

TRIPLE ENTENTE OR UNHOLY ALLIANCE?

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OFFICIAL RUSSIAN ATTITUDES TOWARD BRITAIN AND FRANCE,

1906 TO 1914

By

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A Thesis

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies

In Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements

for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

McMaster University

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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY (1992)
(History)

McMASTER UNIVERSITY
Hamilton, Ontario

TITLE: Triple Entente or Unholy Alliance? Official Russian
Attitudes toward Britain and France, 1906 to 1914.

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NUMBER OF PAGES: viii, 314

ABSTRACT

Triple Entente or Unholy Alliance? Official Russian Attitudes Toward Britain and France, 1906 to 1914

Fiona Katherine Tomaszewski

This dissertation is an examination of official Russian attitudes toward Britain and France from 1906 to 1914, from the inauguration of a constitutional regime in Russia to the outbreak of World War One. In order to illustrate the motivations behind Russian foreign policy making at a critical juncture in the history of Russian autocracy, several groups within the Russian government and bureaucracy are examined, including the Emperor and the Court, the Foreign Ministry and the Ministries of Finance and Trade and Commerce.

A wide spectrum of opinions about Russia's Entente partners existed among Russia's rulers. Although ideological apprehensions about partnership with the two western bourgeois constitutional states did bother some officials, (Russian officialdom overwhelmingly accepted this unusual partnership as a matter of necessity. The policy of the Triple Entente -- to preserve the status quo in Europe and to contain Germany -- was accompanied by Stolypin's domestic reform programme, all in an attempt to save the 'ancien regime' in

Russia. But, as with the domestic reforms, Nicholas II's foreign policy lacked the imagination necessary to halt the precipitous decline of autocratic power in Russia.

The severe constraints on Russian power that had resulted from the Russo-Japanese War and the 1905 revolution shaped Russia's dependent relationship with Britain and France. As Russia recovered from the twin disasters of 1905, she began to place more demands on Britain and France and to reassert herself in the international arena. As the international situation became more tense, official Russia became more adamantly committed to the Triple Entente. The thesis illustrates and analyzes at close range how the alliance system in Europe immediately prior to World War One became increasingly rigid and how, as a result, it became one of the major factors in the outbreak of general war.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The research and writing of this thesis were made possible by awards from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and an Ontario Graduate Scholarship. The School of Graduate Studies and the History Department at McMaster University have also been generous in their provision of teaching assistantships and scholarships. Many thanks are due to the unfailingly helpful and courteous staff at Mills Memorial Library, especially the Department of Interlibrary Loans. External Affairs and the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada made possible a productive research trip to important archives in Moscow and Saint Petersburg. The Moscow Historical-Archival Institute proved to be a most helpful host institution and their staff were extremely kind and useful in dealing with the bureaucracy of a decaying empire.

Many individuals have contributed to this work. Thanks are due to my supervisor Professor R.H. Johnston, who was a patient reader and attentive critic over the years in which this work was born. Professor Alan Cassels' eagle eye and critical intelligence improved the thesis in countless ways. I would like to thank Dr. Wayne Thorpe for the important role he played in the early stage of my doctoral studies and for his worthwhile criticisms of this thesis. My parents started me on the academic path many years ago when as a small child I

watched my mother write her Master's thesis and my father told my sister and me Anglo-Saxon riddles in an attempt to teach us that elephant jokes really did not qualify as true humour. My small son Marcel Aidan's arrival in the world encouraged me to finish when I might have dawdled and his sunny presence since has kept my spirits up. Finally my greatest thanks go to my husband Mirek who has been a constant source of support, encouragement and good humour. Without him this thesis would never have been written.

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NOTES AND REFERENCES

ABBREVIATIONS

- AVPR Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossii (Moscow)
- BAR Bakmeteff Archive, Columbia University
- BD British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914
- BD/CP British Documents on Foreign Affairs: Reports and Papers from the Foreign Office Confidential Print
- DDF Documents Diplomatiques Français
- KA Krasnyi Arkhiv
- LN Livre Noir
- OS Old Style Russian Calendar
- TsGAOR Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv Oktiabr'skoi Revoliutsii (Moscow)
- TsGIA Tsentral'nyi gosudarstvennyi istoricheskii arkhiv (Saint Petersburg)
- NOTE:** Where two dates are given, this refers to the thirteen-day difference between the Russian and European calendars. Normally only one date is used and this refers to the European calendar.

INTRODUCTION

In August 1914 Tsarist Russia, together with two liberal constitutional states, France and Great Britain, went to war against the German and Austro-Hungarian empires. The Triple Entente was one of the more unusual diplomatic partnerships history has seen. The subject of this dissertation is the attitudes of the Russian government and bureaucracy toward France and Great Britain from 1906 to the outbreak of war in 1914. The purpose is to contribute to an understanding of this, in some ways, improbable partnership. Many of the contradictions and tensions in late Imperial Russian society as it approached the abyss of World War One are brought into focus; so also is the complex interplay between foreign and domestic policy. The dissertation helps fill a gap in the study of Imperial Russia by focusing on Nicholas II's embattled government and its attempts to survive, as opposed to the more frequently discussed revolutionary movements and opposition parties.¹

¹ The following works are some of the relatively few which deal with Imperial Russia's governing classes: D.C.B. Lieven, Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime (New Haven, 1989); W.B. Lincoln, In the Vanguard of Reform. Russia's Enlightened Bureaucrats 1825-1861 (Dekalb, 1986); M. Raeff, Understanding Imperial Russia (New York, 1984); A.Sinel, The Classroom and the Chancellery: State Educational Reform in Russia under Count Dmitry Tolstoi (Cambridge Mass., 1973); and A.M. Verner, The Crisis of Russian Autocracy. Nicholas II and the 1905 Revolution (Princeton, 1990).

The approach taken follows the tradition established by D.C.B. Lieven. He argued that in the pre-war years the Russian Imperial government system and other internal political factors influenced Russian foreign policy. He did not conclude, as did Fritz Fischer about Wilhelmine Germany, that the Russian elites sought war to consolidate their power and system of rule at home.² Dietrich Geyer, in his important study of Russian imperialism, maintained that Russian expansion was an expression of economic weakness not strength, and was caused in part by a compensatory psychological need at least to appear to be a great power.³ He also argued that the Russian political elites had no reason to desire a European war in July 1914, and that they did not seek a preventive war.⁴ The conclusions of this present study complement the arguments of Lieven and Geyer.

In broad terms, the dissertation is a contribution to the debate on Russia's relations with the West, a subject that extends from the time of Peter the Great to that of Boris Yeltsin. It was not until the eighteenth century that there was a general turning by the Russian state and nobility toward the West

² D.C.B.Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War (London, 1984), pp.152-154. Fritz Fischer, Germany's War Aims in the First World War (New York, 1967).

³ Dietrich Geyer, Russian Imperialism, The Interaction of Domestic and Foreign Policy, 1860-1914 (New Haven, 1987) p.205.

⁴ Ibid., p.314.

and it was only in the middle of the nineteenth century that the problem of "Russia and Europe" came to absorb the full attention of Russian intellectuals.⁵ Beginning with Peter the Great and ending with Witte and Stolypin, political leaders and high officials had attempted to use western methods to adapt Russian society to the requirements of the modern world. Many of the intelligentsia, although alienated from the regime and wielding no real power, also ardently desired that Russia should follow the western political path.⁶ In the Westerner/Slavophile debate, Russia was seen as either unique or as a backward section of Europe, in the latter case "a rung behind on a single evolutionary ladder."⁷ In fact, at the turn of the century, Russia was a "developing society". Capitalism was taking root and the Silver Age of Russian literature was flourishing. In the decades before World War One the debate about Russia's relation to the West appeared to be losing intensity, as she appeared to be catching up with the West.⁸ A study, then, of what Tsarist Russian elites, on the eve of the First World War, actually thought of her

⁵ C.E.Black, "The Nature of Imperial Russian Society" Slavic Review, (1961) p.574.

⁶ M.Raef, "Russia's Perception of Her Relationship with the West" in D.W.Treadgold, Development of the USSR (Seattle, 1964), p.373.

⁷ T.Shanin, Russia, 1905-1907 Revolution as a Moment of Truth (London, 1986), p.xi.

⁸ Ibid., p.105. See also H.L.Roberts, "Russia and the West" in D.W.Treadgold, op.cit., pp.369-370.

western diplomatic partners is an important part of the larger topic of Russia and the West.

The years covered in this study are 1906 to 1914. 1906 marks the beginning of a new era in Russian history. Two parallel experiments unprecedented in Russia -- the inauguration of a constitutional regime and the movement toward the Triple Entente -- signified a new westward orientation in Russian policy. The military defeat at the hands of Japan and the revolution at home had shaken the Russian state to its core. Russia now abandoned her Far Eastern adventures and refocused her attentions on Europe. In her weakened condition, she was forced to accept a reduced status in the Franco-Russian Alliance and to pursue for several years a low-key foreign policy whose main goal was peace.⁹

After 1905 the constraints on Russian power continued for several years, despite the regime's valiant attempts to preserve Russia's status as a Great Power. They could not suppress easily the domestic troubles, and the fear of another revolution was a constant spectre in government thinking. The basic inefficiencies and evils of Russian autocracy did not disappear with the celebrated October Manifesto. Even with P.Stolypin's counter offensive against revolutionary terrorism, the government of Nicholas II was unable to suppress

⁹ J.Long, "Franco-Russian Relations during the Russo-Japanese War" Slavonic and East European Review LII (1974) p.213.

all dissent, as Nicholas I had been able to do; nor would it reform itself in a manner that might have satisfied substantial segments of the population.¹⁰ Instead, the alienation between the official state and wider society, which had long characterized Russia, became more pronounced.

Russia's perilous financial condition also acted as a brake on her exercise of power. By the end of 1905 the government faced bankruptcy and narrowly avoided it by means of large international loans. Despite some industrialization, Russia was still predominantly a peasant society with a literacy rate in 1913 of about thirty per cent, much lower, for example, than that in mid-eighteenth-century England. The rapid economic development of Germany after 1870 increased the threat to Russia's relative standing among the Powers.¹¹ Russia had a per capita income of less than the equivalent of one hundred dollars. Moreover, foreign capital played an integral part in Russia's economy.¹² A general lack of capital, low-consumer demand, a tiny middle class, vast distances, an extreme climate, and the heavy hand of the autocratic

¹⁰ For a good discussion of the limitations of Nicholas II's government see A.Verner op.cit.,

¹¹ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.8.

¹² T.Shanin, Russia as a Developing Society. The Roots of Otherness: Russia's Turn of the Century (London, 1985), p.186.

state all made the prospects for rapid industrialization in Russia more bleak than virtually anywhere else in Europe.¹³

The consequences of Russian weakness were many, not least of which was her embrace of the Triple Entente, in a vain attempt to preserve the status quo in Europe. While never abandoning the goal of dominating the eastern Balkans and the Straits, caution became the watchword.¹⁴ Among educated Russians, defeat in war had inspired contempt for the regime, whose primary historical role had been the expansion and preservation of a vast and powerful empire. According to Lieven, Russia's lack of success in war and diplomacy in the six decades prior to 1914 sapped the country's moral strength. The Russian elite lacked that self-confident belief in their own society, values and government which was so pronounced at the time among the British and German middle and upper classes.¹⁵

This dissertation is focused on Russian officialdom, both the government and the bureaucracy, especially the Tsar and the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, Finance, and Trade and Commerce. Within each group influential individuals have been singled out for close examination, with the

¹³ See P.Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (London, 1988), pp.232-241 for an assessment of Russian strengths and weaknesses.

¹⁴ McGrew, "Some Imperatives of Russian Foreign Policy" in Russia Under the Last Tsar (Minneapolis, 1969) p.227.

¹⁵ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.20.

intention of making clear a range of attitudes that were actually held toward Britain and France. Chapter two, through the prism of various official visits, provides an overview of the subject. It is followed by examinations of the views of Nicholas II and the Court (Chapter Three), the Foreign Ministry (Chapter Four) and other government ministries and the bureaucracy (Chapter Five). The Tsarist regime's concern with its image in France and Great Britain is discussed in Chapter Six. Special attention has been paid to how changing views of the Entente powers reflect Russia's domestic and international positions. The opinions of the intelligentsia and the new political parties are not part of this study in any major way, although they are occasionally referred to. Despite the new constitutional order these groups had little, if any, effect on foreign policy. Also, the scholarly literature on them is vast and their pro-western sympathies have already been established.¹⁶

¹⁶ Among others see: L.H.Haimson, The Russian Marxists and the Origins of Bolshevism (Cambridge Mass., 1955); G.A.Hosking, The Russian Constitutional Experiment, Government and Duma, 1907-1914 (Cambridge, 1973); J.L.H.Keep, The Rise of Social Democracy in Russia (Oxford, 1963); A.Levin, The Second Duma: A Study of the Social-Democratic Party and the Russian Constitutional Experiment (New Haven, 1940); R.Pipes ed., Revolutionary Russia (Cambridge Mass., 1968); R.Pipes, ed., The Russian Intelligentsia (New York, 1961); N.V.Riasanovsky, Russia and the West in the Teachings of the Slavophiles (Cambridge Mass., 1952); T.Riha, A Russian European, Paul Miliukov in Russian Politics (Notre Dame, 1969) and A.B.Ulam, In the Name of the People: Prophets and Conspirators in Prerevolutionary Russia (New York, 1977).

