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Poland for the Poles

The Necessity of the Independence of Poland

« Poland is the Keystone of the European arch » — such are the words with which Napoleon, while summarising at St. Helena the whole of his active career, formulated the essential point: the Polish question. True a century ago, those words are still true to-day. Apparently simple, secondary, lost in the maze of other European and universal questions, the Polish question has none the less really preserved its secret force and its intrinsic signification. It is the Keystone; it is the centre of gravity of the balance of power in Europe.

The Partition of Poland a century and a half ago was not only a catastrophe in itself but, by the very force of things, a deplorable event for the whole of Europe. To eliminate Poland as a national unit and as a State, was to tear her from the European family in which she constituted a long-existing, indispensable and *organic* element. That old European family was not a mechanical or fortuitous conglomeration, but an organism the elements of which had united throughout the course of centuries by way of natural selection. The vivisection of Poland was the amputation of one of those necessary organs, the absence of which could not fail to bring about a deep perturbation throughout the body deprived of it.

The consequences of the partition of Poland were reflected on the whole of the history of the XIXth Century. After a factitious lull obtained at the Congress of Vienna, the European political system, being unable to find a steady basis, became subject to explosions of ever-increasing violence: the Crimean war, the Austro-Prussian war, the Franco-German war, the Turco-Russian war. Peace was crossed by perpetual contentions: rivalry between France and Russia at the time of Napoleon; between England and Russia during the Crimean war; then, between Austria and Prussia; between Prussia and France; between England and Prussia; between Austria and Russia, and finally between Prussia and Russia. No attempt at restoring a truly lasting equilibrium could hope to succeed, for there was missing, in the very centre of Europe, an *organic* factor, placed there as it were by the very laws of History: Poland was wanting.

Thus, a crime committed over one hundred years ago has become by the force of things one of the causes of the present terrible war, which has set the world in flames. « The curse of bad actions is that they constantly generate evil »: the words of the poet have found their application in the crime committed against Poland.

From the very outset, Prussia understood full well the extent to which the oppression of the Poles by the Petrograd Government was detrimental to Russian interests and favourable to her own, and how much easier and more natural it would have been for the Russian colossus — whose centre of gravity lies in the East and extends to the Pacific — to come to an understanding with Poland in a spirit of justice and on the basis of respective interests. But Berlin was also too well aware that, following a Russo-Polish understanding, an autonomous Poland, free in her development, could not fail by the very force of things to attract to herself the Polish Provinces remaining under the Prussian yoke. Such is the reason why Prussia has invariably prevented, at all costs, any amelioration of Russian policy in Poland.

On the contrary, she has never ceased to dig and widen the gap dividing the two nations; to foster the suspicions and violence of Russia on the one hand, and to keep alive the just rancour of the Poles on the other. That policy has been carried out with persistent and rigid logic, either by personal influence, rendered easy by reason of the relationship between the reigning Houses of the Romanoffs and Hohenzollerns; by anti-Polish denunciations and warnings inserted in official or semi-official messages; and finally, in the imperial interviews of William I with Alexander II and Alexander III, and of William II with

Nicholas II. To the foregoing were added and considered infallible the powerful counsels of Bismarck to Gortchakoff and his successors. One of the chief instructions of the German Ambassadors at Petrograd has always been, up to a quite recent date, to prevent by daily insinuations the grant of autonomy to the Kingdom of Poland. German influences, added to the hatred of the Russian ultra-nationalists and high bureaucracy, have prevented in Poland the practical effects of the religious tolerance proclaimed in principle by the Emperor Nicholas II, a tolerance that the Catholic Church, in spite of everything, does not enjoy. These same influences have likewise opposed concessions of any kind in favour of school or university education in Poland and the use of the Polish language. In this respect, the present war has found Poland a prey to further persecutions: Polish schools and the Polish clergy are hunted down; the representation of Poland in the Duma has been curtailed; the railways of the Kingdom of Poland have been Russified, and the Province of Chelm has been wrested from the Kingdom.

The proclamation of the Grand Duke was the first ray of an unexpected dawn; but, accustomed as they were to the darkness of unhappy days, the eyes of the Poles were dazzled by this light, and they were unable to discern whether it was an illusion or a reality; and that uncertainty still lasts. Following on the noble words of the Grand Duke there has been no action, be it ever so simple, to announce the fulfilment of the promises made.

