, Prince Felix returned to Petrograd with Princess Irina. Their purpose was to see Kerensky and to insist that the Provisional Government send some competent person to prevent a repetition of the harrowing search which had taken place earlier. Irina, a beautiful and charming woman, decided that it would be best for her to seek an interview with the head of the Provisional Government by herself. When she arrived at the Winter Palace she was surprised to recognize many old servants who greeted her effusively. She was ushered into Alexander II's study. Kerensky came in promptly. He spoke politely and asked her to seat herself. She unhesitatingly took her great-grandfather's armchair, thus obliging the head of the government to sit in the chair reserved for guests. As soon as he realized that she had come to seek protection for her grandmother and the rest of her family, he declared that this was out of his hands. Irina ignored his disclaimer and continued her narrative. Finally, Kerensky promised her he would do what he could. She bade farewell to the servants and left the palace for the last time. While in Petrograd, the Iusupovs went to a number of parties which, though smaller than the gala affairs of earlier days, were still peopled by the members of the aristocracy who remained in town either by choice or, more frequently, by necessity. They spent an evening at Tsarskoe Selo with Grand Duke Paul Aleksandrovich, the Emperor's uncle. Nicholas Mikhailovich, the historian, paid them lengthy visits at their hotel and

thundered against the stupidities of the present regime in much the same way that he had criticized the government of Nicholas II. Towards the end of their stay the famous July Days took place, at which time the Bolsheviks made an unsuccessful attempt to overthrow the Provisional Government and a number of their leaders were arrested.[36]

In late summer 1917, Kerensky's commissioner reached the Crimea. Irina's efforts had seemingly born fruit. He turned out to be an old style liberal who had been a member of the Duma. The Sevastopol' and Yalta Soviets made life miserable for him and kept a watchful eye on their perspective prisoners. Grand Duchess Olga remembered him as a poor frightened little man who used to come and drink acorn coffee with her.[37] Prince Felix tersely commented: "He was scared of everybody and everything and did nothing whatever to improve conditions."[38]

Following the July Days, the Provisional Government seemed to gain backbone. Kerensky, certain that the ex-Tsar and his family faced death if they remained near Petrograd, arranged for a secret transfer to Tobolsk in Siberia. Nicholas and his family thought they were going to join their relatives in the Crimea until they were told that they should

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[36]Youssoupoff, Splendor, pp. 275-6.

[37]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 155.

[38]Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 277.

pack furs and warm clothing. Then they knew that they could not be going to their beloved Livadia where sable wasn't worn even in the midst of winter.[39] The news drifted down to the Crimea that the Tsar had been sent to Siberia.[40]

By now there was a real need among the Romanovs for money and clothing. Grand Duchess Olga dispatched her maid, Mimka to Petrograd with great hopes. Unfortunately, the poor girl returned with whatever caught her eye: a huge hat trimmed with ostrich feathers, a silk komono, and a tiny Maltese poodle. Despite this disappointment, the Grand Duchess was cheered by the arrival of a baby boy named Tikhon on August 12.[41]

About this time, the fate of the Provisional Government was sealed. In September, the famous Kornilov Revolt took place in which the old Imperial army officers, led by the indomitable General Lavr Kornilov, attempted to round up the radicals so that the war effort might continue. Kerensky attempted to play both sides against the middle. While Kornilov was on the march to Petrograd, Kerensky issued a call to the forces of the Left to protect the Revolution and defend the city. As it turned out, Kornilov's own troops could not have been depended on, but the Bolshevik's sent up the hue

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[39]Almedingen, Alexandra, p. 214.

[40]Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 277.

[41]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 153.

and cry of counterrevolution. One of Kornilov's colleagues, General Denikin, who later led the White forces in the Civil War, found himself accused of attempting to restore Nicholas II whom he opposed both personally and politically. According to Denikin, proclamations to this effect were sent out in great numbers.[42] The deft hand of Lenin and his followers can be seen. Any attempt to effect the status quo other than to support a Bolshevik coup was labeled as counterrevolutionary monarchism. Meanwhile, "Bloody Nicholas" and his children were salted away in Siberia, completely unaware of all their would-be supporters. Grand Duke Nicholas, who was the only suitable Romanov candidate for a rightist dictatorship or restoration, was heavily guarded and personally disinclined to enter the fray. The same generals who had supported the abdication of Nicholas II, such as Alekseev and Denikin, were sitting in jail accused of plotting to restore the man they had helped depose.

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[42]Anton Ivanovich Denikin, The Russian Turmoil: Memoirs Military, Social, and Political (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1922), p. 322.

CHAPTER IV

THE BOLSHEVIK REVOLUTION AND THE CRIMEAN TERROR

> During the comfortable years before 1914, Europeans had read of . . . altruistic killers with fascinated horror in the stories of the French Revolution, but few had expected to see them appear again in the twentieth century. Soon terror was not only an admitted instrument of Soviet policy, but an instrument whose necessity and efficacy were proudly acknowledged by the Bolsheviks.
>
> R. S. Sontag

In the autumn of 1971, Prince Felix Iusupov once again found himself on the train bound for Petrograd. There were pressing needs which the recapture of a few more valuables could alleviate. Before his departure, the Dowager Empress had requested a favorite portrait of her husband, Alexander III. Having arrived in Petrograd, Felix proceeded to the Anitchkov Palace where Alexander and Maria Fedorovna had lived since the Emperor hated the drafty expanses of the Winter Palace. Iusupov boldly removed the portrait from its frame, rolled it up, and spirited it away. He spent the remainder of his time skulking about in search of jewels which had been hidden by various members of the Imperial Family before their departure for the south.

While Prince Iusupov busied himself collecting valuables, Lenin was preparing the Bolsheviks for a final assault on the

Provisional Government. On October 25 (O.S.) they executed their long planned coup. As the Bolsheviks seized railways, bridges, telephones, and banks in the capital, Kerensky attempted to rally his supporters. However, those who sympathized with the Provisional Government were no match for the forces of the Bolsheviks. The ministers of the old government were arrested in the Winter Palace, save for Kerensky who effected an escape. Prince Iusupov thought it wise to return post haste to the Crimea. When he arrived at the train station, the big Delaunay-Belleville car with the family coat of arms on its doors stood waiting. The limousine also sported a penant with a crown boldly flying in the sea breeze.[1]

Prince Felix was the first to arrive from the new Bolshevik capital, but he was by no means the last. The Bolshevik Revolution caused a number of persons to leave for the south who had been most reluctant to abandon their responsible positions. Among those facing this dilemma was Vladimir Dimitrievich Nabokov, a noted jurist, publicist, and statesman. Like so many others, he had placed all of his hopes in a democratic government for Russia. He had worked, written, and hoped for nothing else. Now that the dictatorship of the proletariat had arrived, he and his family were in real danger. Nabokov decided that it was his duty to remain in Petrograd

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[1]Prince Felix Youssoupoff, Lost Splendor, trans. Ann Green and Nicholas Katkoff (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), pp. 277-81.

to rally opposition to the new regime, but he placed his two young sons, Vladimir and Sergei, on a train with their mother. Their destination was the Crimea. The statesman hoped to join his family later, events permitting. Soon after Moscow the Nabokovs' first-class sleeping car was invaded by hordes of Bolshevized soldiers. Their locked compartment proved especially tempting to the soldiers who were riding on the roof. First, a ventilator was chosen as a lavatory by one of the more imaginative fellows. Then, having failed to flush out the inhabitants, the soldiers forced the doors. Fortunately, little Sergei managed to feign such a convincing case of typhus that the soldiers withdrew in great haste. The train rumbled on to the Crimea. The Nabokov's destination was Gaspre, in the vicinity of Yalta. Upon arrival, they settled in a villa loaned to them by Countess Sofia Panina. At this time, the Bolshevik Revolution was scarcely a week old.[2]

In mid-November, the elections to the Constituent Assembly took place. Men like Nabokov worked tirelessly to see that the elections were legitimate. Although the Bolsheviks already held power, their party accumulated only about 25% of the popular vote. Speculation was rampant as to what the Bolsheviks would do about convening the actual assembly. It was a time of great tension in Petrograd.

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[2]Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited (New York: Pyramid Books, 1973), pp. 178-80.

Lenin proceeded cautiously, realizing that the new government faced a wide variety of opposition.[3]

Political activity increased in the Crimea after the October Revolution. Certain zemstvo organizations joined together with the cities of the Taurida Province (the area of the Crimea which is bordered in the north by the lower Dnieper and belonged to the Zaporozhskaia and Khersonskaia oblasts) to form a Crimean Regional Government. It was composed chiefly of moderate socialists. Support for this government came mainly from the semi-Bolshevik military garrisons. To make matters more complicated, on 9 December 1917, a national soviet of Crimean Tatars elected a Tatar parliament which became known as the Kurultai. This government, despite its obvious ethnic bias, took upon itself the administration of both Tatar and non-Tatar nationalities within the Crimea. The national army of the Tatars was merely a Crimean cavalry regiment with a total strength of two to three thousand men. Although they were rivals, the Crimean Regional Government and the Tatar Kurultai concluded treaties of mutual aid against the Bolsheviks.[4] About this time, Baron General Peter Wrangel arrived in the Crimea to

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[3]Dimitry V. Lehovich, White against Red: The Life of General Anton Denikin (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1974), p. 186.

[4]Anton Ivanovich Denikin, Ocherki russkoi smuty [Sketches of the Russian Turmoil], 5 vols. in 6 (Paris: J. Povolozky & Company, 1921-1926, vols 3-4 bear the imprint Berlin: Slovo, and vol. 5, Berlin: Medny vsadnik), 4:40.

join his wife and children. The Tatar government, discovering the presence of this outstanding cavalryman, requested Wrangel to become commander-in-chief of their little army. The Baron, however, refused and continued to live as a private citizen in Yalta.[5]

The Bolsheviks were determined to extend the socialist revolution to other areas. Agitators were sent out to the Black Sea fleet from the center of Russia. The sailors soon overthrew the moderate Sovdep (Soviet of Deputies) in Sevastopol' and formed a new Bolshevik soviet with a revolutionary committee and a commissariat. Violence and pillaging commenced.[6] A decree proclaimed death to all those possessing firearms. Nevertheless, families like the Nabokovs preferred risking discovery by the authorities to being caught defenseless by marauders. They took the further precaution of hiding precious stones under an old oak tree in the garden and in talcum powder bottles. Vladimir Nabokov (the elder), now a wanted man because of his opposition to the Bolshevik government, arrived in the Crimea disguised as a lung specialist on Sunday, 3 December 1917.[7]

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[5]Baron Peter Wrangel, Always with Honour, Makers of History Series (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1957), pp. 38-40.

[6]Denikin, Ocherki, 4:40.

[7]Nabokov, Speak, Memory, pp. 181-2.

While the Kurultai, the Crimean Regional Government, and the Bolsheviks squared off for a fight, life among the aristocracy continued according to the traditional pattern. Oblivious to the approach of disaster, countesses and princesses still went out for afternoon calls in their landaus. Indeed, the Dowager Empress occasionally honored a house by being present at tea. Young ladies like Princess Sofka Dolgorukii resented the unwavering rules of politeness and etiquette which were required of children upon such occasions. Nevertheless, the Princess found Maria Fedorovna charming, with a "monkey-like vitality and humor." When not at their lessons, the young aristocrats spent most of their time engaged in sports. Tatar grooms and footmen supervised horseback riding. Tennis, too, was quite popular. At the Dolgorukii estate there were six tennis courts. Baron Wrangel's children chose this location for an attack against Princess Sofka and her friends. Cyprus cones furnished ample ammunition. Other adolescent activities included smoking clandestine cigarettes behind massive box hedges, writing hopelessly bad poetry, and painting.[8] The children of the servants sometimes mingled with the young nobles. Princess Sofka, for example, became friends with Vanya and Shura, her lodgekeeper's grandsons. The two young peasants gave the Princess a rapid political education. Although the young

[8]Princess Sofka Skipwith, Sofka: The Autobiography of a Princess (Londond: Hart-Davis, 1968), pp. 38-42.

lady evidenced every sympathy for the cause of the proletariat, her new friends warned her that she would have to perish along with her unrepentant elders. Many years later, while in exile, Sofka Dolgorukii joined the Communist Party.[9]

During this period of relative calm, the Romanovs had ample time to reflect on their fallen state. A certain peevishness and melancholy resulted from their enforced idleness. Family squabbles increased. The Dowager Empress refused to include Olga's husband, Colonel Kulikovskii, in family gatherings. Grand Duke Alexander listlessly wandered the corridors of Ai-Todor. The children, in turn, became restless and peevish. An inordinate amount of time was spent in reminiscences and regrets. Even the servants exhibited surliness and occasional insolence. Everyone was cheered, however, by the news that a dentist from nearby Yalta had been called to Siberia to treat the Imperial Family. This gave the Romanovs a chance to pass on a few hastily written letters and small packages to Nicholas II and his family. No word came regarding their reception.[10]

Meanwhile, the old Empire was rapidly disappearing. New states were rising out of its ashes. On 20 November 1917, a Ukrainian Republic was proclaimed. Peace negotiations with

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[9] Ibid., p. 46.