CHAPTER ONE

The Diplomatic Background

The Dual Alliance between Russia and France served as the cornerstone of Russian foreign policy for more than twenty years.¹ The formation of the Franco-Russian Alliance surprised many, including the new German Emperor Wilhelm II, who had assumed that autocratic and Orthodox Russia would never ally with republican and secular France. France initiated the secret defensive alliance that began in 1891 with a modest political agreement between the two countries that they would consult each other on any matter that might jeopardize the general peace; this was followed by a military convention in 1894.² Both Russia and France viewed the Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy as a threat. According to G.Kennan, with the lapse of the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890, "the Triplice became, for the

¹ W.L.Langer's The Franco-Russian Alliance 1890-1894 (London, 1929), now somewhat dated and written without access to Russian documents, is one of the standard works on the Dual Alliance. More recently G.Kennan produced The Fateful Alliance. France, Russia and the Coming of the First World War (New York, 1984). Kennan had access to Russian archives that makes his work more useful than Langer's. See also E.M.Rozental, Diplomaticheskaiia istoriia rusko-frantsuzskogo soiuza v nachale xx veka (Moscow, 1960).

² Langer, op.cit., p.416. See also Kennan, op.cit., p.177.

Russians, a wholly hostile and menacing apparition on the international horizon."³ Despite a common aversion for the Triple Alliance, important differences existed between the two new allies. Russia's military interests related primarily to Austria-Hungary and the Balkans. For France, it was Germany that posed the greater threat. This difference proved to be a continuing source of tension.

From the modest beginnings of the 1891 agreement, the relationship grew into a full-fledged alliance which, while still nominally defensive, became steadily more inflexible as the international scene darkened. In August 1899 the terms of the Dual Alliance were modified so that the duration of the military convention no longer depended on the Triple Alliance but was extended until either partner denounced it. The aims, now defined, were stated to be not merely the maintenance of the peace but also the preservation of the balance of power in Europe.⁴ The imperial clashes between France and Britain and between Russia and Britain in the 1890s caused the alliance to take on an anti-British character. An April 1901 military protocol outlined the support that Russia and France would provide each other in case of a war against Britain. In

³ Kennan, op.cit., p.120.

⁴ For a discussion of the changing nature of the Franco-Russian Alliance see C.Andrew, "German World Policy and the Reshaping of the Dual Alliance" Journal of Contemporary History, vol.1, no.3, (1966) pp.137-151. Jacques Drimaracci, "La Politique de Delcassé et la Triple Entente" Information Historique vol.29 (1967), no.4, pp.181-189.

1902 Nicholas II chaired a Main Staff Conference, which decided on rapid military aid to France and committed Russia to an attack on Germany in the event of a European war. France exerted financial pressure on Russia to obtain this decision, which clearly served French strategic interests.⁵

While Russian fortunes were at their lowest ebb, Nicholas II signed the Björko treaty with his overbearing cousin Wilhelm II during a courtesy visit on their yachts in July 1905. This abortive treaty provided for a Russo-German alliance against attack by any other power in Europe. The anti-French nature of the agreement was blatantly apparent to the Russian Foreign Minister, Count V.N.Lamsdorf, and he torpedoed the deal once he learned of it. Always fearful of a Russo-German rapprochement, the French helped to broker the forthcoming Anglo-Russian agreement.⁶

, The 1905 revolution and Russia's defeat in the Far East drastically altered the shape of the *Dual Alliance*. Dire financial circumstances forced Russia to conclude a large loan on the Paris and London markets; in return, Russia unequivocally supported France at the Algeciras conference, which

⁵ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, pp.103-104.

⁶ B.J. McKercher, "Diplomatic Equipose: the Lansdowne Foreign Office, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, and the Global Balance of Power" Canadian Journal of History vol.24, no.3, (1989) pp.332-333.

resolved the first Moroccan crisis in France's favour.⁷ At this conference Britain, France and Russia cooperated closely to thwart Germany, who had sought to isolate France and break up the newly formed 'Entente Cordiale'. Consequently, the conference was an important stepping stone in the formation of the Triple Entente.⁸ Russia agreed in April 1906 that the defeat of Germany would be the main aim of a European war. Moreover, the anti-British elements of previous military agreements were dropped.

In 1912 Russia went on to adopt more offensive war plans for the European theatre; in that year the first conference of Russian and French Chiefs of Naval General Staffs was held. By 1914 Russia had undertaken a firm commitment to early action against Germany in the event of a European war. The actual course of the war showed that such a strategy, although beneficial for France, did not serve Russian interests equally well. From 1894 to 1914 the Dual Alliance changed from being a partnership of equals to an unequal

⁷ See E.N.Anderson, The First Moroccan Crisis, 1904-1906 (Chicago, 1930); F.V.Parsons, The Origins of the Morocco Question 1880-1900 (London, 1976).

⁸ For a discussion of the loan and the Algeciras conference see Olga Crisp, "The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia" The Slavonic and East European Review vol.39 (1961) pp.497-511. R.Girault, Emprunts russes et investissements français en Russie, 1887-1914 (Paris, 1973). P.Renouvin, "L'emprunt russe d'avril 1906 en France", Etudes Suisses d'histoire générale 1960/1, pp.507-515.

relationship dominated by France, to Russia's detriment. As the alliance changed, as we shall see, so did official Russian attitudes to France.

In the years before the War, then, in addition to the Dual Alliance, Russia entered into a friendly partnership with Great Britain. Britain was also tied to France by the 1904 'Entente Cordiale'.⁹ It was this loose grouping of powers that came to be known as the Triple Entente and that acted as a counterweight to the Triple Alliance.¹⁰ The new friendship with Britain ran contrary to the entire thrust of nineteenth-century Russian diplomacy; up until this point Anglo-Russian enmity had been an established fact. As late as the beginning of the twentieth century, Britain considered a war against Russia more probable than any other. As Russia's frontier in Central Asia had moved southward in the late nineteenth century, protection of the Indian subcontinent had become a source of anxiety for the British.¹¹ Fear of a Russian invasion of India was real, but the main concern was the possibility that Russian activities

⁹ For a standard work on the 'Entente Cordiale' see P.J.V.Rolo, Entente Cordiale: The Origins and Negotiation of the Anglo-French Agreements of 8 April 1904 (London, 1969). See also C.Andrew, Théophile Delcassé and the Making of the Entente Cordiale, 1898-1905 (London, 1968).

¹⁰ B.E.Schmitt, The Triple Alliance and the Triple Entente (New York, 1947).

¹¹ David Dilks, Retreat from Power. Vol. One 1906-1939 (London, 1981), p.2. See also Z.Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War (London, 1977), pp.79-80; B.J.Williams, "The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907" The Historical Journal vol.9, no.3, (1966), pp.363-365; and B.J.C.McKercher, loc.cit., pp.299-339.

on or beyond the Indian frontier would cause disaffection within India. Russia could not be allowed to establish herself along the Indian frontier, without serious damage to British prestige.¹² In the last two decades of the nineteenth century, with the Russian occupation of Turkestan and the construction of the Transcaspian railway, many of the physical obstacles to invasion by Russia had been removed. As a result, the threat of such an occurrence came to dominate both British strategic discourse and the popular imagination.¹³

The intense Anglo-Russian rivalry of the nineteenth century continued unabated into the twentieth century. The accidental sinking of a British trawler off Dogger Bank on 21 October 1904, while the Russian Baltic fleet was on its way to the Far East, brought the two countries to the brink of war. Anxious French diplomatic intervention averted a military conflict but the incident was the nadir of Anglo-Russian relations, already strained by the Anglo-Japanese alliance and by the Russian conviction that Britain had incited Japan to war and provided her with the means to fight.¹⁴ Russia's humiliating defeat at the hands of an Asiatic power in the Russo-Japanese war was

¹² M.A.Yapp, "British Perceptions of the Russian Threat to India" Modern Asian Studies vol.21, no.4, (1987) pp.647-650.

¹³ Ibid., pp.662-663.

¹⁴ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.28. See also Keith Neilson, "A Dangerous Game of American Poker: the Russo-Japanese War and British Policy" Journal of Strategic Studies vol.12, no.1, (1989) pp.63-87.

Russia's third major military or diplomatic defeat since the Crimean war. The disaster in 1904-1905 convinced Russia's rulers that, as the courtier and publicist General A.A.Kireyev said, Russia had "become a second-rate power."¹⁵ The outcome of the war also reduced the Russian threat to Britain. In particular, the annihilation of the Russian Baltic fleet at Tsushima altered drastically the maritime balance and the British navy was suddenly considerably larger than the next two ranking navies.¹⁶ The military threat to India had been reduced and diplomacy would be enough to protect her.¹⁷ Moreover, Germany was now unequalled in Europe both militarily and industrially.

The new constellation of forces caused both Russian and British statesmen to reconsider their old assumptions about each other. Sir Edward Grey, the British Foreign Secretary, began the Anglo-Russian talks in earnest after the Algeciras conference of 1906 and French encouragement. He regarded an entente with Russia as "the thing most desired in our foreign policy", since an agreement with Russia would eliminate the already reduced

¹⁵ Quoted in Lieven, ibid., p.21. For a history of the war see J.A.White, The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War (Princeton, 1974).

¹⁶ Paul Kennedy, The Realities Behind Diplomacy. Background Influences on British External Policy, 1865-1980 (Glasgow, 1981), p.123.

¹⁷ K.Neilson, "A Dangerous Game of American Poker", p.82.

threat to India and provide protection against Germany.¹⁸ The Russian government sought an agreement to protect its alliance with France, to mend its relationship with Tokyo and to ensure peace and stability.¹⁹

Britain and Russia signed a convention in August 1907, which was the culmination of long and arduous negotiations, going back to Lord Salisbury's proposals in 1898. This agreement, nine years in gestation, defined spheres of influence in Persia and the attitudes of the two countries to Tibet and Afghanistan. Ian Nish has recently described the 1907 convention as a "sensible compromise between two imperialist powers who had their Asian wings clipped, Britain for financial reasons, and Russia at the hands of Japan.²⁰ The ultimate result of the convention, however, was that Britain and Russia united to counter German efforts to dominate the continent.²¹ A "negative correspondence of interests", primarily a fear of Germany and a desire to maintain the balance of power in Europe, drew Russia, France and

¹⁸ Quoted in Keith Wilson, "British Power in the European Balance, 1906-1914" in David Dilks, op.cit., pp.34-36. See also P.Kennedy, The Realities Behind Diplomacy, pp.126-127. Z.Steiner, op.cit., p.83.

¹⁹ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, pp.30-31.

²⁰ Ian Nish, "Politics, Trade and Communications in East Asia: Thoughts on Anglo-Russian Relations, 1861-1907" Modern Asian Studies vol.21, no.4, (1987) p.678.

²¹ McKercher, loc.cit., p.32.

Great Britain into the Triple Entente.²² Anglo-Russian efforts to halt construction of the Berlin-Baghdad railway were a good example of this common distrust of Germany.²³ Although the 1907 accord did not mention European affairs, the British told the Russians that in the future Britain would no longer oppose Russian ambitions for passage through the Straits, provided other powers agreed. But in general Britain and France were not particularly interested in helping Russia achieve her goals in the Balkans, a difference that would prove irksome to the Russians and cause them to question the utility of the Entente. Even after the formation of the Entente, then, problems in Anglo-Russian relations still persisted, but a new willingness to cooperate rendered most difficulties solvable or at least manageable. Persia continued to be a 'bête noire', but Russia's revival and a growing fear of Germany prompted Britain to align herself more closely with Russia. Ultimately, in the spring of 1914, Britain agreed to begin naval conversations with Russia.²⁴ Between 1907 and July

²² McGrew, loc.cit., p.211.

²³ For a discussion of this cooperation see Stuart A.Cohen, "Sir Arthur Nicolson: the Case of the Baghdad Railway" The Historical Journal vol.18, no.4, (1975), pp.863-872. On the issue of the Baghdad Railway see also M.K.Chapman, Great Britain and the Baghdad Railway, 1888-1914 (Northhampton, Mass., 1948) and John B.Wolf, "The Diplomatic History of the Baghdad Railway" University of Missouri Studies vol.2, (1936).

²⁴ Steiner, op.cit., pp.114-115 and 121-123. On the question of Persia see B.C.Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914 (Berkeley, 1967); R.L.Greaves, "Some Aspects of the Anglo-Russian Convention and its Workings in Persia, 1907-1914" Bulletin of the School of Oriental Studies

1914 a series of diplomatic crises had been rocking Europe. The overall impact of these events was to test and finally strengthen the Triple Entente. Since they played pivotal roles in shaping official Russian attitudes to her Entente partners, they are outlined here to provide the necessary backdrop for the main body of this study.