But — people may say — during the war, at a time when States and nations are threatened in their very existence, questions of home reform cannot well be considered. To this I will reply: If it be impossible to ask that the Grand Duke's promise should become immediately and to its full extent an accomplished fact, it might at least have been expected that it should be made to constitute a limit beyond which russifying and anti-Polish tendencies should henceforth not go; it might have been hoped, in particular, that they would have eliminated from the Russian government of Poland that harsh spirit which has animated it down to the present and the baneful situation it has entailed. Far be it from me to question the excellent intentions of the Russian Monarch and the chivalrous sincerity of the Grand Duke's words; but, will not those very reactionary forces which for over a hundred years have opposed Poland at Court, in the Army, and among the bureaucracy, and, for the past ten years carried on their attacks, reappear stronger and more determined than ever to continue their criminal work?

The history of the Constitution granted to the Kingdom of Poland in 1815 by the Congress of Vienna and the will of Alexander I is, in this connection, highly instructive. A prey from the very outset to the attacks of Russian reactionists and nationalists, undermined by the most perfidious intrigues and insinuations conveyed from Berlin to Alexander I and more particularly to Nicholas I, son-in-law of King Frederick William I of Prussia, it was killed and buried in the Polish revolution in 1831.

Poland, in the present crisis, has given palpable proofs of sublime abnegation and great political prudence. On the Western friends and Allies of Russia therefore rests the sacred duty of exerting their influence on her, that she may forego once for all the temptation of oppressing a sister nation, and thereby free Poland from all ideas of vengeance and ill-will. This must be brought about if the present war — according to the words of Mr Asquith — is to remodel the map of Europe « on the principle of nationalities and the real aspirations of the people ». Since the outbreak of the war, the great majority of the Polish nation (under the rule of Russia) has sent into the ranks of the Russian army nearly 800,000 men; in numerous ways, by great sacrifices and effective assistance it has rendered to Russia, and consequently to the common cause of the Allies, invaluable services which have been acknowledged in the warmest terms even by the Russian military authorities, and particularly by the impartial testimony of Italian, French, and English War Correspondents.

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Germany herself realizes at this very moment what might have been expected from the spontaneous assistance of the Polish populations.

The partition of Poland was a crime for which reparation must be made, if Europe is no longer to be the theatre of further strife, violence and commotions. The importance of Poland as an international factor has been clearly demonstrated during the present conflagration in Europe, and confirmed by the proclamations of the Grand Duke and the Austro-Germans. The whole of Europe applauded the noble and chivalrous words of the Grand Duke, in the hope that the jointsharers will cease, in times of crisis, to use Poland as a bugbear; that this time, according to the promise of the Grand Duke, Poland shall really be revived.

It is to the interest of Europe, as of Russia herself, that « the sacred dream » of the Poles should become a reality. But, to this end, the relations between Poland and her two neighbours should be defined once or all; she should be given such boundaries and such a Constitution as will enable her to resume her important mission of buffer between the Germanic and Slavonic communities, a part she has played up to now under the most difficult conditions. By the very force of circumstances, by her central geographical situation, her Slavonic origin, and her millenary Latin culture, she is fitted better than any other nation for that service for the welfare of Europe.

This is so simple and so self-evident a truth that, eventually, no one in Russia, in Austria, or even in Prussia will be able to deny it. Each of the co-participants will be compelled to confess that the suppression of Poland, according to the well-known expression of Talleyrand « was worse than a crime : it was a blunder ». It will not be the first time that this truth has been acknowledged: in Russia by Alexander I,

the Grand Duke Constantine Pavlovitch and Constantine Nikolaievitch; in Austria, by the Archduke Charles and Field-Marshal Radetzky; and even in Prussia, by Prince Henry, brother of Frederick, the Great Chancellor Hardenberg, and other more clear-sighted Prussians. It is to this truth that, in spite of everything, the world will have to revert sooner or later.

In order to serve efficaciously as a barrier against far more powerful neighbours, the Polish nation must obtain such political, economical, and social conditions as will permit her to develop *freely* and *independently*. Laborious and thrifty, the Poles have demonstrated their capacity by organizing, in the Duchy of Posen, cooperative associations which are considered models of the kind, both by English and by German economists; they are extremely prolific, and are imbued with the principles of a wide and original culture. The nation is therefore able to accomplish, and will carry out, the mission to be entrusted to it, if it be restored to its human and political rights.