[10] Ian Vorres, The Last Grand Duchess (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 156.

the Germans commenced after an armistice was signed on 5 December 1917. Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich was disgusted by these events. In his view, the new government brought only national dishonor. The Cantacuzènes attempted to see him at Tchaire but were turned away by the guards.[11] Rumors, nevertheless, began to circulate in the north that the Grand Duke, furious at the recent armistice, intended to lead a counterrevolution.[12] Those who lived in the Crimea, however, knew that Nicholas Nikolaevich was already a prisoner. Any attempt on his part to contact elements hostile to the Bolshevik regime would have led to his immediate execution and, most likely, to the hasty dispatch of the remaining Romanovs as well.

Sentries also turned away callers from Ai-Todor. Only Colonel Kulikovskii and Grand Duchess Olga were free to come and go, no doubt due to his common origin. This left them free to forage about for provisions which they brought to the royal inmates in a little pony cart. The Grand Duchess and her husband lived at the edge of Ai-Todor park, in a cellar formerly used to store wines. Most of Empress Maria's more valuable jewelry they concealed in cocoa tins and secreted in

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[11]Princess Cantacuzène (Countess Spéransky, née Grant), Revolutionary Days: Recollections of Romanoffs and Bolsheviki, 1914-1917 (Boston: Small, Maynard & Company, 1919), p. 329.

[12]The New York Times, 22 November 1917, p. 12.

a deep hole at the bottom of a rock near the seashore.[13] The inmates of the estate saw each day pass much as the last. This monotonous existence was occasionally enlivened when the guards allowed Princess Irina or one of the children's tutors to come to the house.[14]

One of the surviving letters of the Dowager Empress provides a good sketch of the life they led. The letter, written in December 1917, was addressed to her son Nicholas. Much of the text is taken up with a recitation of domestic trivia: Xenia and Olga take morning tea with her, Olga is so happy with her new baby, there is no white bread or butter (save when Prince Iusupov sends some over), she has dispensed with all her servants except Yashchik and Poliakoff, her two giant Cossacks. She praises the quality of the last letter received from her grandchildren. Perhaps because the old Empress realized that the letter might fall prey to hostile eyes, it is remarkably restrained. Brief note is taken of the fact that it is sad never to see one another. In English, she confides, "I long for news." She cannot resist commenting that prohibiting Nicholas' daily walks was an incomprehensible cruelty on the part of his jailors. The following paragraphs speak for themselves.

> You know that my thoughts and prayers never leave you--I think of you day and night and sometimes feel so sick at heart that I believe I cannot bear it

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[13] Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 154.

[14] Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 275.

> any longer. But God is merciful--He will give us strength for this terrible ordeal. . . . Who could have thought . . . of all that was in store for us, and what we should have to go through. It is unbelievable. I live only in my memories of the happy past and try as much as possible to forget the present nightmare. . . .
>
> God bless you, send you strength and peace of mind, and may He not allow Russia to perish. I kiss you tenderly. May Christ be with you. Your fondly loving old Mama.[15]

Like her son, Maria Fedorovna had an abiding Christian faith which permitted her to bear sorrow with dignity and resignation to God's will.

Soon conditions worsened. A huge sailor was dispatched from Sevastopol' Soviet to guard the Romanovs. His name was Zadorozhny. Grand Duchess Olga described him as "a murderer but a charming man."[16] One of his first decisions was to order the family to retire to Castle Dulber, the estate of Grand Duke Peter Nikolaevich, a fortress-like structure which could be easily defended.[17] Zadorozhny let it be known that his main concern, as representative of the Sevastopol' Soviet, was to see to it that his prisoners were not taken by the

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[15]Maria Fedorovna to Nicholas II, 21 November 1917 (O.S.), The Letters of Tsar Nicholas and Empress Marie: Being the Confidential Correspondence between Nicholas II, Last of the Tsars, and His Mother, Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna, ed. Edward J. Bing (London: Ivor Nicholson and Watson, Ltd., 1937), p. 301-4.

[16]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 156; Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 283.

[17]Grand Duke Alexander, Once a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1932), p. 305.

rival Yalta Soviet which also claimed jurisdiction over the Romanovs. He took the necessary precautions by seeing to it that the estate was heavily guarded. Dulber now housed some twenty members of the Imperial Family, including Grand Duke Nicholas and his wife.[18] For these twenty persons, there seemed little hope of escape. While they accustomed themselves to living within the shadow of imminent death, the Crimean Peninsula erupted into a nightmarish scene of violence and brutality.

Events in the Crimea, however, were not entirely unconnected with the national scene. At the beginning of January 1918 the Constituent Assembly was convened. Many members of the Assembly refused to subscribe to the Bolshevik program. The result was dispersal at gunpoint by the Bolsheviks.[19] Such flagrant abuse of power seemed to flaunt the principles of the Russian Revolution. Hence, most of the conservative elements in Russia simply viewed the Bolshevik regime as another stage in the descent into anarchy. As such, they were not surprised at Bolshevik brutality or at the demolition of all democratic institutions. Beyond this, many believed the Bolsheviks had been subsidized by the Germans for the

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[18] Vladimir Poliakoff, Mother Dear: The Empress Marie of Russia and Her Times (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1926), p. 319; Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 157; Alexander, Once, p. 305.

[19] Lehovich, Denikin, p. 186.

purpose of knocking Russia out of the war effort. Such people confidently awaited a limited monarchy and the eventual return of law and order.[20]

Soon the Crimea, too, saw the collapse of all opposition to the Bolsheviks. The major cities fell: Evpatoria, Yalta, Feodosia, Kerch, and, finally, the seat of the government at Simferopol' on 26 January 1918. In each of these cities, the coming of Bolshevik rule was introduced by military courts composed largely of sailors from the Black Sea Fleet. Guns were brought into the center of the town. The few soldiers who were still faithful to the Crimean Regional Government were easily overwhelmed.[21]

Baron Wrangel was arrested by a party of sailors who smashed in the door of his home and pointed a revolver at his heart while he still lay in bed. He had been denounced by a gardener who had been dismissed for making improper advances to his wife. The Baroness refused to leave Wrangel's side, following him down to the pier where a torpedo boat was moored. Crowds had gathered around. There was an unimaginable din. Her husband disappeared into the hold. This prison ship contained every social class, from generals to vagrants. The examinations and interrogations went on all

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[20]Statement of General Prince Cantacuzène, U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Supplement, Russia, 1918, 3 vols., 1:332-3.

[21]Denikin, Ocherki, 4:40.

night. In the morning, young Prince Mechtchersky was brought in with the octagenarian General Yartzeff. While Wrangel was there, over a hundred men (mostly officers) were sentenced to death. The young Prince and the old General were led away to the same firing squad. For some reason, probably his wife's fervent entreaties, the President of the Revolutionary Tribunal ordered Wrangel to be released. The Reds were later very sorry that this future White general had slipped through their hands.[22]

Naval mobs behaved similarly in other Crimean towns. The fate of the Evpatorian bourgeoisie was particularly terrifying. After arrest and brief interrogation by the Revolutionary Tribunal, the prisoners were transported to the hold of a transport ship. In three days time, some eight hundred men were incarcerated there. During this three-day period, those arrested received no food and were subjected to harassment which often extended to brutal beatings, leaving the victim unconscious. Over three hundred persons were given the death sentence, again primarily officers. The reasons were often trivial: the wearing of officer's epaulettes, possession of a dress uniform, and the like. Those who were condemned to die were transferred to the hydro-cruiser Rumynia. Each doomed man was called up from the hold. He had to run a gauntlet past the sailors to the place of execution. By the time he reached the executioner, he had already been

[22]Wrangel, Honour, pp. 41-3.

stripped and subjected to a number of blows. The execution was really more like butchery since, after binding the prisoner's hands and legs, they proceeded to cut off his ears, nose, lips, sexual organ, and hands. Eventually the body was cast into the sea.[23]

After capturing the key towns in the region, the sailors began to send out groups to ferret out the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy. These men became known as the naval cavalry. They were renowned for their brutality and sadism. One such group arrived in the courtyard of the Iusupov estate at Koreiz. They had come to arrest the elder Prince Iusupov, the father of Felix. However, the distinctive theatrical ability of Prince Felix prevented this dread eventuality. Apparently calm, he invited the leaders of the group into his study. One of the men, after accepting a glass of wine, asked Prince Felix if he had indeed helped assassinate Rasputin. The candid affirmative reply of the Prince seemed to ease the tension. They began to tell stories of their own adventures and more wine was poured. Felix, who had sung to Rasputin while he was drinking wine which had been carefully treated with lethal doses of poison, now took up his guitar and in his exceptionally clear and melodious voice began to sing the gypsy songs beloved by the Russian people. The marauders proved to be possessed of good voices and joined in

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[23]Denikin, Ocherki, 4:40-1.

on the choruses. By the time the last song was sung, the leader of the group announced his heartfelt thanks for the gracious hospitality. No mention was made of the old Prince. The naval cavalry mounted and rode off at a gallop.[24] Thereafter, the Romanovs at Dulber realized that only Zadorozhny and his men stood between them and a gruesome fate.[25]

The Dolgorukii estate, Mishor, was visited by a small detachment of armed men who ransacked the house looking for arms. To their displeasure and the comic relief of the inhabitants, they discovered only a revolver case which held dentures. Other families fared worse. Against the advent of anarchy, many had engaged in stockpiling. Some people had huge quantities of foodstuffs. When this was discovered, they were usually arrested and brought before the Revolutionary Tribunal. The Dolgorukiis discovered bodies nearby on the seashore--stark naked and covered with crabs. One evening at Mishor, an electric jolt ran through the inhabitants of the estate when bloody cries and terrifying screams pierced the air. Old Princess Olga seemed transfixed to the spot in her terror. A moment ticked by. The impassive butler entered with great dignity: "Your Highness," he announced in sepulchral tones, "the dog has his teeth in the hindquarters of a stray pig."[26]

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[24] Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 282.

[25] Poliakoff, Mother Dear, p. 319.

[26] Skipworth, Sofka, pp. 44-5.

The Romanovs at Dulber were now little more than trophies in the competition between the Sevastopol' and Yalta Soviets. At least the extreme danger they existed under had the effect of purging old family animosities. The Montenegrin Grand Duchesses, Stana and Militsa, buried their old resentment of the Dowager Empress and her daughters--an animosity which had its origins in the introduction of Rasputin to Court by these mystically inclined wives of Grand Dukes Peter and Nicholas.[27]

Marie Fedorovna even managed to gain the respect of a certain number of the Bolshevik guards. As a special favor to her, they allowed her to attend the funeral of Prince Georg Dimitrievich Shervaschidze, Chief Steward to the Household of the Empress. After the service, a little group of gentlemen and ladies formed a "circle" in front of the church and the Dowager Empress pressed each hand. Even the Bolshevik sailors removed their caps.[28] Once, a commission of Bolsheviks came to Dulber to check up on the Imperial Family. A roll call was taken. Each member was to answer with a loud "here." "Citizen" Maria Fedorovna dutifully answered the call. However, before they left, she lifted up her little dog and gleefully remarked: "You have forgotten someone--put his name down."[29]

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[27]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 157.

[28]Poliakoff, Mother Dear, p. 320. [29]Ibid.

Other humorous features attended Bolshevik rule. Young Vladimir Nabokov, an ardent lepidopterist, was walking among the flowering shrubs nearby the seashore. A bow-legged Bolshevik sentry threatened to arrest him for signaling British warships, presumably with his butterfly net.[30] Still more ridiculous was the rivalry between the various soviets which extended to the designation of time. It became impossible to fix an appointment because each region had altered the old order; some had moved the clock up an hour, others had moved it up two and a half. To coordinate one's appointments required the skill of an astronomer.[31]

Life under the Bolsheviks, however, offered only rare bright spots for the Romanovs. The first Communist regime in the Crimea was ineffective, disorganized, and short-lived.[32] The Romanovs witnessed the virtual collapse of all industrial enterprise and the beginnings of famine.[33] Hence, by March 1918, foreign newspapers began to carry stories about the destitution of the Romanovs. The former Empress Maria Fedorovna, they reported, had applied to the government for assistance.[34]

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[30]Nabokov, Speak, Memory, p. 97.

[31]Skipwith, Sofka, p. 46.

[32]Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 185-6

[33]Denikin, Ocherki, 4:41.

[34]The New York Times, 16 April 1918, p. 3.

On her behalf, a devoted friend of the Imperial Family journeyed to Petrograd. While there, he managed to locate a loyal old servant of the Empress who passed on a few of her valuables to him. Private individuals and foreign missions also came to her assistance. He returned to the Crimea and proudly presented the result of his labors to the Dowager Empress.[35] However, even with valuables to sell, the extreme economic dislocation made the price of foodstuffs incredibly high. They could not afford food although the Crimea is one of the richest agricultural areas in Russia. By April, the Romanovs were once again in want.[36]

No visitors were allowed to enter Dulber, save little Irinia Iusupov, aged two. She would arrive with letters and messages of good cheer pinned inside her coat. Kornilov, the cook, who later became a famous Parisian restauranteur, was restricted to a menu of buckwheat and pea soup.[37] The New York Times carried a story describing these conditions which prompted sympathetic persons to urge the American Minister, Roland S. Morris, to make an attempt to send money and other necessities to the Romanovs in the Crimea. The next day, this notion was sarcastically treated in an editorial in the same newspaper which declared it to be no reason for concern

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[35]Poliakoff, Mother Dear, pp. 320-1.