The Bosnian annexation crisis of 1908-1909 was the baptismal crisis of the newly formed Triple Entente.²⁵ This diplomatic brouhaha, which unfolded disastrously for Russia, began with a seemingly successful meeting between A.Izvolsky, the Russian Foreign Minister, and his Austrian counterpart, Count A.Aehrenthal, on 16 September 1908 at Buchlau. From 1878 to 1908 Austro-Hungarian troops had occupied and administered the provinces of Bosnia-Herzegovina as though they were Austrian colonies, even though they were still nominally under Ottoman rule. Izvolsky agreed to Austrian annexation of this territory in return for the opening of the Straits to Russian warships. Aehrenthal preempted Izvolsky, however, by unilaterally announcing shortly after their meeting the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina, before Izvolsky had had time to prepare the diplomatic groundwork with the other powers on the

vol.31, (1968); F.Kazemzadeh, Russia and Great Britain in Persia, 1864-1914 (New Haven, 1968); and M.Kent, Oil and Empire: British Policy and Mesopotamian Oil, 1900-1920 (London, 1976).

²⁵ See A.Rossos, Russia and the Balkans, Inter-Balkan Rivalries and Russian Foreign Policy, 1908-1914 (Toronto, 1981) and B.E.Schmitt, The Annexation of Bosnia 1908-1909 (Cambridge, 1937).

question of the Straits. Stephen Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, made it clear to Russia that she could not depend on French support. In the end, in March 1909, Saint Petersburg was forced to accept a humiliating German ultimatum, which demanded immediate, unconditional and unequivocal acceptance of Austrian terms. Russia, perforce, recognised the annexation and failed to receive compensation of any kind.

The ramifications of the crisis were many. It caused much bitterness within Russia, and she resolved to strengthen the Entente which had failed her. In the short term, she felt little obligation to aid France in her struggles with Germany. Soon after the Bosnian imbroglio, Saint Petersburg concluded two agreements that caused Paris serious concern. In October 1909, at Racconigi, Russia signed, without informing France, a secret accord with Italy to preserve the status quo in the Balkans. In November 1910 Nicholas II, with his new Foreign Minister S.D. Sazonov, visited Wilhelm II at Potsdam and signed an agreement on Persia and the Baghdad railway. The Bosnian annexation crisis, to be examined in some detail, was the nadir of Franco-Russian relations in the immediate prewar years.

As a result of the annexation, the Serbs within Bosnia, who saw their desire for a greater Serbia threatened, began an anti-Austrian terrorist campaign which culminated in the assassination of the Archduke Franz-

Ferdinand and his wife at Sarajevo.²⁶ The balance which Russia and Austria-Hungary had maintained in the Balkans since 1897, when Nicholas II and Franz Josef agreed to put the Balkans "on ice", was destroyed. Bismarck's defensive arrangement was transformed into a German obligation to bolster Austria's deteriorating position in southeastern Europe. The crisis also demonstrated Austria's dependence on Germany and, paradoxically, the extent to which the initiative within the alliance had passed to Vienna.

When the next major pre-war crisis erupted in the summer of 1911, the Entente powers had taken the lessons of 1908-1909 to heart. The second Moroccan Crisis began on 1 July 1911 when the German gunboat, the Panther, was sent to Agadir on the coast of Morocco, allegedly to protect German commercial interests, which French expansion threatened in Morocco.²⁷

London, already concerned about German naval activity, thought that Germany wanted to establish a naval base at Agadir, which was close to Gibraltar and

²⁶ For a general history of Serbia see M.B.Petrovich, A History of Modern Serbia (New York, 1976).

²⁷ On the Agadir crisis see: J.C.Allain, Agadir 1911, une crise Impérialiste en Europe pour la conquête du Maroc (Paris, 1976); I.C.Barlow, The Agadir Crisis (Durham, N.C., 1940); G.Barraclough, From Agadir to Armageddon, Anatomy of a Crisis (London, 1982); J.Caillaux, Agadir: ma politique extérieure (Paris, 1919); R.A.Cosgrove, "A Note on Lloyd George's Speech at the Mansion House on 21 July 1911" Historical Journal vol.12, (1969); L.A.Neiman, "Franko-russkie otnosheniia vo vremia marokkanskogo krizisa 1911g" Frantsuzskij Ezhegodnik (1969) pp.65-91; and K.Wilson, "The Agadir Crisis; the Mansion House Speech and the Double-Edgedness of Agreements" Historical Journal vol.15, (1972).

vital British trade routes. Consequently, on 21 July, Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, gave his famous speech at the Mansion House, with its stern warning to Germany. France and Germany began direct negotiations but in September the talks nearly broke down and war seemed imminent. In the end, Germany retreated, and in November an agreement recognised French rights in Morocco in return for the cession of territory in the French Congo.

In contrast to what happened in 1908 - 1909, during the Agadir crisis the members of the Triple Entente rallied together, as they had at Algeciras in 1906, and successfully contained German aspirations. Grey in particular was unwilling to let Germany bulldoze France as she had Russia over Bosnia-Herzegovina.²⁸ London regarded the crisis as a test of the Entente.²⁹ Russia, on the other hand, chastened by her recent experiences, was reluctant to back France wholeheartedly. However, after an initial period of aloofness, which worried Paris, Russia let it be known that in case of war she would be true to the alliance.³⁰

The Anglo-French naval conversations begun in August 1912 were a direct result of the second Moroccan crisis. With her participation in these

²⁸ Nabil M. Kaylani, "Liberal Politics and the British Foreign Office 1906-1912: An Overview" International Review of History and Political Science vol.12, no.3, (1975) p.38.

²⁹ Steiner, op.cit., p.75.

³⁰ Barlow, op.cit., pp.357-362.

conversations, Britain incurred a serious moral obligation to aid France in the event of a conflict with Germany; it was agreed that France would concentrate her navy in the Mediterranean and Britain would be responsible for the Channel and France's northern coasts. The crisis and its aftermath revealed the deep divisions between Britain and Germany and, furthermore, it seriously threatened the balance of power. The Triple Entente and the Triple Alliance both determined to swing the equilibrium in their favour and the buildup of armaments intensified.³¹ It also became apparent that Germany's alliance with Austria-Hungary was not worth much unless Austria-Hungary's own interests were threatened as they had been during the Bosnian crisis. The second Moroccan crisis had much the same psychological impact on Germany as the events in 1908-1909 had had on Russia.

After Agadir the "struggle for mastery of Europe" returned to the Balkan peninsula. Russia's Balkan policy and Pan-Slavism were crucial elements contributing to Balkan instability in the immediate pre-war years.³² The Balkan states exploited Austro-Russian rivalry for their own ends. The fear that their Balkan clients, unless humoured, would join the enemy camp greatly

³¹ Ibid., pp.400-401.

³² For a general history of Pan-Slavism see H.Kohn, Panslavism (New York, 1960). A recent work on Russia's Balkan policy is Barbara Jelavich, Russia's Balkan Entanglements, 1806-1914 (New York, 1991). For a background study see M.B.Petrovich, The Emergence of Russian Panslavism, 1856-1870 (New York, 1956).

weakened Saint Petersburg's and Vienna's ability to impose restraint. In the particular case of Russo-Serbian relations, Russia's failure to control Belgrade was exacerbated by the actions of N.G.Hartwig, Russia's Austrophobic Minister to Belgrade from 1909 to 1914, who also had influential friends in Saint Petersburg. Hartwig successfully bound Serbia to Russia but he could not be trusted to fulfill his instructions loyally and his reports to Saint Petersburg were highly selective. He often acted without the direct authorization of his superiors, but his activities in Belgrade were "only the extreme manifestation of that general fear of Austrian ambitions which underlay Russian foreign policy in the years 1909-14."³³

The Balkan wars of 1912-1913 were the last occasion on which a dispute in that region of Europe was kept localised.³⁴ Initially, Russia, through Ambassador N.V.Charykov in Constantinople, had sought to achieve Russian aims in this arena through Russo-Turkish friendship and the adherence of Turkey to a Balkan League. But after Italy's annexation of Tripoli during the Libyan war, Said Pasha, the Turkish Foreign Minister, who had originally welcomed Charykov's overture, no longer had anything to gain by hinting at

³³ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.42. See also E.C.Thaden, Russia and the Balkan Alliance of 1912 (Pennsylvania, 1965) pp.65-70.

³⁴ For a history of these wars see E.C.Helmreich, The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars (Harvard, 1938).

eventual Turkish adherence to the Triple Entente or the Triple Alliance.³⁵

Thus, the idea of a Russo-Turkish 'rapprochement' foundered. Russia, and particularly Hartwig, then played a major role in organising the Balkan League of Bulgaria, Serbia, Greece and Montenegro, although Saint Petersburg seemed to intend that the alliance play a defensive, not an aggressive, role against Austria-Hungary. According to Thaden, the confidential talks Sazonov had with Grey and Poincaré in September and October 1912 to deal with the growing Balkan crisis greatly helped to reinforce Franco-Russian and Anglo-Russian friendship. For the first time Russia could be reasonably certain that France would fight if a Russo-Austrian war arose out of a purely Balkan incident.³⁶

Despite Sazonov's efforts to maintain the peace, the Ottoman Empire's embarrassment at the hands of Italy provided the Balkan League with the opportunity to achieve their nationalistic aspirations. The First Balkan War began in October 1912 when the League attacked Turkey and won swift victories. By May 1913 the Great Powers had secured a preliminary peace at the London Conference, under which Turkey surrendered most of its European territory on the understanding that the Powers would create a new independent

³⁵ For a good account of Charykov's diplomacy in Constantinople see Thaden, op.cit., Chapter 2, pp.38-57.

³⁶ Ibid., pp.68, 79, 133, and 136.

state of Albania. This arrangement displeased Serbia and Montenegro, as they wished to acquire the Albanian coastline. The former allies of the League quickly fell to squabbling over the division of territory. The Second Balkan War began on 29 June 1913 when Bulgaria launched a surprise attack on Serbia and Greece. Romania and Turkey invaded Bulgaria and she was quickly defeated. In August 1913 the Treaty of Bucharest divided most of Bulgaria's land claims in Macedonia and Thrace between Serbia and Greece. Bulgaria also ceded southern Dobrudja to Romania.

The effect of these wars was to limit Turkey's European possessions to the area around Constantinople and Adrianople. The ill-defined state of Albania was created. Serbia and Montenegro doubled their size and Greece became the most important power on the Aegean Sea, possessing the port of Salonika. Bulgaria, one of the original members of the Balkan League, was left bitterly resentful and would join the Central Powers in World War One, as would Turkey.

The aftermath of the Balkan Wars left no one satisfied. Most significantly, Serbia, although victorious on the battlefield, had been thwarted in her main objective of the Albanian coastline by the peace settlement. Russia resolved not to let Serbia be trampled on again, a policy which was to have important ramifications during the July crisis of 1914. The wars also reinforced the Austrian conviction that Serbia was an extremely dangerous enemy that

must be dealt with.³⁷ R.Langhorne has described the manner in which this conflict was handled as the last example of the European Concert in action. If a new crisis arose in which Austria and Russia were directly involved, they would not likely be able to resist their respective desires to destroy and defend Serbia. Nor was it clear that their allies would restrain them again or that the Concert of Europe would have the strength to endure.³⁸

Shortly after the conclusion of the Treaty of Bucharest another dispute threatened Russo-German relations and tested the strength of the Entente. In October 1913 it was announced that a German officer, General Liman von Sanders, was to be appointed to command the Turkish garrison at Constantinople.³⁹ His influence over promotions and appointments was likely to ensure a pro-German Turkish high command. Moreover, should the Ottoman Empire collapse, the presence of German-commanded troops in Constantinople might seriously impede a Russian seizure of the Straits. Saint Petersburg believed that this German action threatened fundamental Russian interests and therefore acted vigorously to overturn the appointment. Jules Cambon, the French Ambassador to Berlin, believed that Russia used this incident to derail

³⁷ Laurence Lafore, The Long Fuse (New York, 1971), pp.178-179.

³⁸ R.Langhorne, The Collapse of the Concert of Europe (London, 1981).

³⁹ See U.Trumpener, "Liman von Sanders and the German-Ottoman Alliance" Journal of Contemporary History vol.1, (1966).

French negotiations with Germany on the Baghdad railway because she worried that such a transportation route would pose a threat to her Caucasian frontier. As international tension mounted, the negotiations with Germany were suspended. After the affair was resolved, however, by Sanders relinquishing direct command of the Constantinople Corps but maintaining his rank of Inspector-General of the Turkish army, France and Germany reached an agreement on French participation in financing the Baghdad railway.

The compromise satisfied Russia, but the affair demonstrated how Russian relations with Germany had deteriorated. A newspaper war over the affair coincided with demands in the Russian press for a revision of the 1904 Russo-German commercial treaty (whose operations had been unfavourable to Russia) and in the German press for a preventive war against Russia.⁴⁰ Russian military intelligence emphasized German determination to control the Straits should the Ottoman Empire collapse, even at the cost of European war.⁴¹ In February 1914 an extraordinary conference in Saint Petersburg laid plans to enlarge the Baltic fleet in preparation for an offensive in the Near East. Russia also initiated, through France, naval conversations with Britain. On 14 May the British Cabinet sanctioned naval talks with Russia along the lines of

⁴⁰ I.V. Bestuzhev, "Russian Foreign Policy February - June 1914" Journal of Contemporary History vol.1 (1966) no.3, p.97.