Such is the interest of that nation, and also that of all the other European States, especially France, England, and the United States. Our Italy equally so. Indeed, more than any one else is she qualified to understand, from cold political reasoning, the ever-living rights of the Poles, and, especially, to feel them in the depths of her heart. The two nations have lived in the same hopes, torn themselves asunder in the same internal strife and in the same disappointments. Let us hope that Poland, following the example of Italy, will emerge from the bounds of national confusion to enjoy the light given to free nations!

ANTONIO RUSSO.

Poland for the Poles

We read in the *Italia* :

« In 1795, that is to say one hundred and twenty years ago, after their short-lived victories, the Polish armies under Kosciuszko were driven from Cracow by the Prussians, crushed by the troops under Suwaroff, and driven from Praga, the Eastern suburb of Warsaw. The cry arose of *Finis Poloniae!* To-day the Russians, in their turn, are forced out of Warsaw. The present historical event is not the forerunner of fresh mutilations of Poland, but of her resurrection. »

The *Corriere della Sera* thus comments on the German occupation of Warsaw :

« After the news of the autonomy and of the union of the Poles, who live scattered in a hostile country, the occupation of Warsaw is a wound opened in the side of Russia; it is a wound that requires to be healed by a victory. Formerly, Poland was foreign and hostile to Russia; now she forms an integral part of that country. The restoration *in integrum* — in the integrity of the period prior to 1772, that is to say of before the first partition of Poland — is the task to be imposed to-morrow on the Russian army. »

The *Secolo* also published a long article by the Belgian Deputy, M. Lorand, the sufficiently significant title of which is *Autonomous Poland in Free Russia*.

Now, with all due respect for our contemporaries and the Deputy *Lorand*, we take the liberty of differing from him in sentiment, and of desiring a different solution of the Polish question.

How can the *Corriere* affirm that the aggregation of all the « *dissecta membra* » of Poland under the sceptre of the Czar constitutes the « *restitutio in integrum* » of a free and independent Poland with her own Monarchy, as she was prior to the Moscovite and Prussian spoliation, to which was eventually added the Hapsburg spoliation? It stands to reason that such a solution would simply mean a territorial aggrandizement of Russia; the annexation of German and Austrian Poland to Russian Poland, with the concession of an autonomy, the limits and nature of which are unknown. In a word, such a solution would be essentially the same as the solution imagined by the Germans and cherished by the Kaiser. We shall perhaps soon assist, at the theatrical and solemn proclamation of a so called Kingdom of Poland united with the other vassal States of the German Confederation. And, considering that such a settlement would represent a conquest for Germany, the contrary solution would simply mean a conquest for Russia: facts cannot be changed. True, Germany is our enemy and Russia our friend; *amicus Plato, sed magis amica veritas*.

How can M. Lorand, Member of the Parliament of Belgium, a country overrun by the foreign foe, and which claims its independence and its liberty, not desire the concession of a like independence and liberty for unhappy Poland? Will Russia be an autocratical Empire and a retrogressive force? The contrary is to be desired for the welfare of the Russians and of Russia. Will Poland, left to herself, be a prey to internal strife? This was the pretext under which the despoilers fell upon their victim. Who, indeed, can say that a long and cruel experience has not borne fruit?

In our opinion, the watchword should be « *Poland for the Poles!* » The present war against the Central Empires is a war for Right and Justice; it is a war of deliverance and, let us hope, the last that will occur for the definite triumph of the principle of nationalities. Belgium for the Belgians; the Balkan Peninsula for the Balkan States; the Italian *irredente* territories for the Italians — and **Poland for the Poles!**

The Allies of the Quadruple Entente who are carrying on the present gigantic struggle in the name of the immortal principles of Right, of justice for the nations, and of respect for the liberty of their peoples, must show the example; they cannot copy the German points of view and trade-marks: these are but marks of assimilation and invasion, of Imperialism and the fever of expansion and conquest.

If the present war is destined to regenerate the great Muscovite Empire and create a Free Russia, the latter will know how to affirm her new life by a spontaneous act of renunciation; she will wrest the Polish prey from the claws of Berlin and Vienna, and will have the glory of having renounced it herself. The Poles are a generous people; and a free and independent Poland will be the best Ally of Russia. Free Russia would thus accomplish an act of civilization.

Poland for the Poles: such is the programme of all those who believe, in the words of Benedict XV in his last document, that « *Nations Cannot die!* » (*Editorial.*)

Neither Germans, Austrians, nor Russians : Poles above all.