[36]The New York Times, 16 April 1968, p. 3.

[37]Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 284.

because the Romanovs lacked the money and servants necessary to live in their accustomed splendor.[38]

The Yalta Soviet next accused the Sevastopol' Soviet of harboring Prince Vladimir Orlov, a close friend of Nicholas II, head of His Majesty's Chancery. A warrant for his arrest had come from Moscow.[39] Zadorozhny refused to allow the Yalta Soviet to search the premesis and warned them that the only Orlov in residence was Prince Nicholas Orlov, an aide to Grand Duke Nicholas and the husband of Princess Nadezhda, the daughter of Grand Duke Peter. A violent argument ensued with the Yalta people promising to return with reinforcements.

Grand Duchess Olga had been made aware of the Yalta group's arrival by the frantic screams of Tatar women running past her cellar home. She took the baby Tikhon, wrapped him in blankets, and made her way down to the shore. Her husband later returned to Dulber and learned that the Yalta force had withdrawn temporarily but would return to storm the castle walls the next day.[40]

The long, increasingly difficult imprisonment seemed to be coming to its appointed end. Each person feared death but saw a continuation of the present pressures and fears as

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[38] The New York Times, 12 April 1918, p. 6; 13 April 1918, p. 12.

[39] Alexander, Once, p. 309.

[40] Ibid., pp. 309-10; Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 284; Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 158.

unendurable. A trial, an interrogation, even torture would at least give one a chance to be courageous and heroic, to show the revolutionaries that nobility consisted of more than privileges and luxuries. Meanwhile, as pawns in the hands of rival Bolshevik organizations, there was no opportunity for any kind of human dignity.

CHAPTER V

GERMAN OCCUPATION AND THE BIRTH OF THE VOLUNTEER ARMY

> I did not know whether to feel happy or sad. Here we were, the Romanovs, being saved from our own people by our arch enemy, the Kaiser! It seemed the ultimate degradation. . . .
>
> Grand Duchess Olga

Zadorozhny expected the Yalta contingent to arrive in a few hours. At best, the Sevastopol' reenforcements would reach him by four in the morning. Yet, even the slowest truck could cover the distance from Yalta to Dulber in slightly more than an hour.[1] Meanwhile, the Iusupovs watched the Yalta road from the roof of their estate. Hours passed by. No sign of troop movements could be discerned. At length, finding themselves mentally and physically exhausted, Felix and Irina went to bed.[2] Within Castle Dulber, Zadorozhny smoked endlessly. He gave orders to mount machine guns on the parapets. The inmates had no choice but to await their fate.

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[1]Grand Duke Alexander, Once a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, Inc., 1932), p. 311; Ian Vorres, The Last Grand Duchess (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), pp. 157-8.

[2]Prince Felix Youssoupoff, Lost Splendor, trans. Ann Greene and Nicholas Katkoff (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), p. 286.

Unbeknownst to the Romanovs, complicated political and diplomatic maneuvers had taken place which now resulted in dramatic and unexpected changes in the status quo. There follows a brief explanation of the international negotiations which resulted in the totally unexpected appearance of the German military in the Crimea.

The Crimea Peninsula lies to the south of the Ukraine which the Germans recognized as an independent republic on 1 February 1918. Eight days later, the Ukraine concluded a peace treaty with the German Empire. The Bolshevik government of the Crimea was cut off from the Soviet Union by the new Ukrainian Republic. Thus, when the Soviet Union actually began peace negotiations with the Germans at Brest-Litovsk, the Crimea had no representatives, nor were adequate provisions made to deal with its future status.[3] Nevertheless, the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk was signed on 3 March 1918. Article VI of that treaty required the Russians to withdraw their troops and the revolutionary Red Guard from Ukrainian territory without delay.[4] This article was interpreted by the Germans to include the Crimea, which they decided to occupy as early as March 15. Although they had made this

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[3]Oleh S. Fedyshyn, Germany's Drive to the East and the Ukrainian Revolution, 1917-1918 (New Brunswick, New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1971), p. 198.

[4]Ralph Hazwell Lutz, ed., Documents of the German Revolution: Fall of the German Empire, 1914-1918, 2 vols (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1932), 2:798.

decision in consultation with the Austrians, they had prepared no diplomatic justification for this step.[5] Early in April, General von Ludendorff decided that the occupation of the Crimea could be justified on the grounds that Bolshevik naval forces stationed at Savastopol' had attacked German troops in Kherson, north of the Crimea. The invasion was to be carried out by General Kosch and a Moslem corps under the command of former tsarist General Suleiman Sulkevich. On April 19, the Germans began their advance into the Crimea. As soon as they learned of the German advance, the better part of the Black Sea fleet made a run for Novorossiisk on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. This move robbed the Germans of one of their most eagerly anticipated trophies.[6]

No one at Dulber, with the possible exception of Zadorozhny, had the slightest idea that German troops were occupying the peninsula. They were informed early in the morning, after Commissioner Zadorozhny had received a telephone call. The chief jailer then entered the study where Grand Duke Alexander was awaiting news of the approaching Yalta Bolsheviks. He announced that it was his duty to inform "His Imperial Highness" that a delegation of German officers would soon come to call at Dulber. It took some moments for Alexander to realize that German troops were

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[5]Fedyshyn, Drive, p. 198.

[6]Ibid., pp. 199-200; 239-40.

occupying the Crimea and, consequently, were the unintentional rescuers of the Romanovs. Promptly at seven, the military delegation appeared. They immediately began to round up the Sevastopol' Bolshevik guards. The Romanovs, however, would not hear of their arrest or execution. Finally, the exasperated Germans agreed to free Zadorozhny and his men if the Romanovs would sign a written release. They left muttering: "diese fantastische Rüssen!"[7] A final bizarre touch was provided by Maria Fedorovna who refused to receive the Germans at all on the plea that Germany and Russia were still at war. Zadorozhny and his men, however, were allowed to bid her farewell. The Romanovs apparently conquered the class hatred which their jailers had originally displayed. Zadorozhny had exploited the rivalry between the two soviets in order to prolong the lives of his prisoners. This unique experience restored the faith of the Imperial Family in the genuine kindness of the Russian people.[8]

Nevertheless, the refugees from Bolshevik rule were deeply depressed by the German occupation. They looked upon the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk as a betrayal of Russia's honor. The Romanovs shared in this disgrace because the Germans had delivered them from the hands of their own people. The whole

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[7]Alexander, Once, pp. 312-3; Youssoupoff, Splendor, pp. 286-7.

[8]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 159.

occupation had a phantasmal quality about it, perhaps because it was so unexpected. As Vladimir Nabokov put it:

> the Germans came to Yalta on tiptoe, with diffident smiles, an army of gray apparitions easy for a patriot to ignore, and ignored it was, save for some rather ungrateful snickers at the half-hearted KEEP OFF THE GRASS signs that appeared on park lawns.[9]

The Germans were unprepared for such ingratitude from the liberated. The fact remained, however, that the Romanovs considered the German occupation an "incomprehensible phenomenon."[10]

The Germans also found themselves immersed in diplomatic complications. Tatar nationalists were agitating for an autonomous Crimea. As a concession to the Tatars, General Sulkevich was reluctantly granted permission to bring the remnants of his Moslem corps into the peninsula. The presence of Turkish troops further complicated matters.[11] Relations grew strained between the Ukraine and Germany as a result of counter claims to the Crimea. The Germans were particularly vexed that the Ukrainian dictator, General Skoropadsi, was attempting to annex the Crimea which they wished to retain for both strategic and economic reasons. Although Skoropadski called himself by the Cossack title "Hetman," his regime was

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[9]Vladimir Nabokov, Speak, Memory: An Autobiography Revisited (New York: Pyramid Books, 1973), p. 182.

[10]Princess Sofka Skipwith, Sofka: The Autobiography of a Princess (London: Hart-Davis, 1968), p. 46; Baron Peter Wrangel, Always with Honour, Makers of History Series (New York: Robert Speller & Sons, 1957), p. 45.

[11]Fedyshyn, Drive, p. 200.

based on German financial and military support.[12] At the same time, G. V. Chicherin, the Soviet Commissar for Foreign Affairs, was protesting that neither the Ukraine nor Germany had any right to claim the Crimea which continued to be Soviet territory.[13] Ludendorff and Secretary of Foreign Affairs, Richard von Kühlmann, finally agreed that an independent Tatar state should emerge in the Crimea, as long as it was subject to Germany's overall requirements.[14] Thus, the Sulkevich government was born amidst the loud protests of the Ukraine and Soviet Russia.

Sulkevich was a Lithuanian Tatar who had participated in the "liberation" of the Crimea from Bolshevik rule. His regime was entirely dependent on German military and economic support. He pursued a policy of returning the lands confiscated in the course of 1917 and early 1918 to their previous owners. For these reasons, the regime was quite unpopular.[15] The Tatar parliament, the Kurultai, was reopened on May 8 with the German commander in attendance.[16] Sulkevich and the

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[12] Ibid., p. 202.

[13] James Bunyan, ed., Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), p. 56

[14] Fedyshyn, Drive, pp. 201-2

[15] Anton Ivanovich Denikin, Ocherki russkoi smuty [Sketches of the Russian Turmoil], 5 vols. in 6 (Paris: J. Povolozky & Company, 1921-1926, vols. 3-4 bear the imprint, Berlin: Slovo, and vol 5, Berlin: Medny vsadnik), 3:42.

[16] Fedyshyn, Drive, p. 202.

Kurultai began to look to the Ottoman Empire for support. Negotiations were carried on with the Sublime Porte in order to effect separation from Russia and annexation within the Ottoman Empire. A strongly worded and romantic nationalistic appeal to this affect was delivered to the Germans by Crimean Foreign Minister Dzhafer Seidahmet.[17] Although the Germans were highly suspicious of any interference by the Turks, they were willing to take the proposal under consideration. Much debate followed between Ludendorff, the Foreign Office, and the diplomatic representatives of the Ukraine and the Crimea. Hetman Skoropadski enforced a Ukrainian economic blockade of the Crimean peninsula. Soon, however, both the Skoropadski and the Sulkevich regimes were in trouble. The Germans decided to evacuate the Black Sea region as soon as a treaty was concluded between the Ukraine and the U.S.S.R. Sulkevich persevered in his attempts to gain German backing for his Turkish scheme. He even sent Count Tatischev as his representative to Berlin. The Germans informed Tatischev that the outcome now depended exclusively upon negotiations between the Crimeans and Ukrainian Premier Lyzohub.[18]

The Romanovs continued to remain aloof from the Germans. With the growing concern of Ludendorff about the perils of Bolshevism and the unsatisfactory diplomatic relations with the Soviets which followed the Brest-Litovsk treaty, the

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[17] Denikin, Ocherki, 3:42-3. [18] Ibid.

Germans began to consider the possibility of supporting a conservative successor to the Soviet regime. In June 1918, the German military authorities favored such a move against the Soviets. The Commander of the Eastern Front, Erich von Ludendorff, sent a memorandum to Berlin advocating a resumption of hostilities.[19] The brightest hopes for such a cooperative venture between the Rightist forces in Russia and the German military were staked on Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich. The Germans approached the Grand Duke with such a proposition. He informed the German representatives that he found it impossible to collaborate with them in any way. He also refused their offer of a German bodyguard.[20] During this period, he declined to receive certain Russians who sought his active political participation.[21] In short, both Russians and Germans who hoped to see him as Nicholas III were sorely disappointed.[22]

During the German occupation, the Imperial Family naturally chose to depart from the close confines and unhappy

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[19]General Erich von Ludendorff, My War Memories, 1917-1918, 2 vols., 2:567-8; for the text of Ludendorff's memorandum see John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), pp. 335-6.

[20]Wrangel, Honour, p. 46.

[21]Denikin, Ocherki, 3:254.

[22]Sir Bernard Pares, My Russian Memoirs, 1914-1918, 2 vols. (New York: AMS Press, 1969), p. 571; Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 287.

memories of Castle Dulber. The Dowager Empress, Grand Duchess Olga, and Colonel Kulikovskii moved to Kharax, an estate belonging to Grand Duke George Mikhailovich, who was still in the north. Their new home was a small English-style chateau, quite near Yalta. Grand Duke Alexander, his wife, and six sons returned to Ai-Todor. Grand Dukes Nicholas and Peter Nikolaevich remained at Dulber with their families.

Despite the German occupation, the young people gave themselves up to the joys of the summer. Picnics, tennis parties, and dances were popular once again. A weekly magazine was edited by Olga Vasil'ev with the sixteen correspondents meeting each Sunday at Koreiz, the Iusupov's estate. There were thirteen issues in all.[23] Vladimir Nabokov remembers the social milieu as a strange combination of suntanned young lovelies, painters, actors, White army officers, and ballet dancers. Their beach parties always sported immense bonfires and an endless supply of Crimean Muscat Lunel. He described the atmosphere as "frivolous, decadent and somehow unreal." The writer also perceived a "brash, hectic gaiety" in the social life of the time. He saw this as an unsuccessful attempt to recreate the peacetime atmosphere by packing the cafés and overcrowding the theatres.[24]

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[23]Youssoupoff, Splendor, pp. 287-8; Vorres, Grand Duchess, pp. 159-60; The New York Times, 12 August 1918, p. 5.