⁴¹ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.49.

the 1912 talks with France. Preliminary discussions were held but the main negotiations were set for August.⁴²

By July 1914 Europe was a powder keg waiting to be ignited. From 1906 and the first Moroccan crisis to 1914 and the outbreak of general war, the stakes in the diplomatic game were gradually raised.⁴³ Each side suffered serious reverses and consequently each side resolved not to back down again. The alliances stiffened and the margin to manoeuvre became narrower. The remainder of this study is a detailed, critical examination of how official Russian attitudes toward Britain and France changed as the international scene became more fraught and the Concert of Europe disintegrated, first into violent dissonances and then into outright destruction.

⁴² Steiner, op.cit., p.121.

⁴³ The literature on the origins of the First World War is vast. Among the more influential studies are: L.Albertini, The Origins of the War of 1914, (London, 1965); S.B.Fay, The Origins of the World War 2 vols. (New York, 1928); Fritz Fischer, op.cit., James Joll, The Unspoken Assumptions (London, 1968); H.W.Koch, ed., The Origins of the First World War (London, 1984); A.J.Mayer, "Internal Causes and Purposes of War in Europe, 1870-1956", Journal of Modern History, vol.41, (1969), pp.291-303; and J.Remak, ed., The Origins of World War One, 1870-1914 (New York, 1967).

CHAPTER TWO

Ritual and Policy:

Seven Official Visits from 1908 to 1914

From 1908 to 1914 Russia and her Triple Entente partners exchanged five state visits, as well as a 1912 visit by the French Premier and a British naval visit. The style, timing and substance of these occasions reflect the changing nature of the Triple Entente of Russia, Britain and France, and of Russian attitudes toward the Entente in the immediate pre-war years. These visits can be viewed as the external manifestation of the inner workings of the Entente. The first round of visits in 1908 and 1909, after the aborted 1906 one by the British fleet to Kronstadt, showed the lukewarm support in Russia for a foreign policy that apparently was not furthering Russian interests. By 1914, however, when the lavish visits of the British fleet and French President Raymond Poincaré occurred, most of the Russian elite had come to regard the Triple Entente as the best means of preserving Russia's status as a great power. Attitudes had hardened and were no longer in flux as they had been from 1906 to 1909. Domestic upheaval and military defeat forced Russia to reassess her position. In 1914 Russia, strong once again and outwardly

confident, enthusiastically and wholeheartedly welcomed President Poincaré and the British fleet. As later events were to prove, this show of Russian Imperial strength and unity was a façade concealing weakness and division that would become all too apparent under the strain of world war.

The mood of the Russian government was sombre in the spring of 1906, when London broached the idea of a naval visit. The Russo-Japanese War and the revolutionary turmoil had shaken the Imperial edifice to its foundation. The First Duma proved more radical than the government had hoped and consequently survived for only seventy-three days before dissolution by Imperial decree. In the midst of such domestic chaos Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British Ambassador to Saint Petersburg, proposed a British naval visit to the Gulf of Finland. Initially Nicholas II welcomed the idea: -- "My August Sovereign welcomed this news with a heartfelt satisfaction"¹ -- perhaps because he felt too weak to resist the British overture or because he recognised the futility of continued animosity with Great Britain, a policy that had harmed Russia during the Russo-Japanese War.

In the end, fear about possible domestic upheaval prompted the Russian government tactfully to refuse the British request. They cited the unruly nature of the opposition parties in both Britain and Russia as the main reason

¹AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.83, l.130, 24 May/ 6 June 1906.

for refusing the visit which earlier they had welcomed.² Nicholas II telegraphed Edward VII to suggest that it be delayed.

I can not but look upon the approaching visit of Your squadron with the greatest anxiety. To have to receive foreign guests when one's country is in a state of acute unrest is more than painful and inappropriate. You know how happy I should have been to receive the English fleet in normal times, but now I can only beg of You to postpone the squadron's arrival till another year. -- Nicky.³

The Russian government still did not wish to offend Britain whose friendly overtures Russia, in her weakened state, could not afford to spurn. Ironically, the British government was worried about public disapproval of a visit which, according to Sir Edward Grey, had "aroused dislike and opposition among Liberals in the House of Commons, and caused great embarrassment at the Foreign Office." Yet the Foreign Office worried that the Russian government would regard withdrawal of the proposal as a "slight and rebuff" which would prejudice relations between the two countries. The British government was relieved when "eventually the Russians themselves, with discretion and tact

²Ibid., l.130, 28 June 1906.

³AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, partII, l.80, secret telegram from Benckendorf, 24 April 1906.

asked that the visit should not take place.⁴ In this manner, the event was delayed with no offence taken on either side.

The first public affirmation of improved relations between Britain and Russia was the British royal visit to Reval in June 1908, which followed soon after the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention. Nevertheless, residual Russian anxiety remained. In 1908, even though the revolutionary disturbances had been quelled temporarily, concern about the domestic impact of a British visit still lingered. Edward VII told the Russian Ambassador, Count Benckendorf, that he would not take the initiative and ask to touch Russian soil, since it would be better on such an occasion to avoid any event that could cause trouble and leave an unfortunate impression.⁵ No doubt Russian officials were grateful for the King's adroit handling of a politically difficult situation. The visit was kept short and confined to the royal yachts to avoid trouble.⁶

The first public news about the proposed visit appeared in a favourable Times article on 21 May 1908, which pleased Count Benckendorf.⁷ The Russian government wanted to repair its damaged reputation abroad and

⁴Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916 (Toronto, 1925), p.150.

⁵AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.60, l.106, 9/22 May 1908, Benckendorf to Izvolsky.

⁶Ibid., l.69, 18/31 May 1908, letter to O'Beirne, British Chargé d'Affaires.

⁷Ibid., l.52, 8/21 May 1908, secret telegram from Benckendorf.

any positive foreign press coverage was eagerly reported to Saint Petersburg by its diplomats abroad.⁸ The proposed visit, however, caused a sensation in Britain and the Independent Labour Party demanded that the Liberal government declare the visit to be of a purely personal nature. Grey would not yield and his firm stand won him the Russian government's admiration. In a long speech to the House, Grey defended the upcoming visit, Anglo-Russian amity, the Russian Emperor and to a certain extent the domestic policies of the Russian government. The Foreign Secretary refused to pass judgement on Russia's internal situation and even went so far as to prophesy a bright future.⁹

S.A.Poklevskii-Kozell, of the Russian embassy in London, described Grey's speech as a "full and just estimate of present relations between Russia and England."¹⁰ Izvolsky told Sir Charles Hardinge, permanent undersecretary in the Foreign Office, that Grey's speech was "excellent".¹¹ To Hardinge Nicholas II also warmly praised Grey's speech, saying it had made the "best

⁸ See chapter 6 for a more thorough discussion of the relations between the Russian government and the foreign press.

⁹Hansard, series 4, 4 June 1908, col.246.

¹⁰AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.60, ll.227-228, 28 May/ 10 June 1908, Poklevskii-Kozell to Izvolsky.

¹¹ Grey, *op.cit.*, p.203, appendix to chapter XII, "Report of Sir Charles Hardinge to Sir Edward Grey on the Visit of King Edward to the Tsar at Reval in June 1908", 12 July 1908.

possible impression."¹² The Emperor told Hardinge he was very glad that the debate had taken place, as it showed the world that both the Conservatives and the Liberals shared the same warm feelings toward Russia. Even when one accounts for Nicholas II's undeniable talent for being agreeable, he clearly impressed upon Hardinge his sincere admiration for Grey and his personal interest in improved Anglo-Russian relations.

Despite the limited nature of the Reval visit it was, by all accounts, a personal and diplomatic success. The Russian Imperial Family presented itself in force to greet their fellow monarch, relative and new-found diplomatic friend, Edward VII.¹³ The Russian Premier P.A.Stolypin, the Foreign Minister A.P.Izvolsky, the Minister of the Court Count Friedrichs, and the Russian Ambassador to London Count Benckendorf, were all at the Reval meeting.¹⁴ Queen Alexandra, the Russian Dowager Empress's sister, and her daughter, Princess Victoria, as well as Sir Charles Hardinge, Admiral Fisher, the First Sea Lord, and Sir Arthur Nicolson, the British Ambassador to Saint Petersburg, accompanied Edward VII. The mix of dignitaries and officials meant the occasion would be both a family affair and a working visit.

¹²Ibid., p.207.

¹³AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.60, l.132.

¹⁴Ibid., l.69, 18/31 May 1908; letter to O'Beirne.

According to Harold Nicolson, the family reunion was a success.¹⁵

Nicholas and Alexandra had spent some of the happiest days of their youth and courtship at Queen Victoria's court, and it was natural that they should feel delight at being among family who brought back memories from less troubled times. General A.A.Mossolov, the chief of the Court Chancellery, recalled that

the whole of the Imperial family retained the pleasantest memories of this visit, during which every sort of constraint or nervousness was dispelled by the tact and good feeling of our guests.¹⁶

In his toast to his uncle, Nicholas wished that this royal meeting at Reval would have the result of drawing the two "countries closer together and of promoting the maintenance of the peace of the world."¹⁷ Improved relations with Britain and the importance of maintaining international peace were the twin cornerstones of Russia's cautious foreign policy as she recovered from the disaster of the Russo-Japanese War and the revolution of 1905. Nicholas referred to the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 through which

questions of equal moment both to Russia and England have been satisfactorily settled by Our Governments. I am certain that your Majesty appreciates as highly

¹⁵Harold Nicolson, First Lord Carnock. A Study in the Old Diplomacy (London, 1930), p.271.

¹⁶A.A.Mossolov, At the Court of the Last Tsar (London, 1935), p.212.

¹⁷Ibid., l.192.

as I do the value of these agreements,
for, notwithstanding their limited scope,
they cannot help spreading among Our two
countries feelings of mutual goodwill
and confidence.¹⁸

The subtext of the Imperial toast reflects the foreign policy of a Great Power in crisis attempting to reconsolidate its international and internal positions while maintaining a brave face for the outside world.

Publicly the Russian government presented the visit as "the happy expression of very amicable relations which actually exist between Russia and England."¹⁹ It was hoped that this visit would inaugurate a new era of closer and more intimate relations with England. In an obvious attempt to placate Germany, whom Russia did not want and could not afford to offend, a qualifying proviso was added to the statement: "Anglo-Russian friendship which cannot injure anyone, which does not aim at the interests of any country, will contribute powerfully to maintain the peace between nations."²⁰

In private Nicholas II expressed his satisfaction with the visit to Charles Hardinge, saying it "sealed and confirmed the intention and spirit of the Anglo-Russian Agreement."²¹ Hardinge and the Tsar discussed the warm

¹⁸ibid.,

¹⁹ibid., l.219.

²⁰ibid.,

²¹Grey, op.cit., p.207.

coverage the British Royal visit to Reval received in the Russian press. The rapid spread of pro-British sentiment pleased Nicholas II, who thought that the idea of friendlier relations with Britain had firmly taken root and now only required "to be carefully fostered to bear fruit in the future."²²

Harold Nicolson attributed Nicholas II's satisfaction with the Reval visit to the personal charm of Edward VII: "The Tsar had returned from Bjorkoe and Swinemunde frightened and humiliated: he returned from Reval flattered and reassured."²³ No doubt Edward VII was a more accomplished flatterer than Wilhelm II, but the Tsar's pleasure was substantive as well as subjective. The visit had been a convincing public affirmation of Russia's prestige and ranking as a member in good standing of the Great Powers, a matter that had been in doubt as a result of the events of 1904-1906. The need to redeem Russia's international prestige and thereby justify the regime's 'raison d'être' drove Russian foreign policy in these critical years.²⁴

Shortly after Edward VII's visit to Reval, the new President of the French Republic, Armand Fallières, paid a state visit to Russia, as had been the practice of all new Presidents since the formation of the Dual Alliance. Before

²²Ibid., p.209.

²³Nicolson, op.cit., pp.274-275. Nicholas II and Wilhelm II met in July 1905 at Bjorkoe and in August 1907 at Swinemunde.

²⁴ Geyer, op.cit., passim. See also Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.153.

the visit, in the winter of 1906, the Russian ambassador in Paris, A.I.Nelidov, had with some trepidation raised with Lamsdorf the question of a Presidential visit to Russia. Nelidov noted that such an event was expected and would have to take place but, in the light of domestic upheavals, the time was not propitious to have a head of state from a Republic visit Russia. Nelidov noted that internal security left much to be desired and demonstrations of every type were to be feared.²⁵ The Ambassador also indicated that Russia, as a result of the 'Entente Cordiale', was no longer France's sole diplomatic friend and consequently they would have to proceed carefully in order not to alienate France. In his reply, Lamsdorf concurred with Nelidov's assessment.²⁶

This matter did not resurface, however, until the end of 1907. In a "private and confidential" letter from Izvolsky, conveyed to Nelidov in Paris by no less an emissary than the Grand Duke Paul Alexandrovich, Izvolsky revealed that the idea of a state visit from Fallières "little appealed to the Emperor."

Our August Master was visibly annoyed by this project: a visit of this type demands, at maturity more or less brief, a visit in response which, in the actual circumstances presents serious difficulties.²⁷

²⁵AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.107, part I. ll.192-195.

²⁶AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.108, l.564, 2/15 May 1906.