The circumstances of the entry of the Austro-German armies into Warsaw still remain wrapped in mystery. The German papers maintain that the Poles hailed the victors as their liberators, and that they were indignant at the behaviour of the Russian army which, before withdrawing, set fire to several portions of the town, and destroyed the gas- and water-mains at the risk of causing everything to blow up. On their side, the Russians accuse the Germans of having

bombarded and set fire to the town, which only contained women, old men, and children.

The truth will soon be known.

What we *do* know already is this: that the Polish organizations sent round word to all the inhabitants to the following effect:

« On the entry of the Austro-German armies do not bring about massacres by useless manifestations, but refuse to utter a single word in German. Let not even those who are indignant at the abandonment of the capital of Poland by the Russian army forget that we are neither German, Austrian nor Russian: but that we are Poles above all. (*Editorial.*)

How to retrieve the Russian Disaster

Some seven months ago, we read in an open letter addressed to M. Hervé, on the publication of his article entitled « *The Polish Torpedo* » :

« France and England have progressively brought into play the whole of their moral and material arsenal. A result will unquestionably follow on the Western front. Unfortunately, Russia has not been willing to use the numerous « *torpedoes* » she then held and still possesses.

« Russia has already reached the maximum of her effort, and her untrained reserves do not present any great value. It is therefore indispensable and urgent that fresh live forces should be awakened... »

This prediction has been only too well confirmed by the events we are witnessing.

The world, astounded, is unable to understand the true cause of so manifest a weakness on the part of a Power of 165 millions of inhabitants, which is only faced by the Austrian army, some 20 German Army-corps and a few corps from the Turkish army, say, altogether, from three to four millions of soldiers. Nor does it understand why Roumania, a Latin country, in spite of her genuine sympathy for France, and a Slavonic country like Bulgaria, both remain indifferent, and even appear to maintain a hostile attitude towards Russia.

To a superficial observer a reply to these questions seems very easy: Russia is lacking in munitions of war, and her means of communication are insufficient; as to the Balkan States, they are selfish, mean, and incapable of a noble gesture.

In reality, for those who know Russia, the cause of such a situation lies far deeper; and in order to discover it it is necessary to analyse the internal and foreign policy of the Russian Government.

It is certain that to attain victory, the organization of *material* forces is the essential condition; but the final decision, the result, also depends on the *moral* condition of the country and its relations with neigh-

bouring countries. In order to come out victorious from a modern war any country must possess, apart from a military organization, a high economical, social and political organisation.

The condition of the Russian army has improved wonderfully since the Russo-Japanese war. The want of munitions, from which other countries also suffer, can be repaired within a certain length of time, and Russia would be capable of recovery in this respect, and even of rising victorious from so serious a position, if the other essentials for victory, viz. : the moral state of the country and its foreign policy could only be rapidly and radically modified.

It must not be forgotten that in Russia and the annexed countries there exists a state of uneasiness which grows from day to day. The short-sightedness with which the Russian bureaucracy began this terrible war is truly prodigious.

Bismarck once said that « you could do everything with bayonets but sit on them ». The Russian Government has always entertained a different opinion, in spite of the serious warning the Russian people gave it after the defeat in Manchuria. Made up until the very last moment of the worst of reactionists, that Government has thought that any awakening of the spirit of human dignity, either among the Russian population or in the conquered nations could be stifled if only the police and constabulary were properly organized. It never understood that unrest, discouragement, or even merely indifference, in so tragic a moment, may bring about the downfall of the clay-footed colossus.

Since the revolution in 1905, a secret but ceaseless struggle has been going on between the awakening consciousness of the Russian people and the Bureaucracy. The latter, by its persecutions and numberless mean vexations, has exasperated the public spirit of the Russian people, as also of the conquered populations. The apparent calm and order outwardly shown by Russia are but superficial. In case of a Russian defeat the world will witness a terrible explosion of the hatred hidden in the Russian breast, which will break out with a violence that is little suspected abroad. The possibility of a fresh revolution after a disastrous war is foreseen by everyone save the Russian reactionists, whose short-sightedness is unbounded. Believing itself invincible, the Russian Bureaucracy has done nothing to gain the sympathy of the Russian people and of the populations under its yoke. On the contrary, all its actions have testified clearly that it considers it useless to grant even the slightest concession, the least relief, in the system of terror prevailing in Russia.