[24]Nabokov, Speak, Memory, pp. 182-3.

For the older people, life grew quieter. The Empress Mother visited with her friend, Princess Olga Dolgorukii. The two old ladies sat in their chairs on the beach for hours at a time.[25] Maria Fedorovna's concern for her relatives in the north grew agonizing as reports reached her of new developments in Petrograd and Moscow. In March 1918, all members of the Romanov dynasty over sixteen years of age were ordered to register immediately with the notorious Cheka, the Extraordinary Commission for the Suppression of Counter-Revolution and Sabotage, headed by the fanatic, Felix Dzerzhinskii, himself descended from Polish nobility.[26] The relative calm which attended the German occupation made the Dowager Empress feel all the more acutely that she should have remained in Soviet Russia and faced the same persecution as the rest of her family. Rumors began to circulate that a wholesale slaughter of Romanovs had taken place. The Dowager Empress refused to believe reports of the murder of Nicholas II and his family in far away Ekaterinburg.[27]

To be sure, the murders were kept secret. Yet, Nicholas II and Alexandra Fedorovna, Tsarevich Alexis, the Grand Duchess Olga, Tatiana, Marie, and Anastasia were indeed

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[25] Wrangel, Honour, p. 46.

[26] The New York Times, 20 March 1918, p. 3.

[27] Vladimir Poliakoff, Mother Dear: The Empress Marie of Russia and Her Times (New York: D. Appleton Company, 1926), p. 320; Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 159.

murdered in the Ipatiev House at Ekaterinburg on 16 July 1918. Their bodies were later taken in a lorry to a secluded mine where they were sawed, chopped up, and cremated. Lye was then poured over the remains. Twenty-four hours later at Alapayevsk another party of Romanov prisoners was conveyed to an abandoned mine shaft. When Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich showed fight, he was shot dead. The rest of the victims were then seized and hurled into the open shaft. Some died rather quickly; others only after much suffering, as a result of starvation. These victims included Grand Duchess Elizabeth, the Tsarina's sister and Abess of an Orthodox convent, an attendant nun, the three sons of Grand Duke Constantine, John, Igor, and Constantine, and a son of Grand Duke Paul, Prince Vladimir Paley. In February, Maria Fedorovna's remaining son, Mikhail, had been arrested. He was shot at Perm'in June 1918. Grand Duke Paul, the Tsar's uncle, was shot in Petrograd on 30 January 1919, the day which had been appointed for his release from prison. The two surviving brothers of Grand Duke Alexander, Nicholas and George, were also shot at this time, along with Dimitrii Pavlovich, the war hero who participated in Rasputin's murder.[28] The Dowager Empress never gave credence to these deaths. She considered them part of the Bolshevik propaganda. By 1919, however, most of her family were dead.

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[28]Grand Duchess Marie, Education of a Princess: A Memoir, trans. and ed. Russell Lord (New York: Halycon House, 1930), p. 291.

The aristocracy as a whole had little better grasp of the situation than Maria Fedorovna. They saw Bolshevik power as a transient stage. They genuinely believed, as the Grand Duchess Olga wrote, that "they would return to their palaces and live down the nightmare."[29] In Petrograd, the old ruling class lived out a hollow imitation of their former existence. Since all agreed that the nature of Bolshevik power was tenuous, most were apathetic about organizing any viable opposition to the regime. Thus, the arbitrary arrests continued and the requisitions increased.[30] Many took courage in the belief that such an uncivilized regime would not be tolerated by the European powers. When Prince Iurii Trubetskoi remarked that the Bolshevik regime might last as long as ten years, his contemporaries scoffed.[31] The Cheka continued its work. Little old Madame Naryshkin, who had so plaintively told Ambassador Paléologue that she feared the glorious days of the Empire were over, was loaded on a cart and driven off to prison. Over eighty, she cheated the hangman by having a heart attack on the way to her execution.[32]

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[29]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 160.

[30]Richard Luckett, The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement in the Russian Civil War (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), pp. 130-1.

[31]Princess Peter Wolkonsky, The Way of Bitterness: Soviet Russia, 1920 (London: Methuen & Company, 1931), p. 7.

[32]Prince Sergei Mikhailovich Volkonskii, My Reminiscences, 2 vols. (London: Hutchinson & Company, 1925), 2:202-3.

Many who had hailed the first Russian Revolution were now frantically trying to escape the second one. A noteworthy example of historical irony exists in the fact that Madame Breshkovskaia, the "little grandmother of the Russian Revolution," fled to Siberia at the same time as Baroness Sophie Buxhoeveden, Empress Alexandra's Lady-in-Waiting. Both revolutionary and aristocrat were fleeing from the persecution of the Bolshevik government.[33] The Red Terror had set in. Its death toll was eventually immense: all the members of the Imperial Family who did not leave Russia; 1,560 members of the clergy; 33,595 teachers, lawyers, and members of the law courts; 16,367 university professors and students; and 65,878 members of the gentry and nobility.[34]

Such opposition as appeared to the Bolshevik regime was poorly organized and uncoordinated. This was especially true of the anti-Bolshevik organizations which attempted to operate within Soviet boundaries. The White movement got its start in the disorganized regions of Russia where ethnic groups were attempting to pull away from the old multinational Russian state and in the occupied areas where the Germans or, later, the Allies maintained troops. However,

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[33]Baroness Sophie Buxhoeveden, Left Behind: Fourteen Months in Siberia During the Revolution, December 1917-February 1919 (London: Longmans, Green & Company, 1929), p. 121.

[34]Baron Alexander Feliksovich Meyendorff, The Background of the Russian Revolution (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1928), pp. 173-4.

there were several anti-Bolshevik organizations formed in the heart of Russia. The most prominent were the Moscow Center (also known as the National Center and the Right Center), and the Union of Rebirth. The Moscow Center was formed in the Fall of 1917. Many of its members fled to Kiev in the winter of 1917, following the Bolshevik Revolution. This group was composed of non-socialists, largely of the Kadet Party. Their leader was the historian Paul Miliukov. The Moscow Center drew its strength from the urban bourgeoisie.[35] The Union of Rebirth favored the establishment of an all-Russian government with a dictatorship and a three-man directory. In this regard, they were in agreement with the Moscow Center. However, as to the position of "generalissimo," the Center favored General Alekseev and the Union of Rebirth was unwilling to specify a candidate. Both sides attempted to determine the popular choice by sending representatives to other regions of Russia.[36] Ambassador Francis notified the U.S. State Department of the existence of the Moscow Center in June 1918. He noted that the goals of the group were the eventual restoration of a limited monarchy and the reestablishment of law and order.[37] It was the intention of

[35]Dimitry V. Lehovich, White against Red: The Life of General Anton Denikin (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974), p. 225.

[36]Denikin, Ocherki, 3:254.

[37]U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Supplement, Russia, 1918, 3 vols., 1:558-61.

the Center to provide a transitional government between the Bolshevik dictatorship and a revitalized all-Russian state based upon "organic reforms."[38] This goal was destined to be frustrated by the basic policy enunciated by the Volunteer Army of Generals Alekseev and Denikin.

The so-called Volunteer Army had its beginning in late 1917 with the anit-Bolshevik generals who had participated in the Kornilov affair. Alekseev, Kornilov, and Denikin managed to make their way into Cossack territory after escaping from prison. Many officers and cadets later joined them. Sizeable elements of the Don and Kuban Cossack hosts provided further support. Most of the officers were monarchists. They urged Denikin to adopt a monarchist slogan. The general, however, was of a different mind. He felt that adopting a policy of restoration would be disastrous to any movement attempting to unseat the Bolshevik regime. The people, he argued, should be allowed to choose their own form of government once the White forces were victorious. He believed it was far more important to maintain a policy of an indivisible great-Russian state. He, therefore, emphatically opposed the dismemberment and disintegration of the former Russian Empire.[39] This position made Denikin unpopular with

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[38]Denikin, Ocherki, 3:253-4.

[39]Anton Ivanovich Denikin, The White Army, trans. Catherine Zvegintzov (New York: Academic International Press, 1973), p. 156.

both republicans and monarchists. As he wrote to General N. M. Tikhmenev: "If I raise the republican flag, I will lose half of the Volunteers and if I raise the monarchist flag--the other half will leave me. In the meantime the primary task is to save Russia."[40] It is conceivable that this moderate policy contributed to the downfall of the White forces in the Russian Civil War. Had they declared themselves for a monarchist regime and wisely chosen a reputable candidate, they might have garnered considerable support.

Reliance on the convening of a future Constituent Assembly put the Whites under a severe ideological disability. By contrast, the Bolsheviks, who consistently declared the White forces to be in favor of a restoration of the monarchy anyway, possessed the very powerful appeal of the Marxist dialectic and the easily grapsed concept of class struggle.[41]

When the Bolsheviks captured Admiral Alexander Kolchak, his testimony, given during the trial for treason which resulted in his execution, reveals this deep rooted weakness of the White movement. When asked what form of government he thought Russia would have adopted after the Constituent Assembly he replied:

> It was my opinion at the time of the Tsar's overthrow that the monarchy would probably be

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[40] Lehovich, Denikin, p. 215.

[41] Luckett, White Generals, p. 3-8.

> clear to me that it was impossible to restore the former monarchy, and that in our time people no longer choose a new dynasty. In my conviction this was a closed question, and I thought that, probably, some kind of republican form of government would be established, and I considered a republican form of government corresponding to the needs of the country.[42]

In the atmosphere of the Russian Revolution and the attendant Civil War, such a position was both unwise and untenable. It offered no concrete and attractive alternatives to the Bolshevik rule and seemed to herald only a continuation of turmoil and uncertainty. The Communist regime at least created an orderly society.

The White forces made every attempt to dissociate themselves from the Romanovs. Prince Iusupov and three of Grand Duke Alexander's sons, Andrew, Theordore, and Nikita, addressed a joint letter to General Denikin after they learned of the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk. They offered themselves as volunteers. Denikin replied that they were undesirable for political reasons.[43] Later on, in early 1919, General Denikin refused to see Grand Duchess Olga. He sent a message to inform her that she was persona non grata in Rostov, the town where he was located.[44]

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[42]Elena Varneck and Harold Fisher, eds., The Testimony of Admiral Kolchak and other Siberian Materials, trans. Elena Varneck (Stanford: Hoover Library Publications, 1935), p. 49.

[43]Youssoupoff, Splendor, p. 297.

[44]Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 162.

Despite Denikin's policy, a large monarchist element in the Volunteer Army began to clamor for the active participation of Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich. A movement got under way in late May 1918 when the Volunteers were located in Don Cossack territory. Two officers appeared in Denikin's camp representing a secret organization which supported Nicholas Nikolaevich as supreme commander. Although they had no proof of the Grand Duke's cooperation or endorsement, they began signing up officers and issuing cardboard emblems with numbers and the initials of the Grand Duke. The officers told the men who enrolled that they would be expected to rally to the call as soon as word was given. Eventually, General Denikin learned of their presence and sent for them. They had departed, however, for Colonel Drozdovskii's division, located nearby. When queried, the Colonel reported that the officers had decamped for Rostov. Denikin was disturbed by this mysterious recruitment. However, since he was unable to locate the ringleaders of the project, he turned his attention to other, more pressing matters.[45]

In the summer of 1918, the Volunteer Army participated in the formation of a government for the Kuban region. Heated discussions ensued. The more conservative elements proposed Grand Duke Nicholas for the post of Kuban dictator. Denikin, however, vigorously opposed his candidacy. He

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[45]Denikin, Ocherki, 4:254.

pointed out that the Cossacks were likely to interpret this as a move to restore the monarchy which the majority of the Coassack people thoroughly detested. The cooperation of the Kuban Cossacks had been obtained with the greatest difficulty. He reminded his listeners that he had promised the Kuban Cossacks considerable autonomy.[46]

Later in the summer of 1918, General Denikin received a letter from General Alekseev concerning a conversation which he had held with Prince P. M. Volkonskii. The Prince, a close associate of Grand Duke Nicholas, claimed that the Grand Duke now bitterly regretted the role he had played in the downfall of the monarchy. Volkonskii believed that participation in the White movement could expiate his crushing sense of guilt. He therefore strongly urged the leaders of the Volunteer Army to approach the Grand Duke along these lines. General Alekseev was greatly agitated at the very idea of making such an overture.[47] There the matter stood until August when Prince Volkonskii held further talks with Generals Denikin and Alekseev. He intimated that the Grand Duke resented not having been invited to command the Volunteer Army, as it appeared to be the wish of the whole army. As a further incentive, Volkonskii warned the generals that

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[46]Luckett, White Generals, p. 187; Denikin, White Army, p. 189.

[47]Denikin, Ocherki, 4:254.