²⁷ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.69, ll.183-184, 8/21 December 1907; Private and confidential letter, Izvolsky to Nelidov.

The timing of the President's visit was also a problem, since the date that Maurice Bompard, the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, indicated to Izvolsky interfered with the Emperor's vacation plans. Worried about the implications of a refusal, Izvolsky asked Nelidov to use his fertile mind "to find a way out".²⁸

Under renewed prodding from the new French Ambassador, Admiral Touchard, Izvolsky on 22 April 1908 again broached the subject of the state visit. The prospect of Fallières travelling to Russia had already been discussed in the European papers. If the President failed to visit Russia after his visit to the Scandinavian courts, "one would not miss in Europe to deduce from this the consequences which could have a great political significance."²⁹ In the end Izvolsky won the Tsar's reluctant consent but the Foreign Minister was obliged to instruct his Ambassador in Paris that the visit was to be kept as short as possible because of the Empress's health. As for the return trip which protocol demanded, Izvolsky had to assure Nicholas that it would also be short and could be in conjunction with a visit to Britain.³⁰ Nelidov was relieved to receive

²⁸Ibid.,

²⁹AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.69, ll.183-184, 8/21 December 1907; Private and confidential letter, Izvolsky to Nelidov.

³⁰Ibid.,

news of the Emperor's change of heart.³¹ He suggested that the President should make a naval visit to one of the Baltic ports after he had been to the Scandinavian courts, to cause the Imperial couple as little disruption as possible and to avoid visiting Paris in response.³²

The Emperor and Empress were not the only ones in Russia in the spring of 1908 who felt little sympathy for their French ally. The conservative Novoe Vremya published an article by its leading columnist, M.O.Menshikov, so hostile to France that the French Ambassador drew Izvolsky's attention to the matter. According to Touchard, the article concerned the lack of solidarity in the Franco-Russian alliance and advocated "entente, if not alliance, with Germany".³³ Menshikov argued that in a war against Germany France would abandon Russia whereas "if Russia and Germany would fight back to back, the one against the East, the other against the West, they would be invincible."³⁴ Izvolsky managed to placate Touchard, but the article indicated both the lack of warm feelings for the Dual Alliance and scepticism in certain Russian circles prior to the visit by Fallières as to the alliance's utility.

³¹AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.69, ll.187-188, 16/29 April 1908; Personal letter, Nelidov to Izvolsky.

³²Ibid.,

³³DDF, Second Series, vol.XI, no.392, Touchard to Pichon (29 June 1908) p.678.

³⁴Ibid.,

To complicate matters, a French socialist, Edouard Vaillant, insulted the Tsar in the Chamber of Deputies, and thereby helped to confirm the Russian government's suspicions about socialists. On 29 June 1908 during a debate on the government's request for a credit of 400,000 francs for the President's trip, Vaillant protested strongly against the visit, referring to the Emperor "in terms coarse and irreverent".³⁵ Nelidov sent Saint Petersburg the Matin press account of the Vaillant incident underlining twice in blue pencil and marking "NB" the passage describing Nicholas II as "the murderer of his best subjects."³⁶ Flesser, a Senator, also opposed the French government's request for money to finance the trip to Scandinavia and Russia. Nelidov reported to Saint Petersburg that these protests had no effect on French public opinion. The Russian Ambassador accepted the French Government's apology for the incident and, in a confidential letter to Izvolsky, suggested that the Russian government consider the incident closed to its satisfaction. Nelidov took great pains to praise the French Government for their handling of the affair.³⁷ While satisfied with the French government, Nelidov linked the French

³⁵AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.69, l.34, 17/30 June 1908; secret telegram from Nelidov.

³⁶Ibid., l.36, article from Le Matin.

³⁷Ibid., ll.41-43, 26 June/ 9 July 1908; Personal and confidential letter, Nelidov to Izvolsky.

socialists, who protested the President's visit to Russia, with the Russian revolutionaries and with Jews in France.

These are the manifestations of hate of Messrs. Rubonovitch and Co., furious to have failed in their revolutionary attempts in Russia, seconded by some anarchists and encouraged by our refugees and by the Jews.³⁸

Nelidov's anger toward Russian revolutionaries, refugees, anarchists and Jews reflected the strong fear among the Russian ruling elite of these elements which it believed posed a threat to the established order.

As the presidential visit began, the official newspaper Journal de Saint Pétersbourg, published an editorial which sought to limit the damage done by the Novoe Vremya article and the Vaillant incident by defending the alliance as "an essentially popular policy."³⁹ Nonetheless, the editorial, despite its best efforts, still projected an image of an alliance under attack. The strongest praise the newspaper could summon was really a nostalgic look back at the honeymoon period of the Dual Alliance:

Today the Franco-Russian alliance is a fact, and, the memories of its proud beginning have not more than the sweetness, a little melancholy, a little faded of a diplomatic honeymoon.⁴⁰

³⁸ Ibid., I.40, 30 June/13 July 1908; dispatch from Nelidov.

³⁹"France et Russie", Journal de Saint Pétersbourg, 15/28 July 1908, p.1.

⁴⁰Ibid.,

After all the preliminary difficulties, President Fallières did visit Reval in July 1908. During their first meeting the two heads of state had a conversation of "an unusual form and length,"⁴¹ which lasted for three-quarters of an hour. Stephen Pichon, the French Foreign Minister, Izvolsky and Nelidov expressed to each other their mutual satisfaction about this development.⁴² Nicholas told Pichon that he was very satisfied with the pacific character given the alliance in France and Russia.⁴³ This emphasis was no doubt intentional, as it was during Edward VII's visit, because of the real constraints on Russian foreign policy as a result of military defeat abroad and revolution at home.

Although Nicholas II's government might have had misgivings about the reliability of its French ally, it was well aware of the limitations within which its foreign policy had to operate. Consequently, care was taken during the visit not to offend or alienate Russia's main diplomatic partner. Pichon reported to the French Cabinet that the long interview with Izvolsky

had been more complete and more amicable than any of those that I had had previously in Paris with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Empire. I drew from it the impression that there was on the part of the Russian Government a desire, equal to ours, to maintain and practise the alliance.⁴⁴

⁴¹DDF, Second Series, vol.XI, no 421, Note du Ministre (5 August 1908) p.724.

⁴²Ibid., p.724.

⁴³Ibid., p.727.

⁴⁴Ibid., p.730.

Pichon also concluded that Russia was resolved to persevere with the policy of Entente with England. The Triple Entente had, to a large extent, been Izvolsky's creation. His reassuring words reflected his personal commitment to the Entente and the Russian government's realization both that it could not afford an adventuresome foreign policy and that its security lay in a policy of preserving the status quo.

The visit unfolded with the usual state dinners on both yachts, with toasts and honour guards. As in his conversation with Pichon, so in the Tsar's toast to the President at the dinner in his honour aboard the 'Standart', Nicholas stressed the peaceful goals of the alliance.⁴⁵ The toast was polite, welcoming and reassuring but hardly enthusiastic. In this way it reflected Nicholas II's attitude in 1908 toward France and his distinguished visitor. While not enthralled with the 1908 visit, Nicholas II performed his duty and pleased the French in the process. Touchard, Fallières and Pichon were all pleased with the event.⁴⁶

During Fallières' 1908 Reval visit efforts were made to please the French press in addition to the visiting French dignitaries. Prior to the visit the Russian Foreign Ministry, through the French Embassy, indicated its willingness

⁴⁵AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.69, l.112, 14/27 July 1908.

⁴⁶DDF, Second Series, vol.XI, no.420, Touchard to Pichon (3 August 1908) p.723. Also no.416, Pichon to Clemenceau (29 July 1908) p.713.

to see that telegrams from the French press covering the visit would be given "priority of expedition".⁴⁷ The Russian Foreign Minister himself had promised that "the best welcome would be made to representatives" of the rightwing, nationalist journal La Liberté, in Saint Petersburg.⁴⁸ As we shall see, Russian government concern with its image in the French press was continuous, prompted by the Russian government's dependence for loans on the Paris bourse.

The Russian press on the whole welcomed the visit of Fallières, much to the relief of the French Ambassador Touchard who monitored the reports for his Foreign Minister. The unpleasant attitude which had manifested itself in the Novoe Vremya article seemed to have disappeared. The 'Petersburger Zeitung' praised the alliance but its enthusiasm was as much for the 'rapprochement' with Britain as for the old Dual Alliance.⁴⁹

Russian coolness toward the visit, especially on the part of Nicholas II, reflected both a prevailing sentiment among the Russian elites that France had forsaken them during the Russo-Japanese War and a distaste for the

⁴⁷AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.69, l.11, 7/20 July 1908; letter to Touchard.

⁴⁸AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.135, l.20, 5 June 1908; letter from Maurice Gaudolphe to Izvolsky.

⁴⁹DDF, Second Series, vol.XI, no.420, Touchard to Pichon (3 August 1908) pp.722-723.

suspiciously left-wing character of the French government. Although the French were well pleased with the visit and publicly the Russians professed themselves to be so as well, the new President's trip to Russia did not completely alleviate the strains that stemmed from the war with Japan. During the Bosnian Annexation crisis, which was about to erupt, Russian sympathy for France and belief in her value as an ally reached its lowest ebb in the immediate pre-War years. In 1908 Britain was a newly acquired and cautiously praised friend, ideologically more acceptable than Republican France, and with a monarch who was Nicholas II's uncle. France, however, was a somewhat worn and apparently not very useful old ally with a radical government.

In 1909 Nicholas II and his wife, as required by protocol, returned the visits made in 1908 by President Fallières and Edward VII. In keeping with Imperial wishes the visits were brief and made at the same time to ensure the minimum of fuss. The Imperial yacht 'Standart' visited the French port of Cherbourg for two days from 31 July to 1 August 1909. The Russian Emperor reviewed the French fleet and in his toast to the French President paid "hommage to the superb fleet" which had "vigorously impressed" him.⁵⁰ Nicholas also expressed his firm conviction that the Dual Alliance constituted "a precious guarantee for the general peace". As in 1908, the emphasis on peace was apparent in 1909 after the recent Bosnian annexation fiasco had humiliated

⁵⁰ AVPR, F.133, OP.470, 1909G., D.196, I.160.

a Russia still weak on the international stage. Russian rage at French behaviour during the crisis was carefully concealed during Nicholas's visit to Cherbourg, because Russian vulnerability forced them to swallow their pride and accept with as good grace as possible the hand dealt them.

After his perfunctory visit to France, Nicholas proceeded to Cowes. Before his arrival, Sir Edward Grey asked Benckendorf if he could refer in the House to the upcoming visit as official. Benckendorf informed Saint Petersburg that he agreed that Grey should do so and even felt compelled to insist on this point.⁵¹ A group of Duma representatives visited England just prior to the Cowes meeting. In light of the Imperial visit the Russian ambassador viewed the delegation as "exceedingly useful and destined especially to exercise a very salutary influence on the Parliament".⁵²

In the House of Commons, under the guise of a question to the Foreign Secretary, William Thorne, a member "of the party of the extreme left" [sic], launched an attack on the upcoming Russian Imperial visit in "violent" terms. Thorne's behaviour appalled Benckendorf but the response of "the great

⁵¹AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1909g., d.197, l.2, 3/16 June 1909; secret telegram from Benckendorf.

⁵²AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1909g., d.198, ll.3-4.

papers, with the Times at the head" pleased Benckendorf.⁵³ He protested officially to Grey, whose outrage satisfied Benckendorf.⁵⁴

So confident was Benckendorf of British goodwill that he dismissed summarily an Independent Labour Party manifesto of 26 June which protested "violently against the visit of Our August Master".⁵⁵ He suggested that the sympathetic welcome which the Russian deputation received from all classes of British society led the extremists in their exasperation to this "new and odious effort." Benckendorf delighted in the Russian Duma visit which produced "the best effect." The Russian delegation issued a statement, which was published in the morning papers of 29 June, rejecting the contrast made in the Labour Manifesto between the delegates as representatives of the Russian people and the Tsar, who by implication was not.

As commissioned by my colleagues I think it my duty to protest resolutely against the insult to ourselves conveyed in this contrast. We are happy to feel that the cordial welcome which we are receiving everywhere entitles us to be sure that the manifesto of the Labour party does not express the opinion of the English people.⁵⁶

⁵³ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1909g., d.197, l.3, 3/16 June 1909; secret telegram from Benckendorf.

⁵⁴ Ibid., l.4, 3/16 June 1909; secret telegram from Benckendorf.

⁵⁵ Ibid., l.6, 13/ 26 June 1909; secret telegram from Benckendorf.

⁵⁶ The Times, 29 June 1909, p.5. A.S.Khomiakov issued the statement for the delegation.

The British press hailed the protest as "stamped with dignity and appropriate."⁵⁷ Furthermore, V.A.Maklakov, a Kadet member of the delegation, in a Morning Post interview, said that all Russia regarded the Emperor as the representative of the nation and consequently any insult to the Tsar was an insult to Russia. Benckendorf viewed these initiatives as "very useful".⁵⁸ They also pleased Grey who told Benckendorf that "for the English Government this Russian display was so useful and opportune that he had avoided speaking to me of it until now fearing to appear to have suggested it."⁵⁹ In the end what had begun as an insult to Imperial dignity became a minor public relations triumph.