People arriving from Russia all report a general discouragement and a feeling of uneasiness, full of peril for the outcome of the present conflict.

We constantly meet with Russian intellectuals who sincerely wish the defeat of the Russian Empire as being the only means of escaping from the present intolerable situation.

To complete the picture of the moral state of Russia it is almost superfluous to speak of the spirit of revolt and hatred smouldering in the breast of the oppressed nationalities. The Finns are already deploring the fate of their autonomy, solemnly ratified by succeeding Czars during the past century : it is gradually disappearing under the onslaught of the all-powerful Russian Nationalism, which loudly demands the russification of all the countries annexed. Even now, in full war time, the Council of Ministers is considering the best means of annihilating that autonomy.

Poland, in bondage for the past 150 years, whose noblest sons have perished by hundreds of

thousands on the gallows, by bullets, under the *Knout* or the hard labour of Siberia, still groan in their martyrdom, and in spite of official announcements, can hardly believe in the realization of true autonomy. Thorough discouragement prevails among all classes of the Polish nation.

Such is the truth concerning the moral state of the Russian Empire. The foreign situation is in no way better.

In order to vanquish, Russia needs the cooperation of Roumania and Bulgaria. That assistance was at its disposal as early as the month of November last ; but the Russian Government did not avail itself of it, owing to its immutable policy of greed. So long as the home administration and the foreign policy of Russia do not undergo a radical change, all the Balkan States will view with terror any aggrandisement of the Muscovite Power.

A glance at the map of the Empire of the Czars and a short reference to its history for the past two centuries, bring out most strikingly the fierce persistency it has shown in the pursuit of its conquests, both in Europe and in Asia. The neighbouring countries know full well what to think concerning the real intentions of Russia, and will not allow themselves to be lulled by newspaper articles. They are perfectly aware of the fate a victorious Russia holds in store for them, should she pursue her secular policy. Bulgaria learned to her cost the Russian way of proceeding after the Russo-Turkish war, as well as the intrigues of Hartwig and others after the last Balkan war. Nor has Roumania forgotten that the help she brought to Russia during the Russo-Turkish war and which prevented a positive disaster, cost her the loss of Bessarabia, one of her finest provinces ! The possibility of the capture of Constantinople by Russia constitutes a menace for all the populations inhabiting the territories bordering on the Adriatic. According to Pan-russian conceptions all the Slavonic countries : Poland, Bohemia, Serbia, Bulgaria, Montenegro, etc. should belong to Russia. And why not ? If Russia announces solemnly that she intends maintaining under her yoke the next largest Slavonic country, *i. e.* Poland, why should she renounce the conquest of the other Slavs, who represent in the aggregate a population nearly equivalent to that of Poland ? At a banquet held recently in Moscow, the Russians said to the Czechs who were present, that if they wanted their independence they would have to conquer it themselves ! As to the Roumanians and Hungarians, their fate would be easily settled by means of a few Cossack regiments, to be left permanently in those countries, as in Poland.

The history of Poland, Finland, Armenia, Bessarabia and, quite recently, Eastern Galicia and Bukowina, is sufficiently instructive to show clearly what lies in store for Roumania and Bulgaria, should the spirit of oppression and conquest be allowed to last in Russia.

Pan-russians and their Bureaucracy, like the Pan-germanists, dream of the subjugation of the whole world to their purposes, by the gradual enslavement of all countries which allow themselves to be conquered.

The Roumanians and Bulgarians would have been up in arms long ago, by the side of the allies, had not the blindness and cupidity of the Russian Government prevented them from joining in the present gigantic struggle. The Roumanians, in particular, would certainly march by the side of France and England ; but they hesitate, and will probably hesitate to the very last moment for fear of contributing to the success of reactionary and conquering Russia.

It will be seen from the above few examples, which need not be multiplied, how the reactionary and Pan-russian spirit creates a very grave situation, at home as well as abroad ; it will lead to a rebellion in case of a defeat, and is now bringing about the isolation of Russia in presence of the Germans.

Are there really any means of saving Russia from defeat as well as from the revolution which would result therefrom ? Yes — the immediate entry of the Russian Empire into the camp of « the world », its transformation into a modern, constitutional State by the transfer of full powers to the hands of the *nation* ; the solemn proclamation, by a really national Government, of its sincere intention to break with a past founded on injustice and renounce for ever all mad ambition for conquests, so detrimental to the Russian people. But neither words nor manifestoes will avail to give courage and patience to the populations constituting the Russian Empire or to attract nation on whom depend a rapid victory and the cessation of the present horrible carnage. Actions are necessary, and decisions should be prompt and energetic.