Nicholas Nikolaevich was unsafe in the Crimea. Actually, Prince Volkonskii's overtures did not originate with the Grand Duke at all but were the result of his own personal initiatives. General Alekseev, however, had been somewhat softened by his plea. Although the extent of Volkonskii's authorization from Alekseev is unclear, he did take the opportunity to invite the Grand Duke to join the White forces. After due reflection, the aging warrior declined. In October 1918, he stated this policy: he would take part in a campaign only if it were the manifest desire of the whole people and, then, only temporarily until there was "the reestablishment within Russia of elementary order and peace and the people will be in a position to decide its [the government's] structure themselves."[48]

The policy of the Germans considerably complicated the plight of those who were interested in adopting some sort of monarchist position. In the summer of 1918, they made an intensive effort to gain control of the monarchist military forces. The German Consul General in the Ukraine contacted the monarchist leaders, Prince Grigorii and Nikolai Laikhtenbergskii.[49] On 9 June 1918 Ludendorff sent a long memorandum to the Imperial Chancellor advocating cooperation with the anti-Bolshevik forces, both monarchist and republican. The Germans sought the opinions of Professor Miliukov in the

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[48] Ibid., p. 255. [49] Fedyshyn, Drive, pp. 242-3.

Ukraine and the Right Center in Moscow. Miliukov and General Hoffman, Chief-of-Staff of the Army Command East, even discussed possible candidates for a restored monarchy.[50] Naturally, Grand Duke Nicholas was excluded because of his refusal to cooperate with the Germans.

The Astrakhan Army and the Southern Army were organized as rallying points for the restorationists. Its members denounced Denikin as a traitor to the tsar and the monarchy.[51] The Southern Army was the most serious of these ventures. Recruiting was held in Kiev, supervised by Count A. Bobrinskii. The commander was General N. I. Ivanov, a noted tsarist military leader. Count Fedor Keller, another former tsarist general, also supported the movement. These armies lacked popular enthusiasm and had to look to the Germans for much of their material support.[52] The Germans sometimes interfered with recruitment for the Volunteer Army. In the Crimea, as well as the Ukraine, the agents of the Whites were formally forbidden to carry on their work. Those who refused to conform to this dictum were deported without explanation.[53]

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[50]Wheeler-Bennett, Brest-Litovsk, pp. 335-6.

[51]Lehovich, Denikin, p. 250.

[52]Fedyshyn, Drive, pp. 246-7.

[53]Prince P. M. Volkonskii, The Volunteer Army of Alexeiev and Denikin: A Short Historical Sketch of the Army from its Origin to November 1/14, 1918 (London: Russian Liberation Committee, 1919), p. 25.

This policy was quite difficult to enforce, however, and the sympathies of the local authorities were often with the Volunteers.

Alarming news reached General Alekseev in September 1918. The story ran that Grand Duke Nicholas had agreed to become Commander-in-Chief of the Southern and Astrakhan Armies. Alekseev was so concerned that he composed a long letter to the Grand Duke warning him not to accept the command. He reminded Nicholas that the Germans had created these monarchist armies for their own purposes. Indeed, when Prince Tunduntov of the Astrakhan Army sent a telegram to Alekseev stating his desire to join forces with the Volunteers as "true, devoted sons of unified Russia," the Germans promptly cutoff all their support. Therefore, the Grand Duke could easily see that the Southern Army was entirely subservient to the Germans. His letter concluded with the following statement:

> The statesmen of Kiev and the Southern Army dream of asking Your Imperial Highness to become the chief of these new formations. I report to you with full frankness of the possible situation of a fratricidal war in which you could not take part.

Finally, Alekseev pleaded for the Grand Duke's cooperation in turning back the two enemies of all Russians, Germany and Bolshevism. The General's anxiety about Grand Duke Nicholas' future activities was needless. He had no intention of

leading such an army. His reply to General Alekseev ended with the reassurance: "Bud'te pokoiny" [be calm].[54]

In the Crimea, the Sulkevich government was approaching its end. Germany was preparing to withdraw all her troops from the area. Aware of the possibility of the return of Bolshevism to the Crimea, the Danish government made inquiries about the future residence of Maria Fedorovna, a member of the Danish royal family. Foreign Secretary von Kühlmann replied that Germany had not refused the Empress or her family any request to emigrate. Hence, she remained in the Crimea of her own volition.[55] The Dowager Empress had no desire to leave her adopted homeland. She lived an increasingly restricted life. At her little court, the main event was the family dinner on Sunday. On week days, the old lady could often be found sitting alone on the balcony, lost in her memories.[56]

The Germans ordered the withdrawal of their forces from the Crimea and the Taurida on 12 November 1918. At this time, General Kosch informed the Sulkevich government that it could no longer depend on German support.[57] As the German troops rumbled along the roads of the Crimean peninsula, an ominous

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[54]Denikin, Ocherki, 3:255-6.

[55]The New York Times, 29 July 1918, p. 3.

[56]Ibid., 12 August 1918, p. 5.

[57]Denikin, Ocherki, 3:43.

stillness settled over the land. The Romanovs pondered over what fate might next befall them.[58]

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[58]Skipwith, Sofka, pp. 46-7

CHAPTER VI

CIVIL WAR, INTERVENTION AND EVACUATION

> What impressed me most was the atmosphere of unreality in which we were living.
>
> Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky

The Crimean government which replaced the Sulkevich regime was headed by Solomon S. Krym, a member of the Jewish Karaite sect. The Karaim lived near Evpatoria. Although they were a Turkic-speaking people, they belonged to the Jewish faith. Krym was fundamentally conservative and strongly in favor of a restoration of great Russia. The new government immediately established ties with the Allies and the leader of the Volunteer Army, General Denikin.[1] One of the first proclamations of the Krym government was a pledge "to promote with all its strength the unification of dismembered Russia."[2] The successor of Sulkevich was painfully aware of the vulnerability of the Crimea following the

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[1]Richard Pipes, The Formation of the Soviet Union: Communism and Nationalism, 1917-1923, rev. ed. (New York: Atheneum, 1968), p. 187; James Bunyan, ed., Intervention, Civil War, and Communism in Russia, April-December 1918: Documents and Materials (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1936), p. 58.

[2]Anton Ivanovich Denikin, Ocherki russkoi smuty [Sketches of the Russian Turmoil], 5 vols. in 6 (Paris: J. Povolozky & Company, 1921-1926, vols. 3-4 bear the imprint, Berlin: Slovo, and vol. 5, Berlin: Medny vsadnik), 3:43.

evacuation of German troops. The menace of invasion by the Red Army could only be offset by a substantial number of White military units based within the Crimean Peninsula. The inhabitants of the Crimea were encouraged by the optimism of the White forces in the winter of 1918. All signs seemed to point to an upswing in the fortunes of the anti-Bolsheviks.

The Whites expected that the military and economic blockade of Soviet Russia would soon extend to active Allied intervention. The Allies, after all, owed an immense debt to the Russian people for their participation in the World War. How could they turn away in their hour of need? Furthermore, it was clearly in the interest of the major European powers to contain the Bolshevik menace with its international proletarianism and militant revolutionary declarations.[3] Finally, the West was now aware of the apalling spectacle of the Red Terror. Reports of the summary execution and torture of thousands had been circulated from capital to capital by reputable diplomatic sources. The Americans were considering the enlistment of neutral nations in a forceful protest against this barbarism. Their plan included the denial of asylum to members of the Bolshevik government and a policy of strict accountability for the

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[3]Anton Ivanovich Denikin, The White Army, trans. Catherine Zvegintzov (New York: Academic International Press, 1973), p. 215.

continuation of the Red Terror.[4] Thus, the anti-Bolshevik forces expected to witness Lenin's downfall and the consequent establishment of a moderate Russian regime.

The Whites immediately experienced problems with the mixed population of the Crimea. To begin with, they were unable to adequately garrison the peninsula. Units of the Volunteer Army moved into the Crimea in November 1918, disembarking at Kerch and Yalta. However, the force, numbering about five thousand men, proved unable to maintain order. The peninsula was swarming with insurgents and bandits. The raw recruits which the Whites received from the native population proved to be irresponsible and ineffectual.[5] Furthermore, General Denikin's makeshift political promises failed to convince the peasantry that he did not wish to restore the old order.[6] Denikin, nevertheless, remained hopeful of a White victory over the Bolsheviks.

In mid-November 1918, Admiral Kolchak was proclaimed Supreme Ruler of Russia. With headquarters in Omsk, the Admiral ruled considerable portions of Siberia. Kolchak's armies proceeded to occupy Perm' and Ufa while, to the south,

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[4]Recommendation of Consul Poole from Moscow to Secretary of State Robert Lansing, U. S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Supplement, Russia, 1918, 3 vols., 1:681-2.

[5]Dimitry V. Lehovich, White against Red: The Life of General Anton Denikin (New York: W. W. Norton & Company, 1974), p. 264.

[6]Bunyan, Intervention, p. 58.

Denikin defeated the Bolsheviks in the Don and Kuban regions. These victories and the increasing concern of the Allies over the growing contagion of Bolshevism prompted the Yassy Conference in Rumania.

At Yassy, the anti-Bolshevik forces met with Allied envoys and attempted to formulate a program which would restore order in Russia. The Whites proposed two candidates for the post of military dictator: Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich and General Denikin. Heated discussions developed concerning the most suitable choice. After prolonged debate, Denikin was given the mantle of authority.[7] In December 1918, Allied diplomats at Yassy gave the French Vice-Consul at Kiev, Emile Henno, plenipotentiary powers until an Allied landing could be accomplished.[8]

The conference at Yassy did not end the division within the White movement. The White Army continued to experience difficulties between monarchist and republican factions. Furthermore, there now existed two all-Russian leaders, Admiral Kolchak and General Denikin. As for Grand Duke Nicholas, no evidence has been produced to establish his willingness to proceed according to the plans of the rightist

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[7]Louis Fischer, The Soviet in World Affairs: A History of the Relations Between the Soviet World and the Rest of the World, 1917-1920, 2 vols. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1951), 1:153.

[8]Arthur E. Adams, Bolsheviks in the Ukraine, 1918-1919 (New Haven & London: Yale University Press, 1963), pp. 95-6.

elements within the White movement. After all, it was not until the summer of 1918 that Kolchak was accepted as supreme commander of the White Russian forces.

In mid-December 1918, the Ukrainian regime of Hetman Skoropadski collapsed. Desperate appeals were made to the Allies to hasten to the scene as the Bolsheviks advanced in the wake of this collapse.[9] A People's Republic was proclaimed in the Ukraine with Simon Petlyura at its head. Collaborating with the Red Army, the forces of the new Ukrainian state moved towards the Crimea. The French, according to the agreement reached at Yassy, rushed forces to Odessa to head off the offensive.

The history of the French intervention in south Russia falls somewhere between farce and tragedy. The Whites recall it as one of the bitterest experiences of the entire Civil War.[10] In order to understand the basis upon which the French predicated their policy in Russia, it is necessary to go back to an agreement which antedates the Yassy Conference. A secret treaty was contracted between Lord Milner and Georges Clemenceau at Paris in December 1917. Anticipating

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[9]John W. Wheeler-Bennett, Brest Litovsk: The Forgotten Peace, March 1918 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1966), p. 325; Bunyan, Intervention, p. 59.

[10]Richard Luckett, The White Generals: An Account of the White Movement in the Russian Civil War (New York: The Viking Press, 1971), p. 195; Prince Andrei Lobanov-Rostovsky, The Grinding Mill: Reminiscences of War and Revolution in Russia, 1913-1920 (New York: Macmillan & Company, 1935), pp. 320-4.

future activity within the territory of the old Russian Empire, the agreement defined spheres of political and economic interest for each of the participants. The British were allotted the Cossack territories, the Caucasus, Armenia, Georgia, and Kurdestan; while the French zone encompassed Bessarabia, the Ukraine, and the Crimea.[11] Thus, from the beginning, the French seem to have had clandestine motives, hence, their confusing and sometimes contradictory efforts in South Russia and the Crimea. Exploitation alternated with profligate outlays of money and munitions, usually to the wrong persons in the wrong places at the wrong times. The French Black Sea expedition disembarked at Odessa in November 1918. It included a motley array of 6,000 Frenchmen, 2,000 Greeks, and 4,000 Poles, plus several warships. All these forces were under the command of General Franchot d'Esperey, Allied Commander-in-Chief of the Eastern Front.[12] General d'Esperey was personally opposed to the White movement his troops had been sent to support. This dislike of the anti-Bolshevik military forces was shared by the field commander, General Phillippe d'Anselme, who proved to be the bane of Denikin's existence. Not only did d'Esperey and d'Anselme

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[11]Robert D. Warth, The Allies and the Russian Revolution: from the Fall of the Monarchy to the Peace of Brest-Litovsk (Durham, North Carolina: Duke University Press, 1954), p. 190.

[12]Paul Marie de La Gorce, The French Army: A Military Political History, trans. Kenneth Douglas (New York: G. Braziller, 1963), p. 201.

refuse many requests for aid and assistance by the Whites, they decided to begin negotiations with the Directory government toward the recognition of an independent Ukraine. This was done in open defiance of Denikin's great Russian policy.[13]

At the beginning of 1919, when General Denikin wished to transfer his headquarters to the Crimea, General d'Esperey wired the following to the head of the French military mission in Ekaterinodar, where White headquarters were located at the time.