The visit to Cowes was a success. Edward VII and Queen Alexandra were present, as were the King and Queen of Spain, the Prince and Princess of Wales, and other members of English royalty.⁶⁰ In his toast to his uncle, Nicholas II referred to the 1908 Reval visit and the Anglo-Russian Convention as having "fully answered its purpose". He said,

Never have the relations between England
and Russia been more cordial; it is

⁵⁷AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1909g., d.197, l.7, 16/29 June 1909; secret telegram from Benckendorf.

⁵⁸Ibid.,

⁵⁹Ibid.,

⁶⁰Ibid., l.29, 25 June/ 8 July 1909; secret telegram from Benckendorf.

My warmest desire that these relations founded on common interests and mutual esteem, should remain as perfect in the future, for the general cause of peace and the benefit of mankind.⁶¹

This almost effusive Imperial toast, composed by Nicholas himself, signified the growing official Russian commitment to Britain as an important diplomatic friend. Nicholas II's sincerity contrasted with the lukewarm toast he had proposed at Cherbourg to the French President only a few days previously. Despite the Labour Party protests, the Russian Emperor was clearly pleased to be in English waters, among friends and family, furthering a policy of 'rapprochement' with the England that was dear to him and ideologically acceptable as a monarchy.

The next important French visitor to pay an official visit to Russia was premier Raymond Poincaré. He arrived in August 1912 at a time when Russian attitudes toward her ally were distinctly warmer than hitherto, even though the centenary of the battle of Borodino was being celebrated. Poincaré's reception illustrated the significant changes which had transformed the Franco-Russian relationship and the growing rigidification of the alliance system in the years immediately prior to World War One. Poincaré visited Kronstadt, Peterhof, Saint Petersburg and Moscow. Fallières had not even touched Russian soil. No unpleasant controversy, like the Vaillant incident, preceded the 1912 visit. The

⁶¹ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1909g., d.197, l.127.

Russian government and society welcomed Poincaré as a strong, respected leader with whom it was possible to agree and work as equals. Russian timidity and caution, while not completely exorcized, had receded into the background. Russia was a country regaining its confidence and sense of place in the world, as it welcomed Poincaré in the summer of 1912.

Unlike most French politicians, Poincaré, the Lorrainer, was highly regarded in official Russian circles. His conservatism and unconditional support for the Dual Alliance and Triple Entente won him praise and respect from the Russian government.⁶² Poincaré appealed to the Saint Petersburg establishment in a way no French leader in recent memory had done and the corresponding warm feelings helped to reinforce both the Dual Alliance and the growing belief among the Russian elites that Russia's survival depended on a foreign policy of close cooperation with both France and Great Britain.

Poincaré arrived at Kronstadt on board the 'Condé' on 22 August 1912. The next day, as Poincaré and Georges Louis, the French ambassador to Russia, drove toward the French Embassy "a fairly large crowd gathered on the quay were shouting hurrahs".⁶³ During his first day in the Russian capital Poincaré paid a personal visit to Kokovtsov and his wife, whom he considered

⁶² For example see LN, vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov (16/29 February 1912) pp.203-204.

⁶³ R.Poincaré, The Memoirs of Raymond Poincaré (London, 1926), p.208.

to be old friends and who had always been strongly pro-French.⁶⁴ Kokovtsov remembered with gratitude

the service Poincaré had rendered Russia, and me personally, in 1906 ... since without his assistance Russia would not have liquidated her financial difficulties which followed the Russo-Japanese War.⁶⁵

The following day Nicholas II received the French Premier at Peterhof. The audience lasted half an hour and etiquette was strictly observed. He was not invited to sit down, nor did the Emperor or the Empress. Nicholas II and Poincaré discussed various questions including the military and national awakening of France, which pleased Nicholas. He "was delighted with the state of mind he saw existent in France; he congratulated the French Government on cherishing and developing it." The Emperor's remarks left Poincaré "convinced of his absolute loyalty to the alliance."⁶⁶

The Grand Duchess Maria Pavlovna, Nicholas II's aunt, invited Poincaré to tea because she wished to show him some favour during his stay in Russia.⁶⁷ The Russian Imperial Academy of Science held a luncheon in the

⁶⁴Ibid., p.221.

⁶⁵V.N.Kokovtsov, Out of My Past (Stanford, 1935), p.333.

⁶⁶ Poincaré, op.cit., Poincaré's notes from his audience with Nicholas II, 11 August 1912, p.226.

⁶⁷AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1912g., d.201, ll.23-24.

Premier's honour.⁶⁸ His stay in Saint Petersburg ended with a dinner given by the French Ambassador, attended by the Russian Ministers, Izvolsky, the British Ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, and members of the French colony in Saint Petersburg. The cream of Saint Petersburg society lionized Poincaré during his stay in the Russian capital.

Determined not to be discouraged by the upcoming Russian celebrations to mark the centenary of the Battle of Borodino, Poincaré continued from Saint Petersburg to Moscow. Moscow proved to be as anxious as Saint Petersburg to honour its distinguished French visitor. The Governor of Moscow, General Dounkovskii, the Mayor, Nicholas Gutchkov, brother of the leader of the Octobrist party, and several members of the French colony, which was quite large in Moscow, greeted Poincaré at the train station. Of Napoleon, Poincaré noted significantly, "they spoke with far more admiration than resentment." Poincaré attended a dinner given by his compatriots who received him so enthusiastically that it brought a lump to his throat.⁶⁹

A statement written by Poincaré and Sazonov publicly confirmed the cordial and mutually satisfying nature of Poincaré's Russian visit.⁷⁰ The

⁶⁸Ibid., l.69.

⁶⁹Ibid., pp.231-232, for Poincaré's stay in Moscow.

⁷⁰Ibid., p.235.

communiqué stressed the "spirit of absolute confidence and sincere friendship" with which the leaders dealt with all questions. The discussions were

not only to exchange views, but to plan practically their action. The two Governments noted that the accord is complete between them and that the ties which unite the two nations have never been more solid.⁷¹

The language of the communiqué was strong and clear. After the doubts and misgivings following the Russo-Japanese War and the humiliation of the Bosnian annexation crisis, the alliance was publicly reaffirmed as a result of Poincaré's successful visit. The recent events of the Second Moroccan crisis had drawn the two allies together and contributed to the success of Poincaré's visit.

From aboard the 'Condé' Poincaré telegraphed Sazonov:

Before losing sight of Russian shores I want to thank you again for your friendly welcome and to tell you again how happy I was to make your personal acquaintance.⁷²

Sazonov replied that the Premier's visit had given them great pleasure:

Permit me to say that you carry from here unanimous sympathy. I am particularly happy to have been able to develop a personal rapport with you which I will hold to my heart and cultivate.⁷³

⁷¹AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1912g., d.201, l.95.

⁷²AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1912g., d.201, l.81, 4 August 1912; telegram from Poincaré to Sazonov.

⁷³Ibid., l.82, 4 August 1912; telegram from Sazonov to Poincaré.

In his report to the Tsar, Sazonov indicated that the two Foreign Ministers had discussed the Franco-Russian naval conversations, the circumstances in which the allies would support one another in a war, and the tension between Georges Louis and Sazonov, among other matters. Sazonov concluded his report by saying that, in Poincaré, "Russia possesses a sure and faithful friend, endowed with a political spirit above the line and an inflexible will."⁷⁴ Poincaré so impressed the Russian Foreign Minister that he believed it would be most desirable for Russia to have Poincaré or someone of similar character at the head of France in the case of a crisis.⁷⁵ When the July crisis of 1914 unfolded Poincaré stood firmly by Russia and the two countries went to war together.

The reception accorded their Premier gratified the French public, a reaction which in turn pleased the Russian chargé d'affaires in Paris, M. Sevastopoulo. The Empress Alexandra's participation in the Imperial audience was especially welcomed, as her presence had not been anticipated. Such an honour was regarded as a welcome "almost equivalent to that reserved in a similar situation for a Head of State."⁷⁶ The visit caused the French to recognize the depth of the Russian attachment to the Alliance and

⁷⁴LN, vol.2, Sazonov report to Nicholas II (4 August 1912) p.345.

⁷⁵Ibid., p.345. See also BD/CP, Series A, Russia vol.6, no.113, Buchanan to Grey (18 August 1912) p.260.

⁷⁶LN, vol.2, Sevastopoulo to Sazonov (3/16 August 1912) pp.311-312.

consequently to value it more highly.⁷⁷ The Russian Foreign Ministry, through its embassy in Paris, monitored the French press coverage of the visit, revealing its concern with Russia's public image in France.⁷⁸

The Russian press also was "practically unanimous in extending a warm welcome to M. Poincaré", displaying an attitude of "sincere and hearty cordiality," according to Buchanan.⁷⁹ Novoe Vremya, so cold to France in 1908, now praised Poincaré most warmly:

For the first time M.Poincaré comes to Russia. Russian public opinion had already appreciated him for a long time: consummate orator, brilliant lawyer, financier of the first order, worker such as one rarely sees,... this man so interesting for his simplicity and his personal charm we welcome him who has always been one of the protagonists of the Franco-Russian alliance.⁸⁰

This conservative newspaper rejected the supposition that the 'raison d'être' of the Franco-Russian Alliance was the recovery of Alsace Lorraine and the Russian plundering of French savings. Rather, Novoe Vremya maintained that the Dual Alliance had been created to restore the balance of power in Europe

⁷⁷Ibid.,

⁷⁸AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1912g., d.201, ll.61-68.

⁷⁹BD/CP, Series A Russia, vol.6, no.112, Buchanan to Grey (11 August 1912) pp.257-258.

⁸⁰Ibid., p.258.

which had been destroyed by Bismarck.⁸¹ This passionate defence of the Franco-Russian alliance was symptomatic of a fundamental shift in Russian public opinion from 1908 when questioning the partnership rather than defending it was the fashion. Fear of Germany appeared to motivate Novoe Vremya's change of heart and in general was an important driving force in the rallying behind the alliance.

Both Vechernoe Vremya and Rossiya endorsed the Dual Alliance as the cornerstone of Russian foreign policy. Vechernoe Vremya pointed out that the Premier's visit came at an important moment, as Austria-Hungary had just passed a law increasing her army and her fleet; Germany had recently increased her army by a whole corps and her navy was a cause of deep anxiety for Great Britain.⁸² The semi-official Rossiya also attached great political significance to the visit.⁸³ The Kadet newspaper, Riech, welcomed the French statesman and hailed the significance of the event. Riech thought the timing of the visit noteworthy, coming as it did after the Baltic meeting between Nicholas II and Wilhelm II.⁸⁴

⁸¹Ibid., p.259.

⁸²Ibid., p.258.

⁸³Ibid., p.259.

⁸⁴Ibid., p.259.

The chorus of approval from the Russian press was not universal. Birzhevie Vedomosti, an influential paper, suggested that the action of Parisian capitalists in the future should be more in accord with the mutual political interests of France and Russia, revealing the always present if sometimes dormant Russian suspicion toward French capital which had invested so heavily in the Russian Empire since the last quarter of the nineteenth century.⁸⁵ This financial paper also questioned the utility of a naval convention with France which, unless it provided for cooperation between the Black Sea fleet and the Franco-British naval forces in the Mediterranean, would be a dead letter, and would only unnecessarily provoke German hostility and suspicion. Birzhevie Vedomosti did, however, describe the Poincaré visit as "a very important political event which it is impossible not to welcome with all our heart."⁸⁶

The zenith of these official visits came in the early summer of 1914. In June and July respectively, Russia played host to a squadron of the British fleet and to the new French President, Raymond Poincaré. On these two occasions an outwardly confident Russia lavishly entertained her valued Triple Entente partners. Volker Berghahn has written of the so-called golden age of pre-1914 Europe that "it is probably more accurate to say that behind a

⁸⁵ Attitudes toward French capital are discussed more fully in chapter 5.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.259.

splendid façade there existed an international community convulsed by growing conflict."⁸⁷ Behind the façade of toasts, banquets, and military and naval reviews, domestic troubles plagued all the Entente powers. The Caillaux scandal in France, the fear in Great Britain of civil war over Ireland, and worker unrest in Russia provided the troubled domestic background, as the unfolding Sarajevo crisis threatened, and finally broke, the uneasy international peace.

When 1914 began, however, Russia outwardly seemed fully recovered from her previous troubles. The Balkan Wars had ended in 1913. 1914 appeared likely to be a year of calm. Meriel Buchanan, the daughter of the British Ambassador to Saint Petersburg, described in her memoirs the mood in Saint Petersburg high society.

People were full of confidence and hope that winter, the memory of the Japanese War was fading, an era of new prosperity was dawning, there were rumours of possible Court balls, of a revival of the old brilliance of the Russian Court.⁸⁸

Such was the atmosphere when the First British battle-cruiser Squadron, under the command of Sir David Beatty, came to Saint Petersburg in June 1914. During this British visit fears of domestic disturbances did not hamper the

⁸⁷V.Berghahn, Germany and the Approach of War in 1914 (London, 1973) p.211.