What is required :

1° *At home :*

The transfer of power to the hands of genuine representatives of the people, who are indignant over the composition of the First Duma, driven out by M. Goremykine, the Prime Minister ;

The proclamation of a general amnesty ;

The restoration to Finland of her complete autonomy ;

The proclamation of the independence of Poland before this should be done by the Germans ;

The suppression of all barbarous laws against the Jews, etc.

2° *Abroad :*

The restitution of Bessarabia to Roumania ;

The demand that Serbia should restore Macedonia to Bulgaria ;

to guarantee the neutrality of Constantinople.

It is at that price, and by that noble effort that Russia may be saved from the internal and external disaster awaiting her. To obtain that result, it is necessary to call upon all her forces, all her energies, and not to rely upon any patched-up Ministry, from which no new spirit will ever be evolved.

Seeing the end of a secular tyranny, the Russian people and the annexed countries will regain faith in their destinies, and their present depression will give way to enthusiasm and thus increase immensely their force of resistance.

Roumania, Bulgaria, Greece and other nations, in presence of so radical a change in the principles of the home and foreign policy of Russia, would emerge from their neutrality. Their presence by the side of the Allies would rapidly put a stop to the carnage Europe is now subjected to, by compelling the Central Empires to commence at once the discussion of the terms of peace, which, in such a case, could really be founded on justice and the principle of nationalities.

It is very doubtful whether this means of securing the true greatness of New Russia will be adopted by a Bureaucracy incapable of any generous impulse, of any noble action. The Allies should understand, in any case, that the key to the situation lies in the hands of the Russian Bureaucracy, which if unchecked will cling desperately to power and to its antiquated dogmas and thus drive Russia to further disasters at home and abroad from which the Allies must suffer.

M. Goremykine's Speech

For the second time during the past twelvemonth the world at large has listened with emotion to the grave words concerning Poland, the martyr, « whose living body, in the words of the Grand Duke, was torn to pieces » by the three Empires. At the beginning of the war we heard the promises of the Russian and Austro-German Commanders-in-Chief, and, a year later, the decla-

ration of M. Goremykine, President of the Czar's Conseil of Ministers.

Such manifestations must be considered with great calmness and in a spirit of impartiality based on the knowledge of the past, as well as of the men who gave them utterance. The question is one of vital importance, one on which depends the future peace and also the future of a population of twenty millions.

As to the manifestoes of the Commander-in-Chief, including that of Grand

Duke Nicholas, they were mere acts of strategy, in flagrant contradiction with the secular policy of Russia and Germany towards Poland, a policy pursued even during the first year of the war. That policy may be summed up thus : « *The extermination of the Polish nation by every means* ». If the assassination of Poland by the Three Empires has not given the result sought ; if the Polish nation, now stronger than ever, disturbs by its very existence the quietude and schemes of diplomatists,

it is not the German and Russian governments, fault ; they have on the contrary committed every possible act of violence likely to attain their aim.

Considering that success has favoured the Central Empires during the first year of the war, the promises of their Generalissimos have so far been forgotten that one has to seek them out in the newspapers published a year ago. The proclamation of the Grand Duke alone continues to be remembered.

That proclamation came as a disagreeable surprise to the Russian Government presided by M. Goremykine — the arch-enemy of Poland — and it met with the unanimous reprobation of the members of the Cabinet. An attentive perusal of the document itself is sufficient to enable one to perceive that it did not emanate from a Foreign Office.

Numberless publications have sufficiently demonstrated the sceptical and even openly hostile reception that it met with at the hands of the government. M. Goremykine, whose notorious incapacity in the conduct of the war has been only too fully shown up, expressed his contempt for so inopportune an interference with his anti-Polish policy. Backed by reaction in every shape and form, and seconded by such men as MM. Maklakoff, Schtscheglovitof, Ruschlof, the late M. Kasso and others, M. Goremykine systematically opposed, almost to the very last moment, the smallest concession to the Poles, and even forbade the Russian press to mention the word «autonomy». Officials high and low smiled ironically when the promises contained in the Grand Duke's manifesto were mentioned in their presence, for they knew that they were not binding on them, and that the watchful eyes of M. Goremykine and his sympathetic colleagues were upon them, to cut short the slightest inclination to alleviate the rule of violence to which the Poles are subject. They sought to attenuate «the blunder» of the Grand Duke by preventing the Czar from putting his signature thereto, urging that it was impossible for Poland to obtain a form of government similar to that of Galicia under the Austrian rule; and, finally, that the manifesto only referred to municipal and provincial autonomy, (Ziemstvos), &c.