> Have received your communication regarding proposed transfer of General Denikin's headquarters. I consider that General Denikin's place is with the Volunteer army and not in Sebastopol where the French troops, which he does not command, are stationed.[14]

The short-sighted nature of French policy in Russia was disastrous for the Whites. Deterioration in the morale of the French troops, especially the sailors, made the presence of the French quite a burden to the White Army. Officers feared to order their own men into action. The French soldiers were eager to be sent home.

On the other hand, the British sailors who arrived in the Crimea in late 1918 were eager confederates of the White forces. Their cooperation was highly praised by Denikin and Wrangel. Although active elsewhere in south Russia, most of the British naval forces withdrew from Crimean ports shortly

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[13]Luckett, White Generals, p. 256.

[14]Lehovich, Denikin, p. 264.

after they arrived.[15] This was in accordance with the secret agreement with the French referred to earlier.

French troops in Sevastopol' were commanded by a Colonel Rué, who infuriated the Whites by refusing to take any steps to stop Bolshevik propaganda and by releasing the agitators who had already been arrested by order of the Russian command.[16] Russians who had to work with the French military authorities in the Crimea, such as Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky, noted that they behaved as if they were in conquered territory.[17]

In the winter of 1918, Grand Duke Alexander was most anxious to go to Paris in order to see the heads of the delegations to the Versailles Peace Conference. He wished to impress upon them the necessity of further Allied assistance to the Whites in the Russian Civil War. Admiral Calthorpe sent a British destroyer to Yalta to transport him to France. They set sail at Christmas time (by the Gregorian calendar).[18] Unfortunately, access to the so-called Big Four was denied the Grand Duke. He was refused an audience by both President Wilson and Secretary of State Robert Lansing.

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[15]Princess Sofka Skipwith (née Dolgoroukii), Sofka: The Autobiography of a Princess, pp. 47-8; Lobanov-Rostovsky, Grinding Mill, pp. 319-20.

[16]Denikin, White Army, p. 247.

[17]Lobanov-Rostovsky, Grinding Mill, p. 247.

[18]Grand Duke Alexander, Once a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1932), p. 314.

Nor were the heads of the other Allied governments interested in hearing his plea. Lord Derby, an old friend of the Grand Duke had the sad task of informing Alexander that His Majesty's Government considered it politically inexpedient to grant him the English visa which he had requested. He was thus denied access to Dowager Queen Alexandra and other prominent relatives. Despite the enormous sacrifices which the Russian nation made during the course of World War I, she had no voice in the peace conference and was even considered fair game for colonial enterprises by certain elements in the Allied community of nations.[19]

Although the statesmen of the post-war era turned a deaf ear to the Romanovs, many important figures from the old regime were now in the Crimea. Among them were Alexander Krivoshein, former Minister of Agriculture, and A. F. Trepov, former Prince Minister, both victims of Alexandra Fedorovna's dislike and Rasputin's opposition.[20] Trepov negotiated with Baron Mannerheim of Finland about the possibility of a restored Russian monarchy with Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich as Tsar.[21] Such fly-by-night schemes were more credible in the atmosphere of the Crimea than in Paris or London. The

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[19]Grand Duke Alexander, Always a Grand Duke (Garden City, New York: Garden City Publishing Company, 1933), pp. 32-50.

[20]The Times (London), 2 November 1918, p. 5.

[21]U.S. Department of State, Foreign Relations, Supplement, Russia, 1918, 2:859.

Finns managed to beat off the Reds without intimately involving themselves in the White cause. Baron Mannerheim, however, personally sympathized with a Romanov restoration.

Shortly after Grand Duke Alexander's departure, Grand Duchess Olga and Colonel Kulikovskii decided to leave for the Caucasus. The Dowager Empress had never really accepted Olga's second husband. Although the move appeared safe, since Baron Wrangel had beaten back the Reds in that area, Olga's announcement horrified her mother. The Dowager Empress absolutely forbade Olga to leave the Crimea. Olga reminded her mother that she now had her own family to consider. Moreover, Grand Duchess Xenia and her children were remaining to provide the beloved matriarch with companionship and care. The Dowager Empress coldly replied that this was all Kulikovskii's fault and she would never forgive him for it. The fact that Olga was once again pregnant made this emotional scene all the more painful. Thus departed Grand Duchess Olga and her family.[22]

Maria Fedorovna's mind was set against leaving her adopted country. She refused to yield to the barbarous enemy who persecuted her family and desecrated all that was sacred to the Russian soul. Her determination was soon put to the test. In February 1919, King Ferdinand invited the Dowager

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[22]Ian Vorres, The Last Grand Duchess (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1964), p. 161.

Empress to come to Rumania. Strongly supported by Maria Fedorovna's sister, Dowager Queen Alexandra, the Rumanian monarch dispatched his invitation through Colonel J. W. Boyle, formerly of the Canadian militia. A suitable ship was provided for the journey. The Dowager Empress would hear nothing of it. She absolutely refused to leave Russia and sent back only her thanks and reassurances that all would be well in God's time.[23]

By mortal standards, however, time was running out. During this period, Prince Lobanov-Rostovsky was assigned by the White command to serve as a liaison between the French and the Volunteer Army. In that capacity, he became intimately familiar with the conditions in Sevastopol'. Throughout early 1919 he grew more and more pessimistic about the future of the Crimea. The social life of the officers and the prominent refugees was scarcely curtailed by rapidly deteriorating military conditions. Lobanov-Rostovsky was constantly being pressed to attend a party, lecture, or concert at the Naval Officers Club or some other prestigious institution. White officers mingled with foreign military representatives in full dress uniform. Graceful and magnificently gowned ladies clung to their arms. Perhaps, the glittering social whirl was a noble gesture of defiance. Perhaps, it was merely obedience to the Cavalier poet's

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[23] The New York Times, 4 February 1919, p. 3.

injunction "carpe diem." It impressed the hard-nosed Lobanov-Rostovsky as "the afterglow of a dead era."[24]

The political and military position of the White forces in southern Russia was growing more desperate from week to week. The domestic agrarian policy of the White government was deeply resented by the rural population. The influence of the landed gentry upon the Krym administration was, nevertheless, sufficiently powerful to forestall any meaningful redistribution of landed property. The dissatisfied were urged to patiently wait until the Constituent Assembly would be convened and the matter decided in accordance with the will of the populace. The peasants were more than sceptical, having no reason to believe that the landlord's voice would not prevail over theirs as it had in the past. Meanwhile, those who had seized the land became leaseholders from the former landowners.[25] The failure to establish a land policy with popular credibility was of sufficient magnitude to influence the outcome of the Civil War. After all, the ordinary Russian peasant could not understand theoretical differences between the Whites and the Reds--what mattered to him was land. Hence, both sides had to resort to terrorism in order to renew their ranks as the Civil War continued. This was a struggle waged by minorities; first and foremost, the

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[24]Lobanov-Rostovsky, Grinding Mill, pp. 319-24.

[25]Denikin, White Army, p. 299.

literate minority who could be swayed by principles and theories. The long-range republicanism and democracy which the Whites held out as their goal was too vague and nebulous to inspire peasant support. Moreover, the economic ruin of the country necessitated a forceful and single-minded reorganization which could not be deferred.[26]

The Reds renewed their offensive in February 1919. As they advanced through the Ukraine towards the Crimea, conditions among the Allied troops stationed in the peninsula grew critical. The French fleet based at Sevastopol' mutinied. Led by André Marty, they tore off the red pompoms from their berets and pinned them to their chests. They waved Red banners and sang the "Internationale" as they marched along the streets. The urban proletariat of Sevastopol' was pro-Bolshevik and the French mutiny stirred their hopes for liberation. The Greek soldiers who also occupied the city had to keep the French in check and disperse any dangerous political gathering. Decision was soon taken by the French to reduce the occupied perimeter. Accordingly, they withdrew from Nikolaev, abandoning enormous amounts of war materials to the Reds.[27]

By the beginning of March 1919, the Crimean front was cut in two: part of the White troops withdrew to the Caucasian

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[26]Luckett, White Generals, p. 179.

[27]La Gorce, French Army, p. 202; Lehovich, Denikin, p. 264.

Volunteer Army and the remainder headed for the Crimean Peninsula. The Whites forced local conscripts to fight but the rate of desertion remained high and there were no properly trained reinforcements available. Having reached the Crimea, the White army had its back to the sea.[28] On April 3, the French informed the White command of their decision to abandon Odessa, both a storehouse for military equipment and one of the leading cities of south Russia. Thousands of White soldiers were in the area and many of their families resided in this port city. Seventy-two hours notice was given prior to the French evacuation. Panic ensued and terror gripped the populace. The White army demanded a longer period in which to evacuate the city. Having been refused this, they pressed the French for assistance in transporting the troops across the water to the Crimean Peninsula. This request, too, was denied. Disaster inevitably followed.[29]

Within the Crimea an atmosphere of tension and fear descended upon the inhabitants. In Sevastopol', the nights were pierced by the sound of sporadic firing. Bolshevik sympathisers began to harass police and military authorities. Food was rapidly becoming scarce. Yet, each day brought an endless stream of weary and once-prosperous refugees. The White soldiers maintained a fatalistic attitude toward the

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[28]Denikin, White Army, p. 247.

[29]Luckett, White Generals, p. 202; Lehovich, Denikin, p. 264.

coming struggle: better to fight and die on native soil than to lead a wretched life as men without a country.[30] The extreme gravity of the situation in the Crimea prompted the British Senior Naval Officer at Sevastopol', Captain Bertram S. Thesiger, to offer the Dowager Empress asylum in England. But Maria Fedorovna demurred, asserting that her presence had a calming effect on the populace and the troops. She could not abandon her people to the tender mercies of the Bolsheviks while she serenely sailed off to her sister in Britain.[31] Besides, the news that Kolchak's army was 110 miles from Samara and only 85 from Kazan was most heartening. By June, Denikin and the Don Cossacks were expected to meet Kolchak's troops and proceed to close in on the Reds. Reports reaching Dowager Queen Alexandra were far less optimistic. She decided to exercise her influence with King George V in order to dispatch a British officer to the Crimea with a formal request that Maria Fedorovna come to England. She obtained King George's consent. Captain C. D. Johnson was sent to the Crimea on the H.M.S. Marlborough. The ship arrived in Sevastopol' in late March 1919. Fortunately, one of the officers was the man who later became Vice-Admiral Sir Francis Pridham, for he left an account of the British

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[30]Vice-Admiral Sir Francis Pridham, Close of a Dynasty (London: Allen Wingate, 1956), pp. 54-7.

[31]Ibid., p. 50; Vorres, Grand Duchess, p. 161.

mission to the Crimea which provides a reliable and fairly detailed source on the evacuation of the Romanovs from Russia.

Sir Francis was on board when the first Romanov visited the British ship. They had just arrived at Sevastopol'. The visitor was Grand Duke Boris Vladimirovich, the same individual whose dissolute personal life is so frequently cited as the example _par excellence_ of the decadence of the Romanov dynasty. The harrowing years of revolution and civil war had scarcely altered his urbane charm. The aura of the _grand seigneur_ had survived the destruction of Imperial Russia. Accompanied by his pretty traveling companion, the Grand Duke condescended to take tea in the officer's mess. He proceeded to revile the French for their duplicity. Although his suit appeared the worse for wear, he confidently discoursed to the British officers on the nature of the Bolshevik menace. Eventually, he conveyed his desire to board the _H.M.S. Marlborough_ and return to England. The British were forced to inform him that the decision as to who would accompany the Dowager Empress rested entirely in the hands of Her Imperial Highness. Two days later, Boris and his entourage departed the Crimea on a French destroyer. Perhaps Grand Duke Boris preferred the duplicity of the French to the reproaches of Maria Fedorovna.[32]

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[32]Pridham, _Close_, pp. 54-5.

On April 7, the H.M.S. Marlborough made the short voyage from Sevastopol' to Yalta, passing the tortuous and immense cliffs of Balaclava Bay. Before reaching their destination, they sighted Tchaire, the turreted estate of Grand Duke Nicholas. The Empress had requested that the Marlborough avoid the pier at Yalta and weigh anchor at a small cove near the estate of Kharax.[33] This was the jetty at Mishor, the estate of the Dolgorukiis. Princess Sofka remembered the strange delicacies, like Quaker Oats and corned beef, which began to appear at table. Her governess, Miss King, delightedly poured tea for her fellow countrymen. However, the news reached Mishor that the old Empress still refused to go.[34]

The letter from Queen Alexandra weighed heavily upon the mind of Maria Fedorovna. It was clear that she alone bore the responsibility for the life or death of a good two-thirds of the surviving Romanovs. But, as she tried to decide what would be the honorable thing to do, one thought particularly vexed her: what would become of the faithful friends who had joined her in the Crimea? Further negotiations were undertaken at the anxious insistence of all interested parties. With understandable reluctance, the Captain of the H.M.S. Marlborough, whose instructions had been rather vague in the first place, agreed to evacuate not only the Empress

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[33] Ibid., pp. 60-1. [34] Skipwith, Sofka, pp. 48-9.

and her family but a fairly large number of persons who had no claim to the original invitation by the British Monarch. The ship would dock at Constantinople where these additional refugees would have to fend for themselves.

The news spread like wildfire and vast amounts of luggage were packed and labeled. As no plans had been made for such a large group, all the officer's cabins had to be vacated. Two beds were placed in each cabin. Maria Fedorovna was assigned the captain's quarters. The cook was in despair--not only would he have to feed more than a dozen Romanovs, he was expected to provide sustenance for a hoard of hangers-on. Sir Francis Pridham engineered the provisions and accomodations. He was assisted by the striking daughter of Grand Duke Peter Nikolaevich, Princess Marina. She helped him sort the tons of luggage and shepherded the Russian servants who arrived on board dazed by the whole spectable.[35] As soon as it was known that definite preparations were being made for the evacuation of the Dowager Empress, hundreds of requests began to pour into Kharax. Desperation provided the necessary boldness and no opportunity was lost in petitioning the Dowager Empress or one of her relatives for a place on board. Harrowing stories were related of earlier escapes and even more harrowing pictures were drawn concerning

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[35]Vladimir Poliakoff, Mother Dear: The Empress Marie of Russia and Her Times (New York: D. Appelton Company, 1926), p. 323; Pridham, Close, pp. 58-64.

the fate of the petitioners, should the Bolsheviks lay hands upon them. Consequently, the list was frequently extended and other ships had to be provided for these refugees. From April 6-7, panic reigned in Yalta, as the Dowager Empress had predicted.[36]

On the night of March 7, the H.M.S. Marlborough left Mishor and put down anchor at Yalta. The ship had fifty passengers aboard and was scheduled to leave for Constantinople in a few days. The party included the Dowager Empress, Grand Duchess Xenia and her children, Grand Dukes Nicholas and Peter and their families, the elder and younger Iusupovs, a dozen or so adjutants, ladies-in-waiting and equerries, as well as a number of servants. The decision to weigh anchor was taken as the Volunteer Army decided to evacuate the Crimea. The morale of the populace and of the military was at a low ebb. Thousands of people who had once composed the cream of Russian society were now bartering for their lives. Survival meant getting on one of the ships which were about to steam out of Yalta harbor.[37]

Inside the H.M.S. Marlborough the former rulers of a vast empire looked upon a spectacle of ultimate degradation and defeat. Although the White movement was by no means

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[36]U.S. Department of State, Papers Relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, Supplement, Russia, 1919, p. 759.

[37]Ibid., p. 758.

dead, it appeared so at that juncture. The men and women who had, through courage or necessity, defied the Bolshevik rule appeared to have done so in vain. The old hierarchical, tradition-bound Mother Russia had reached its final departure. The day so long deferred had come at last.

At certain times in history, the end of an historical epoch may be marked by a symbolic rite which provides a fitting and definitive conclusion to a dramatic series of events. Such an occurence took place on the quarter deck of the H.M.S. Marlborough when the Imperial anthem was given in salute for the last time. A troop ship loaded with White soldiers passed along side the Marlborough. The soldiers saw the Imperial standard flying and they spied a tiny figure on deck, dressed all in black and standing quite erect. Behind her a short distance, stood an exceptionally tall man in a military greatcoat. The word went round and the soldiers shifted to the deck facing the Marlborough. A great cheer arose, the traditional Russian military greeting for members of the Imperial Family. From the Marlborough a white handkerchief began to wave. A salute was exchanged between the man in the military greatcoat and the soldiers. This was the last time that the Romanovs participated in the hallowed ritual of showing themselves to the people.[38] This was the

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[38]Prince Felix Youssoupoff, Lost Splendor, trans. Ann Green and Nicholas Katkoff (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1953), pp. 298-9.

last occasion in which Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich and Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna formally accepted the homage of their subjects on Russian territory. The isolated figures stood on board the British ship as it sped away from their native land. It was the end of a way of life which no longer had a raison d'etre.

Fig. 1. The Four Sons of Nicholas I.