Only a few months ago, in a long speech on the situation of the Empire delivered in the Duma, M. Goremykine did not utter a single word on the subject of the famous manifesto.

Such was then the stage at which the «dawn of a new life» announced to Poland by the Grand Duke stood when the Russian troops were compelled to evacuate Galicia and fall back to the south of the kingdom of Poland.

Seeing that Poland was soon to be occupied by the Austro-Germans, the Russian government hastily organized a so-called «Russo Polish Commission», composed of six Poles and as many Russians, chosen promiscuously from among the reactionists of both countries.

At the opening of the first sitting M. Goremykine informed these gentlemen that their recommendations would not be binding on anyone. When the real aim was attained, that is to say, as soon as the press of the allied countries had sufficiently extolled «the goodness», «the generosity», &c., of the paternal government, the board-room so uselessly occupied was cleared and the Commissioners were sent about their business.

But very soon afterwards the Austro-German troops crossed the Narew and the Vistula. Then, and then only, did M. Goremykine become eloquent, mild, and sentimental, and «brought tears to the eyes» of certain journalists when he said:

«The chivalrous, noble, loyal, and brave Polish nation deserves all sympathy and unalloyed respect. This day, the Emperor has charged

me to declare to you that he has ordered the Council of Ministers to elaborate the projects granting to Poland, after the war, the right to organize freely her national, social and economical life on the basis of autonomy, under the sceptre of the Emperors of Russia.»

For the word «autonomy» — which, by the way has no specific meaning — to have escaped the lips of that representative of the Czar signified that Russia considered Poland as lost to her; that she was threatened with thorough discredit in the eyes of the civilized world and of the Slavs in particular; should the rumour of the imminent proclamation of the independence of Poland by the Germans take shape; that, finally, the political horizon was enshrouded in thick clouds portentous of a storm which might overwhelm those supporters of reaction.

Such words as those spoken by M. Goremykine on this occasion sound like a mockery in the lips of the man who has devoted his long career to the extermination of all the non-Russian populations of the Empire, and the Poles are not simple-minded enough to put faith in promises made under such circumstances and by such intermediaries. Verbiage of that kind is of no value to them.

They remember the solemn declaration and oath of Alexander I on the autonomy of Poland; they remember the oaths of several Czars swearing to preserve Finnish autonomy; and they also remember the manifesto of October 1905, proclaimed at a crisis exactly similar to that which Russia is now undergoing.

All the above acts emanated from personages far more important than a Goremykine, who will disappear at the first moment from the political arena; and yet all those resolves led to a purely negative result. Nor could it have been otherwise, in spite of the best intentions of those who took part in the elaboration of such promises. A powerful and reactionary State will never tolerate real freedom in one or more of its provinces. It is, on the contrary, driven instinctively and automatically to crush the few liberties which may have been wrung from it at critical moments.

Russia will never suffer in its midst a really independent Poland. The day after the war, the struggle between Poland and Russia would begin anew; and Europe, like Pontius-Pilate, would assist unmoved at the gradual destruction of the concessions made; she would have to content herself with pleading, as an excuse for her inertia, that she cannot interfere in the home affairs of other Powers.

Russia has but one way of proving that she is sincere and desirous of a real reconciliation with the Poles, and that is by proclaiming the independence of Poland, simultaneously with the overthrow of the bureaucratic government that is leading Russia to an abyss.

Europe should know that the so-called «Polish voices» from Russia, Austria or Germany which the Press Agencies transmit with such surprising eagerness, are in nowise the expression of the wishes of the Polish people, gagged as they are by martial law and the Censorship. The Polish people want their unity and their independence, and will energetically claim them at

the end of the present war. Neither were Count Wielopolski at Petrograd, nor M. Bilinsky at Vienna, authorized to speak in the name of Poland. In every country, there exists a class of people who are ever ready to go down on their knees before force of any kind. There are such among us, also; but their cringing is severely condemned by the real Polish Nation, which has preserved its national dignity and the consciousness of its imprescriptible right to independence.

The *Temps* ventures to say that the present war, «which will result in the liberation of Europe and the emancipation of the small States, will also atone for the injustice committed a century and a-half ago» — but it forgets to add that there is but one atonement in the eyes of honest people: the proclamation of the independence of Poland. Does it wish «the greatest crime in History» weighing now on the conscience of the three Empires to fall again solely on the conscience of the Russian Empire, «the friend and ally of France»?

Let Russia be frankly asked by what right she intends to keep what does not belong to her? When a poor wretch steals a small loaf from a counter, he is seized, locked up and sentenced to a penalty entailing infamy. But in the case of a well-armed community called the German, the Austrian or the Russian Empire, well-meaning people look upon the offence with indifference.

The «good friends» of Poland seek to apply this international code of morality to Poland once more. To get her to swallow the pill more readily, they recall daily the horrors committed for the past century and a-half by Prussia. *The Poles have not forgotten them*; nor do they forget the no less dreadful persecutions they have suffered at the hands of Russia, «the great Protector and Liberator of the Slavs»!..

We need neither the Russian tutelage nor the Austro-Prussian guardianship. Let Europe, which threw us into bondage in 1815, restore our liberty to us and we shall know how to organize and govern ourselves, perhaps better than certain nations now in the enjoyment of their independence.

A new era is dawning for the whole of mankind, and we see approaching the period that will bring peace and liberty to nations. Is it to be admitted that Poland alone shall be excluded from so radiant a future? Is it to be admitted that the European Democracies will deliver her up into the hands of the one among her oppressors that has relentlessly persecuted her for a century and a-half, and been unwilling to release her prey, even at so critical a moment for him?

We do not believe it. For the honour of Europe the present «crusade for Liberty and the liberation of oppressed nations» must end in the complete emancipation of Poland.

W. PODLASKI.

The French Socialist Party will demand the Independence of Poland

M. Compère-Morel, member for Uzès, one of the leaders of the French Socialist party, has made the following statement:

«The French Socialist party considers that, after the war, Poland should recover the complete independence of

her country. It is because the French Socialists believe firmly that the terrible struggle carried on by civilized Europe against German Imperialism is a struggle for the liberation of oppressed nations and for the reparation of past injustice and violence, that they have rallied loyally to the Government and brought it the full measure of their support. The moral compact established between the French Socialist party and the Government rests on the *sine qua non* condition that France is carrying on and will continue to carry on a war of liberation and not a war of invasion and conquest. And it is precisely for this reason that we have the right to demand of French diplomacy that there shall no longer be, in the new Europe, any nations whose existence be threatened or interfered with. And if the bonds of Poland are not completely shattered, how then could we settle the question of Alsace-Lorraine in conformity with Right and Justice? Considering that Alsace and Lorraine are to be restored to France, the Polish question must also be settled conformably with the principle of nationalities.

«Besides, the independence of Poland will be a great boon for the whole of Europe, for it will restore the balance between the West and the East that was broken by the odious partitions, and will benefit in a large measure the spoliators themselves, and for this reason: — Russian Poland, Prussian Poland and even Austrian Poland are so many seats of infection which threaten the security of the co-sharing States. We, who are about to forcibly cure the Austro-German body, are in duty bound to amputate all the limbs that poison it. In a like manner, Russia will feel all the better for being freed from the Polish thorn.

«In the opinion of the French Socialist party, all the promises that have been made to the Poles either by Russia or by any other Government whose interest it is to gain the sympathies of the Polish population, as well as those the German Government may still pompously make, are absolutely without any positive value. Considering the policy the Russian Government inaugurated in Eastern Galicia immediately on the military occupation of that country, we have not the least right to rely on the promises of the Grand Duke Nicholas.

«It is solely at the hands of the two great Western Democracies: England and France, that Poland can obtain the liberation of her people. And it is the duty of the French Socialists to see to the fulfilment of that task. Were the French Government to commit the mistake of ignoring the imprescriptible rights of the Polish nation; should it fail in its promise to carry on a war of justice and liberty, it would be seriously brought to account by the French proletariat. It would run the risk of breaking the civil peace in France.»

(Polonia).

Reading such noble and proud words, we are astonished that the Democratic parties in other belligerent or neutral countries have not yet made like energetic declarations in favour of the independence of Poland.

(Editorial).

LÉON GRANGER, éditeur responsable.

LAUSANNE — IMPRIMERIE HOIRS BORGEAUD.