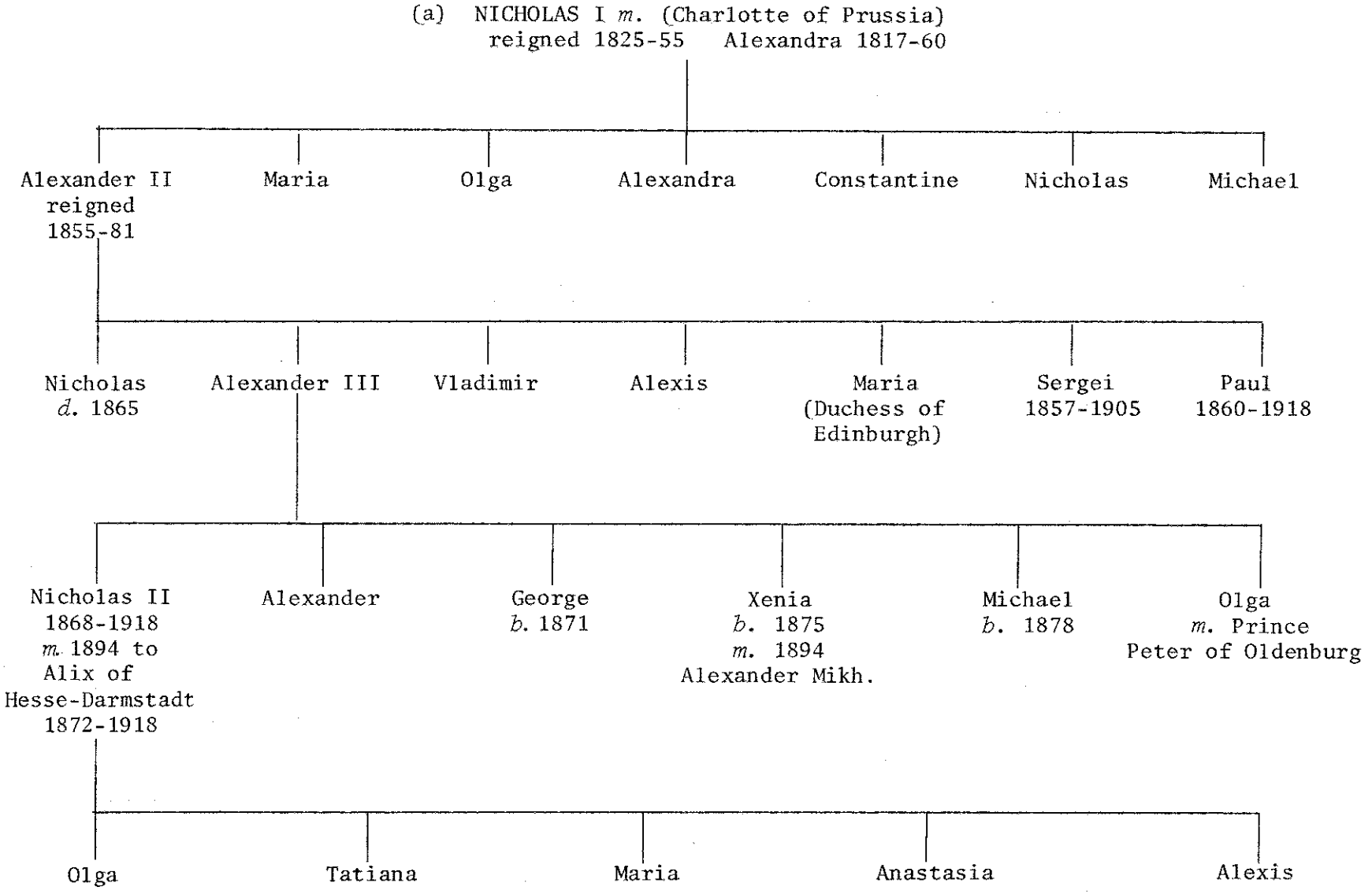


Fig. 1.--Continued

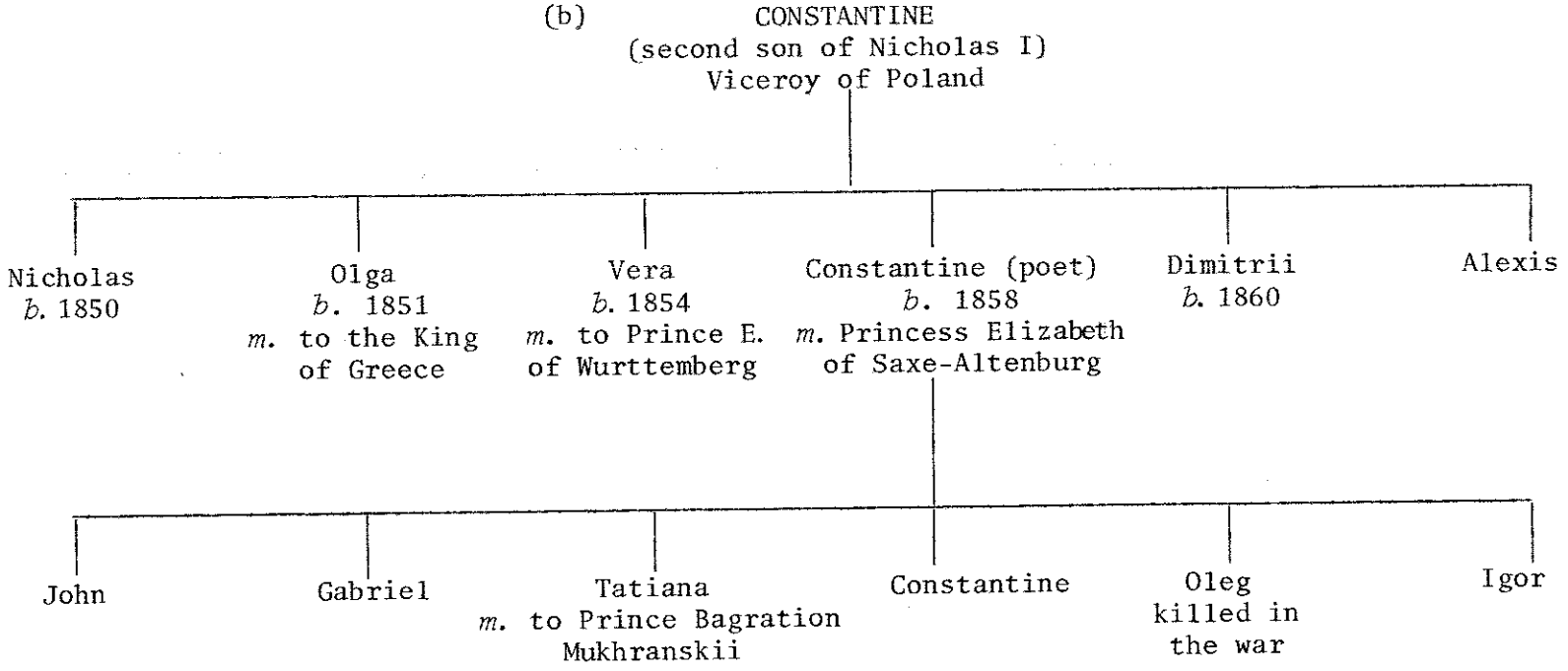


Fig. 1.--Continued

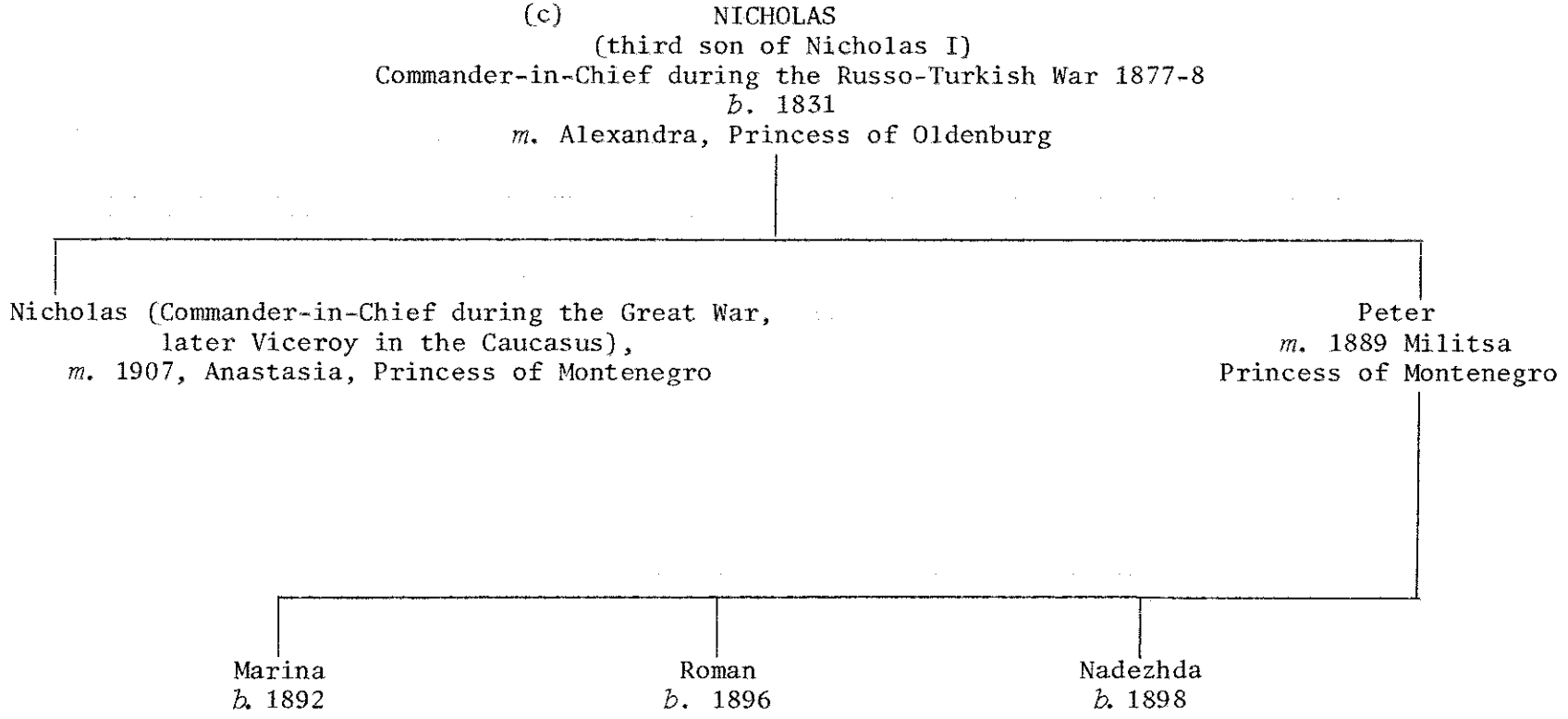


Fig. 1.--Continued

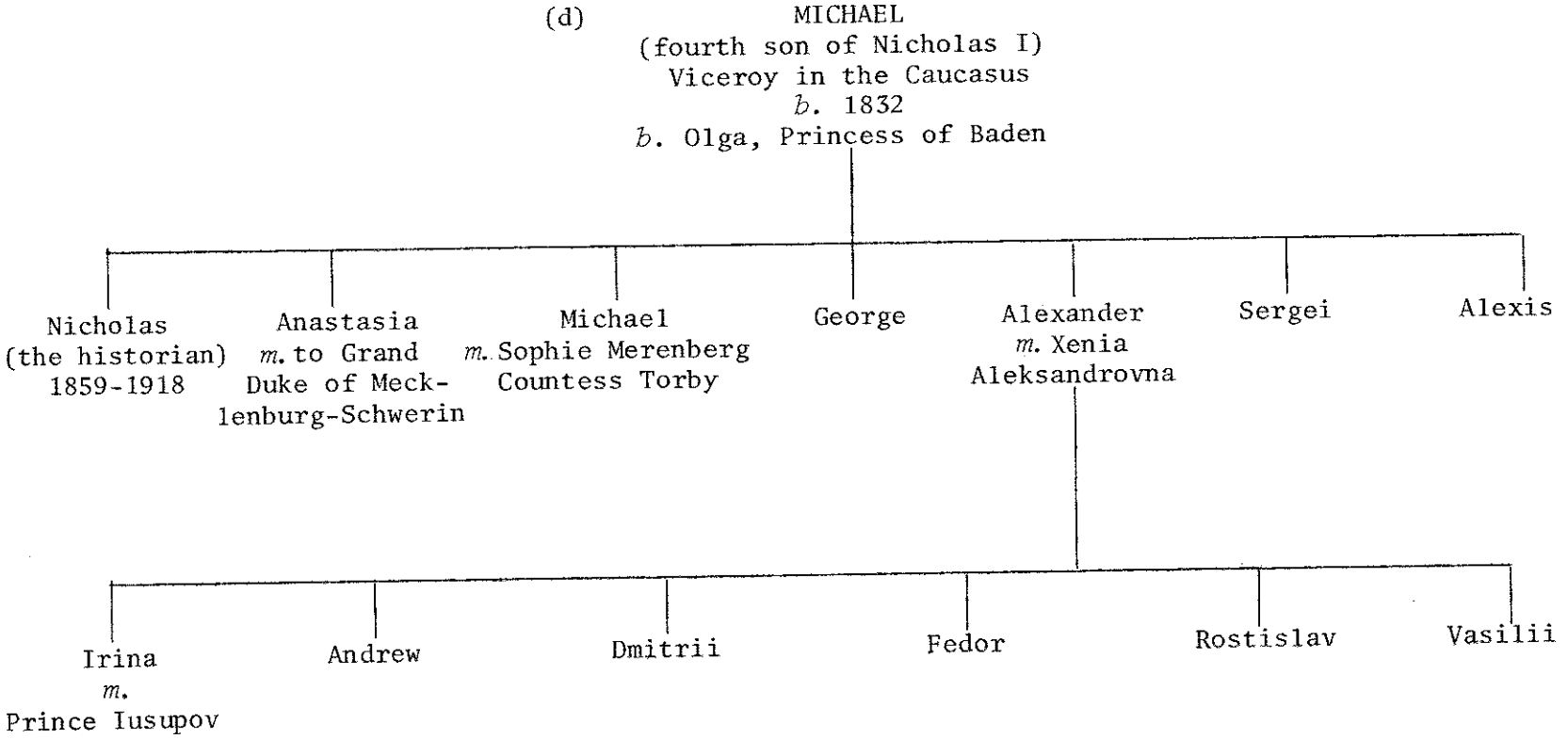


Fig. 2. The Uncles of Nicholas II

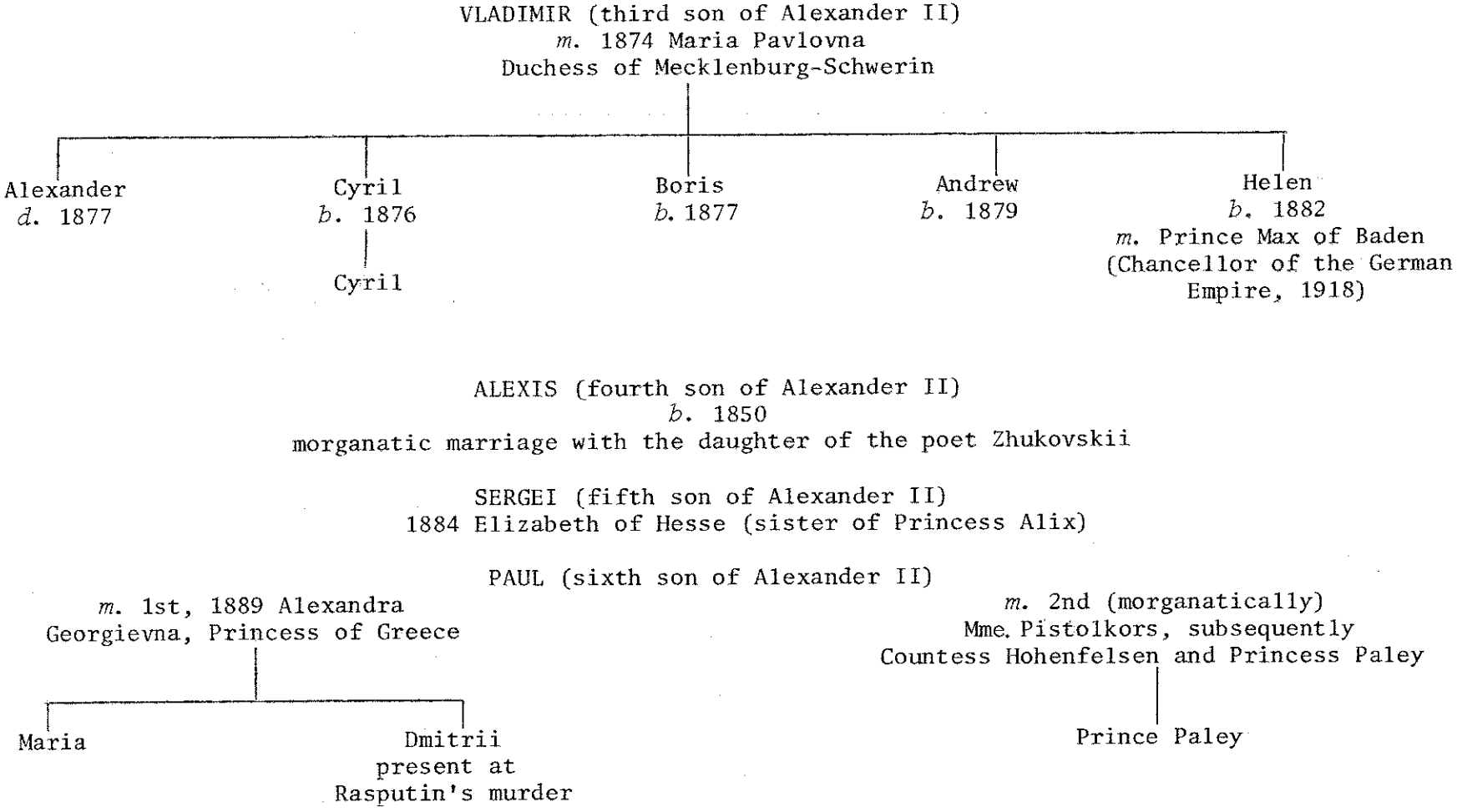
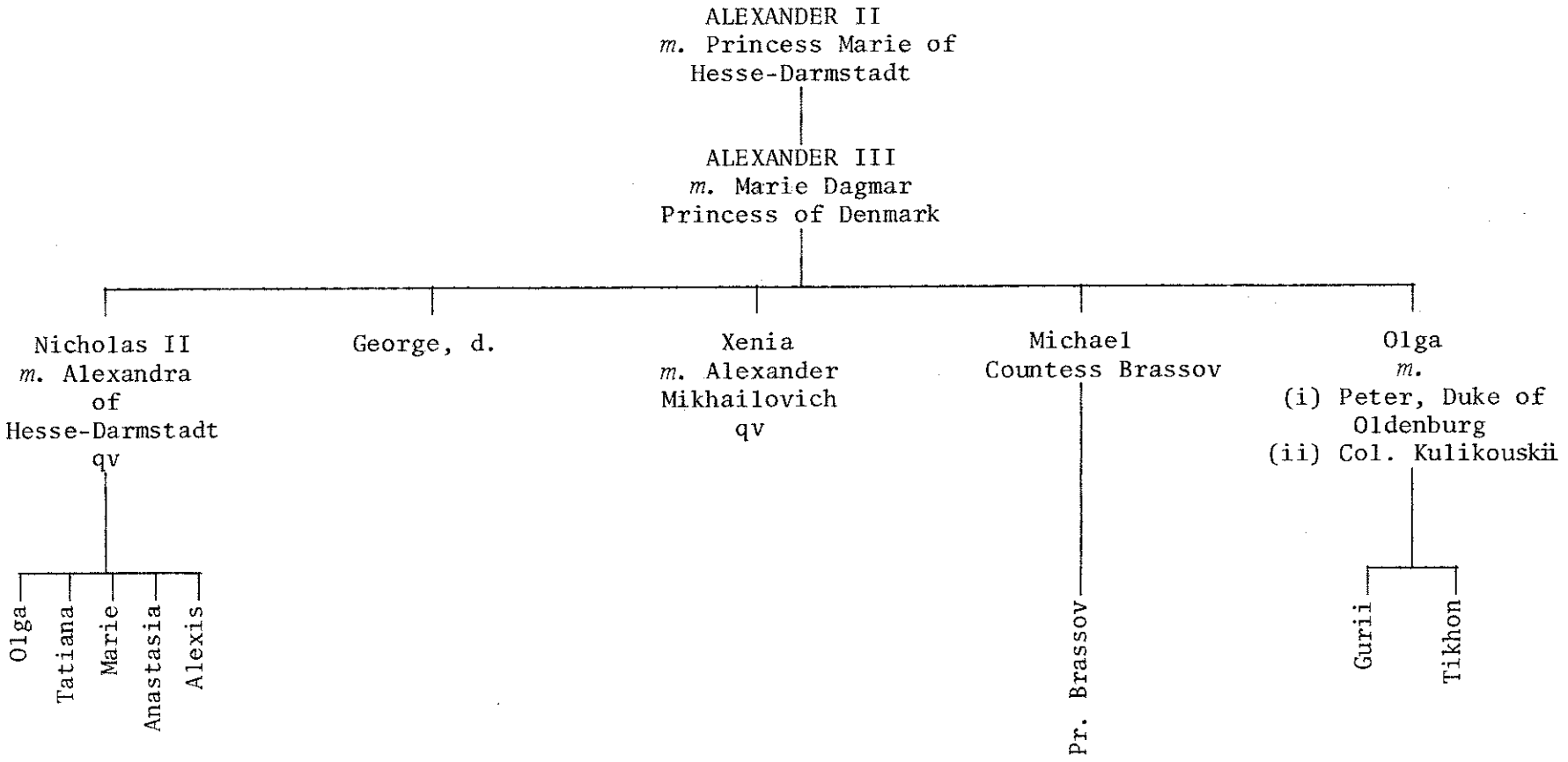


Fig. 3. Lineal Descendants of Alexander II.



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