⁸⁸Meriel Buchanan, Russia Observed. The Dissolution of an Empire (New York, 1971), p.71.

ceremonies as they had in 1908. Two of the smaller light cruisers even came up the Neva and anchored at the Nicholas bridge, while the rest of the fleet anchored at Kronstadt. To Sazonov, George Buchanan stated that the Emperor's visit to the Squadron at Kronstadt deeply touched the Royal Navy.⁸⁹ At a garden party given after the luncheon by the Grand Dukes Cyril and Boris, Nicholas II wore the uniform of a British Admiral. Buchanan was told that this was a compliment "quite unprecedented ... equivalent to treating the Squadron with Sovereign honours."⁹⁰

The officers of the Squadron described the reception accorded them by naval officials and the inhabitants of Reval "as being nothing less than affectionate... [it] well accorded with the best traditions of Russian warm heartedness and hospitality."⁹¹ Russian naval and municipal authorities placed steamers and yachts at the disposal of the men and officers and mounted theatrical performances. The Municipal Duma hosted a large dinner and ball for the British officers. Great distance had been travelled in relations between the two countries since the aborted 1906 naval visit, which had so frightened both the British and the Russian governments. The June 1914 visit ran smoothly and

⁸⁹AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., d.197, l.10, 18 June/ 1 July 1914; Buchanan to Sazonov. See also G.Buchanan, My Mission to Russia vol.1 (London, 1923), pp.187-188.

⁹⁰ BD, vol.X, Part II, no.555, Buchanan to Grey (25 June 1914), pp.810-811.

⁹¹Ibid.,p.810.

was a festive occasion of genuine warmth, a "further proof of the real friendship" which Russia felt for Britain.⁹²

Beneath the surface display of friendship and bonhomie, however, discord lurked. Difficulties threatened the Anglo-Russian relationship in the spring of 1914, especially concerning Persia and the question of a naval agreement, which the Russian government earnestly desired and from which the British government shied away as an unnecessary entanglement. Despite these serious problems, Russia was firmly committed to Britain, even going so far as to propose an alliance, clearly indicating the Russian government's desire not just to adhere to the Triple Entente but to strengthen it as well.⁹³

Shortly after the departure of the gratified first Battle Cruiser Squadron of the Royal Navy, Raymond Poincaré and his Foreign Minister, René Viviani, made their celebrated visit to Saint Petersburg, on the eve of a war which would destroy Imperial Russia and the balance of power which the Dual Alliance was designed to preserve. In retrospect the irony of this visit is great. Official Russia, glittering in its Imperial splendour, welcomed its ally with all the pomp and circumstance an 'ancien régime' could muster. It was to be the last such display. In 1914 Russian commitment to the Dual Alliance was

⁹²ibid., p.811.

⁹³D.W.Spring, "The Trans-Persian Project and Anglo-Russian Relations 1909-1914" Slavonic and East European Review, vol.54, 1976, p.78.

absolute, and the state visit of the French President was an opportunity to publicize this solidarity. In one sense, however, this visit too was a façade, an illusion, which masked tensions in the Alliance and in Imperial society. Russia had sufficiently recovered from 1905-1906 to mount an impressive display for a state visit but not sufficiently to endure the coming war. The Russian elites gambled on the Triple Entente as the best means of preserving European peace and, by this, their system of rule and privilege. Their uneasy alignment with the liberal democracies, however, led them to war and destruction. Such a fate was not apparent in July 1914, although some concerns and fears could be heard. Nonetheless Saint Petersburg welcomed President Poincaré as a strong friend.

The Caillaux scandal, with the attendant rumors of Joseph Caillaux's secret negotiations with Germany during the Agadir crisis, troubled many within Russia.⁹⁴ The French Ambassador, Maurice Paléologue, nervously monitored the situation for Gaston Doumergue, the Minister of Foreign Affairs. The German newspapers, which had a large readership in Moscow and Saint Petersburg, played up the French scandals and used them as an argument against the Franco-Russian alliance. According to Paléologue, the efforts of the German papers were "not in vain" and found sympathy in the Emperor's

⁹⁴ John F.V. Keiger, France and the Origins of the First World War (London, 1983), p.139.

entourage and even in liberal Duma circles.⁹⁵ Birzhevie Vedomosti published an anonymous article entitled "Russia is Ready: France Must Be as Well." The Russian Minister of War, General Sukhomlinov, was said to have inspired the article.⁹⁶ The article dealt with the military preparedness of the two allies and indicated that Russia "cannot with sang-froid contemplate the French ministerial crisis." The author hoped that the French Government would be able to maintain the law of three years' military obligation,⁹⁷ which had been passed in August 1912 in response to the reorganization of the German army after the Balkan Wars. Poincaré succeeded in spearheading the bill through the Chamber against heated opposition from the Socialists and many Radicals, but the measure proved to be intensely unpopular with the people.

According to the French chargé d'affaires, Doulcet, the whole of the Russian press followed with "extreme interest" the fall of the Ribot Ministry and the formation of its successor under Viviani. Like the Russian military, the press were extremely concerned about the impact of the ministerial crisis on French military laws. Doulcet concluded that the crisis created the impression in Russian public opinion that the law of three years was in jeopardy and that they

⁹⁵DDF, Third Series, vol.X, no.95, Paléologue to Doumergue (10 April 1914), p.159.

⁹⁶Ibid., no.404, Doulcet to Viviani (18 June 1914), pp.579-580.

⁹⁷Ibid., no.369, Doulcet to Bourgeois (13 June 1914), pp.542-543.

would "brusquely change the system and reduce" the military force,⁹⁸ although in fact the law was maintained.

Developments leading up to Poincaré's July visit, then, were not entirely propitious and French overtures to change the dates because of French domestic concerns were not well received in Saint Petersburg.⁹⁹ In the end the visit took place as scheduled and on the surface was a proud display of allied solidarity and Imperial might. President Poincaré's 1914 state visit to Russia differed in every respect from the hurried affair that passed for a state visit by President Fallières in 1908. Despite Russian concern about domestic problems in France, the alliance was more united than it had been since the Russo-Japanese War. This mutual commitment to the alliance was apparent in the length, the style and the substance of Poincaré's visit.

The Tsar in full naval uniform and wearing the sash of the Legion of Honour greeted Poincaré with Izvolsky, Paléologue and Count Friedrichs. In "faultless French" Nicholas II told Poincaré "how happy a recollection" he had of Poincaré's last visit, stressing his loyalty to the alliance.¹⁰⁰ During the President's audience with the Tsar on 21 July Nicholas thanked Poincaré for his visit and said how pleased he and the Empress would be to make a return visit

⁹⁸Ibid., no.404, Doulcet to Viviani (18 June 1914), pp.579-580.

⁹⁹Ibid., no.434, Doulcet to Viviani (24 June 1914), pp.625-626.

¹⁰⁰ Poincaré, Memoirs 1913-1914 p.165.

the following summer. The promise was made unconditionally for the Emperor; for the Empress it was contingent upon her health.¹⁰¹ Poincaré and Nicholas II discussed at length the difficulties between Britain and Russia. The Emperor was adamant that "no problem should present itself which might jeopardise good relations between England and Russia". The Tsar was committed to the proposed Naval Convention with Britain, about which he had just written to King George begging him to speed things up. Nicholas expressed his gratitude to the French for their aid in advancing this matter with the British. Despite difficulties and differences of opinion Nicholas II clearly valued the Triple Entente and was willing to compromise to preserve and strengthen it.

The Imperial Family paid marked attention to the French President during his stay in Russia. He gave the Grand Duchesses diamond watch-bracelets which they received "open-mouthed with delight" because these bracelets came from Paris. The Tsarevich received library furniture and the Grand Cross, the first foreign decoration his father had allowed him to receive. Nicholas II told Poincaré that it "gave him great pleasure to think that the first was awarded by France."¹⁰² According to Pierre Gilliard, the Tsarevich's tutor,

¹⁰¹ibid., p.168.

¹⁰²ibid., pp.175-176.

the President "made an excellent impression upon the Czar", who warmly praised Poincaré:

He is a remarkable man, with a splendid intellect, and a brilliant talker. That's always useful: but what I like most is that there is nothing of the diplomat about him. He is not reticent, but plain-spoken and frank and wins one's confidence at once.¹⁰³

After his audience with the Tsar, Poincaré proceeded to Saint Petersburg without the Emperor, which struck Poincaré as odd and caused him to wonder if Nicholas disdained or feared a crowd. Cheering crowds, organized by the police, hailed Poincaré on his way to the Peter and Paul Fortress.¹⁰⁴ Poincaré hosted a dinner at the French Embassy for the Russian Ministers, important generals, admirals and civil servants during which he conversed with the new Russian Prime Minister, Goremykin, who seemed "very friendly to France where he has spent a great deal of his time".¹⁰⁵ The nobility of Saint Petersburg also welcomed the French President and formed a delegation to greet him and pay its respects. Their address illustrated their commitment to the Dual alliance and faith in Poincaré as a friend of Russia. They stressed

¹⁰³Pierre Gilliard, Thirteen Years at the Russian Court (London, 1921) pp.98-99.

¹⁰⁴ Poincaré, op.cit., pp.169-170. H.Rogger, "Russia in 1914" Journal of Contemporary History vol.1, no.3, (1966) p.107.

¹⁰⁵ Poincaré, op.cit., p.172.

friendship with France, "indissoluble ties" between the two countries and the heartfelt support of all classes of Russian society for the alliance.¹⁰⁶ The effusive address betrayed no hint of ambivalence or doubt, which might have characterized the nobility's welcome to the President of a Republic. Privileged Saint Petersburg welcomed its ally's leader enthusiastically and unreservedly.

In the same vein of warmth and appreciation, Sergei Pavlovich Ispolatov, Bureau Chief of the General Staff, wrote a poem, entitled "Greetings to the High Guest" and dedicated it to the French President. The poem, not an example of fine Russian poetry, welcomed the President to the great capital of Tsarism. The author referred to Poincaré with the familiar 'tyi', expressing the hope that once he has been shown the "peaceful north... that love this north will YOU". He beseeched Poincaré to accept "our greeting... from love". The last stanza says that the author alone did not shape these words "BUT ALL THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE".¹⁰⁷ Such a flight of fancy from an officer of the General Staff for President Fallières in 1908 would be difficult to imagine.

Nicholas II's final toast to Poincaré was as effusive as Ispolatov's poem, but somewhat more dignified. The Emperor requested the President to return to his beautiful country with "the expression of the faithful friendship and

¹⁰⁶AVPR, f.130, op.470, 1914g., d.330, l.18.

¹⁰⁷AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., d.329, l.4.

the cordial sympathy of all of Russia."¹⁰⁸ The last state visit between Imperial Russia and the Third Republic of France thus ended on "a truly cordial note".¹⁰⁹ President Poincaré and his Foreign Minister Viviani sailed away aboard the cruiser "La France". In seven days the allies were at war with the Central Powers and the words of solidarity and trust spoken over good wine during peacetime were put to the ultimate test. Nonetheless, the Russian commitment to Great Britain and France endured longer than might have been reasonably expected, given the disastrous way in which the war unfolded and the strain it inflicted on the Imperial regime.

Despite any private doubts and hesitations that may have existed in June and July 1914, official Russia publicly embraced and reaffirmed its commitment to the Triple Entente as the cornerstone of Russian foreign policy. The "Fateful Alliance"¹¹⁰ was celebrated as the clouds of the war which would destroy Imperial Russia gathered over Europe. The support and firm belief in her ally and friend that Russia's rulers and educated society expressed during the visits of June and July 1914 survived three bloody years of war and only ended with the regime's complete collapse.

¹⁰⁸AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., d.330, l.89.

¹⁰⁹Poincaré, Memoirs 1913-1914, p.181.

¹¹⁰ George Kennan, op.cit.

CHAPTER THREE

A Marriage of Convenience:

Nicholas II and the Triple Entente

Despite his reputation as a reactionary and weak-willed ruler, Nicholas II was consistent in his post-1905 foreign policy. He regarded the Dual Alliance, formed by his revered father, as the base of Russian foreign policy and never seriously considered abandoning it. Moreover, once the last Romanov Emperor embraced the Entente with Great Britain, he remained faithful to it and even sought to transform it into a defensive alliance. Nicholas II's primary goal was the preservation of Imperial Russia and the Romanov dynasty. For this the overriding imperative was peace. The Tsar and his Foreign Ministers concluded that the Triple Entente was the best means to this end. Thus reasons of 'realpolitik', not ideology, motivated the Tsar's Triple Entente policy.

Until recently, the important role played by the Tsar in the formation and execution of Russian foreign policy was largely undisputed. Scholars and memoirists had often cast aspersions on Nicholas II's strength of character and consistency of purpose, but his power as the sole arbiter of foreign policy, as

outlined in Article XII of the Fundamental Laws, had not been challenged.¹

D.C.B.Lieven paints a portrait of Nicholas II as a ruler who maintained a close watch on foreign policy events, read "conscientiously the despatches and telegrams which were submitted to him every day and, blessed by an excellent memory, was exceptionally well-informed on questions of international relations."² In his discussion of the Tsar's role in foreign policy, Lieven emphasizes Article XII. But, he also acknowledges the Duma's limited power over foreign policy because of its restricted role in budgetary matters, including increases in defence expenditures, and the blossoming of a relatively free and increasingly vocal press after 1905. He still maintains, however, that those who wished to alter the course of Russian foreign policy had to catch the ear and influence the views of Nicholas II.³ B.J.Williams and G.Katkov, among others, share Lieven's interpretation.⁴

¹ Constantin de Grunwald, Le Tsar Nicholas II (Paris, 1965), p.278. E. de Schelking, Recollections of a Russian Diplomat, the Suicide of Monarchies (New York, 1918), see chapters V and VI.

² Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.57.

³Ibid., p.40.

⁴B.J.Williams, "The Revolution of 1905 and Russian Foreign Policy" in Essays in Honour of E.H.Carr (London, 1974), p.105. And George Katkov, "Russian Foreign Policy 1880-1914" in Russia Enters the Twentieth Century 1894-1914 (New York, 1971), p.10.

Two recent scholarly studies challenge the traditional interpretation as espoused by Lieven et.al. D.M.McDonald argues that, as a result of the 1905 revolution, the Council of Ministers and particularly its chairman began to play an important role in foreign policy and thereby diminished the Emperor's hitherto preeminent role. McDonald contends that after the 1905 revolution the domestic situation was "the central preoccupation" of Russian foreign policy-makers, which led officials not legally associated with foreign policy to acquire a significant role in its discussion.⁵ According to McDonald, Witte, Stolypin and Kokovtsov all aimed for "unification of government". They sought to regulate the relationship between the Emperor and his ministers by submitting to Nicholas only decisions which had been discussed by the Council or examined by the Chairman as a means to coordinate policy. These Council Chairmen tried "to create a Russian version of a cabinet, a word Izvolsky and other liberals did indeed use to describe the reformed Council."⁶

Given the emphasis McDonald places on the Council of Ministers, it is not surprising that he questions the traditional interpretation of Article XII of the Fundamental Laws. He suggests that its real purpose "seems to have been to fence in and protect certain aspects of State prerogative from encroachments

⁵ David M.McDonald, Autocracy, Bureaucracy, and Change in the Formation of Russia's Foreign Policy, 1895-1914 (Ph.D. diss., Columbia University, 1988), pp.6-7.

⁶Ibid.,p.22.

on the part of the new Duma."⁷ Furthermore, McDonald refutes the 'activist' portrait of Nicholas II in foreign policy and argues that the Emperor's role was to "lend" his power to his government which used it for goals defined by the Council.⁸ Despite the interesting nature of this contention, the author does not produce convincing evidence to support this characterization and, in fact, is forced to admit that after Stolypin's death Nicholas reemerged as an important political player, if in fact his importance had ever substantially declined.⁹

Andrew Verner's book The Crisis of Russian Autocracy is a more convincing attempt to reassess Nicholas II's role as autocrat. While not primarily concerned with foreign policy, Verner characterizes the last Emperor as a man psychologically alienated by temperament and circumstances from the role forced on him, and thereby distant and remote from matters of vital concern. Verner argues that after the disastrous years of 1904-1905, Nicholas II distanced himself from "the role of autocrat and was willing to play the quasi-constitutional monarch."¹⁰ The Emperor had always been actively involved in

⁷Ibid.,p.291.

⁸Ibid.,p.355.

⁹Ibid.,pp.473-474.

¹⁰ Verner, op.cit., p.333. See also pp.319-320 and p.330.

foreign policy, an area in which he was interested and comfortable. The events of 1904 and 1905 did, however, temporarily shake Nicholas even in foreign policy.

Despite their revisionist views, neither McDonald nor Verner denies that Nicholas II continued to play a key role in the functioning of the Russian state and in the formation and execution of foreign policy. Whether one therefore accepts the traditional interpretation or the revisionist one, an examination of Russian foreign policy prior to World War One would be incomplete without an assessment of Nicholas II and those closest to him.

Despite the undisputed importance of Nicholas II to foreign policy, certain problems do exist which complicate any discussion about him. Although an articulate man, fluent in several languages, the main sources in the Emperor's voice are terse and often unrevealing of any opinion he might have had. His famous diary is the classic case in point. The paucity of first-hand sources, however, does not necessarily mean the Emperor held no opinions but rather that he was reserved in voicing them, but not necessarily from acting on them. This facet of Nicholas's character has often led memoirists and historians to make derogatory judgements of his character, the most frequent of which were and are that the last Emperor was a stupid, unimaginative prisoner of his

court circle and easily swayed.¹¹ But in reality, despite his gentle and impressionable manner, when his convictions were at stake he could be quite stubborn.¹² The secondary sources on Nicholas II are not usually of a high scholarly quality and there has been little serious debate about his role in either domestic or foreign policy. In this respect Verner's aforementioned book is a welcome addition as a serious attempt to evaluate the last Romanov Emperor.

A final problem is the nature of the man himself. He never embraced his role as autocrat with any enthusiasm and he ruled in extraordinarily troubled circumstances. In a certain sense Nicholas II was an anachronism and a paradox. He was the supreme ruler of a vast, rapidly industrializing empire as it entered the twentieth century. Yet his outlook and values were in many ways a throwback to the distant Russian past which he so admired. Always aware that he had been born on the nameday of Job the Sufferer, Nicholas II was almost medieval in his acceptance of God and fate. Once when asked how he could keep his composure when in the background the guns suppressing the mutiny at Kronstadt could be heard, the Emperor replied:

It is because I have a firm, an absolute conviction that the fate of Russia -- that my own fate and that of my family -- is in the hands of God who has placed me where

¹¹ For example: Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers (London, 1988), p.240. See also S.D.Sazonov, Les Années Fatales (Paris, 1927), p.61.

¹²Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.57

I am. Whatever may happen to me I shall bow to his will with the consciousness of never having had any thought other than that of serving the country which he has entrusted to me.¹³

Nicholas never deviated from this faith and in fact it enabled him to accept passively the grisly fate the future had in store for him and his family.

Nicholas's conservatism and his distaste for the reforms granted under duress in October 1905 have been well documented.¹⁴ What has not been as clearly established is what, if anything, Nicholas believed in aside from the necessity of preserving the Empire and the autocracy as his son's inheritance, an impossible task. The dilemma of the last Tsar is eloquently described by Verner. Nicholas II

was indeed trapped, a prisoner of the administrative structure. He chafed under the external restrictions imposed by his administrative responsibilities, and he rebelled against them. Yet, lacking a firmly internalized and personally comfortable conception of his role through which to assert himself and his views, he had no choice but to submit. Such resignation only heightened the estrangement he had felt in the first place. It also made him appear weak-willed and passive, though he was neither in any personal sense.... What was perceived as indecision, vacillation, and passivity was in fact the result of his being contained by a structure with which he could not

¹³ Noble Frankland, Crown of Tragedy: Nicholas II (London, 1960), p.38.

¹⁴ See for example: de Grunwald, op.cit., pp.190-191. A.Verner, op.cit., pp.288-290. And Hosking, op.cit., pp.8-10.

identify and which therefore became still more imposing, alienating and constraining.¹⁵

Conditioned by his own distaste for his role and the realities of Russia's international position after a crippling revolution and a humiliating military defeat, Nicholas II adopted an unassertive foreign policy. The Emperor and his government were forced into a policy of 'attentisme' if the Empire was to be preserved and thereby fulfil the regime's 'raison d'être'.¹⁶ No clear ideological motivation for foreign policy was evident during the reign of Nicholas II.¹⁷ In the second decade of his rule, this absence became even more apparent as the Triple Entente, an alignment which some regarded as contrary to traditional Russian interests, emerged. In part this new direction in Russian foreign policy was a desperate bid to preserve peace, to gain time and breathing space to ensure the survival of the 'ancien regime'. Nicholas II initially accepted the new arrangement with Britain as reluctantly as he did the new constitutional arrangements.

Throughout his reign, Nicholas remained faithful to his father's * alliance with France, although occasionally French republicanism exasperated him and he never sympathized with the political traditions of the country of the

¹⁵ Verner, op.cit., p.69

¹⁶ Geyer, op.cit., pp.273-274.

¹⁷ R.E.McGrew, loc.cit., p.225.

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Revolution. In the first years of his reign, the young Emperor and his wife exchanged a series of visits with the French President. Nicholas's first visit to France in 1896 was a huge success. The people of Paris were unrestrained in their enthusiastic welcome. Nicholas wrote his mother and told her that: "The reception in Paris was tremendous, as you probably know from the papers. I repeat I can only compare it to my entry into Moscow!"¹⁸ According to Robert Massie, the young Tsar never forgot this overwhelming display of emotion and "in the future, this favourable impression in the mind and the heart of the young Tsar was to serve France well."¹⁹

Aside from the 1905 Björkoe aberration, Nicholas never took any action to indicate that he wished to abandon France as an ally. Even with the abortive Bjorkoe treaty, the Emperor believed, mistakenly as his Foreign Minister later took great pains to point out, that an agreement with Germany could be reconciled to the alliance with France. (Izvolsky in his memoirs described the Emperor as a true friend of Britain and France.²⁰) In a December 1906 audience, Nicholas told Maurice Bompard, the French Ambassador, that the alliance was "the base of my foreign policy, the foundation on which it rests

¹⁸ Edward J. Bing ed., Letters of Tsar Nicholas and The Empress Marie (London, 1937), 2 October 1896, p.121.

¹⁹ Robert K. Massie, Nicholas and Alexandra (New York, 1967), p.61.

²⁰ A.P. Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister: Memoirs of Alexander Iswolsky (Toronto, 1921), p.289.

entirely", and the Emperor emphasized his statement by putting two vigorous fists on the writing table.²¹

Part of this strong commitment no doubt derived from Russia's financial dependence on French loans to see the Empire through a period of reconstruction and repression.) When the Russian Finance Minister, Kokovtsov, visited Paris in 1906 to arrange a critically important loan the Tsar clearly understood the significance of the trip and the necessity of a 'quid pro quo' between allies. Nicholas told Kokovtsov to apprise the French government of the "particular importance" he attached to the undertaking and the Tsar was prepared "to support the French government in whatever form it most desired at the present time". He made clear that he meant strong Russian support for France at the Algeciras conference, which he felt the French could find quite useful.²² Several years later, in 1913, when Kokovtsov, then Chairman of the Council of Ministers, was on a similar mission to obtain loans for the construction of Russian railways, Nicholas sent a message of strong solidarity to Poincaré.²³ Nicholas was well aware of the material benefits for Russia's

²¹ Maurice Bompard, Mon Ambassade en Russie, 1903-1908 (Paris, 1937), p.250.

²² Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.90.

²³ Ibid., pp.377-378.

development to be derived from the alliance and he was shrewd enough to cultivate such ties.

{ Nicholas also appreciated French military strength and the importance of maintaining and strengthening military ties in the event of a war. }

He took an especial interest in high-level French participation in Russian military manoeuvres in 1911.²⁴ In February 1912 Nicholas approved the notion of closer ties between the two countries' Naval General Staffs.²⁵ In 1913 Nicholas told Poincaré that he entirely shared his opinion about "the importance of correlated measures to be adopted in view to reinforce our two armies." He praised the new French military effort and assured the French President that Russia would not lag behind.²⁶ { Financial assistance and the strength of the French army were two important factors that helped to ensure Nicholas II's continued devotion to the Dual Alliance, especially as the threat from Austria-Hungary and Germany seemed to be increasing, not decreasing. }

Although the Tsar was a faithful ally, French domestic politics often exasperated him, as they did many in the Russian government. In a masterpiece of British understatement, Nicolson described "the union between Socialistic freethinking France and Orthodox Russia" as "not a sympathetic

²⁴ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1911g., d.204, ll.3,8,9.

²⁵ LN, vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 16/29 February 1912, p.202.

²⁶ LN, vol.2, Nicholas to Poincaré, 17 March 1913(os), p.54.

one."²⁷ In October 1903 Nicholas commented to the Kaiser that the French domestic situation disturbed him and French irreligiosity repulsed him. He attributed the problem to the Freemasons who, he believed, were influential everywhere. Nevertheless, he told Wilhelm that he had to maintain the alliance to ensure that France did not defect to the English camp.²⁸ In a similar vein Nicholas remarked to his mother years later about disturbances in Berlin and railway strikes in France: "There is a foul odour of revolution in all of this."²⁹

Given his distaste for secular republicanism, it is not surprising that Nicholas disliked the left-wing French President Armand Fallières, as we have seen during his 1907 visit to Russia. In a letter to the German Emperor, Nicholas apparently made a slighting reference to "the woodcutters [sic] von Fallières" which caused Wilhelm "unlimited amusement".³⁰ In contrast, Nicholas esteemed Fallières's successor, Raymond Poincaré, a man whose world view and attitudes were much closer to Nicholas's. When the Emperor

²⁷ BD/CP, vol.4, doc.187, Nicolson to Grey, 2 January 1907, p.282.

²⁸S.S.Oldenburger, Last Tsar Nicholas II, His Reign and His Russia vol.2, (Gulf Breeze, Florida, 1975), p.61.

²⁹Bing, op.cit., 21 October 1910, p.258.

³⁰N.F.Grant, ed., The Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar (London, 1920), pp.223-224.

met Poincaré in 1912 for the first time he told his mother that he "liked him very much; he is a calm and clever man of small build."³¹

[When Poincaré was elected President, Nicholas sent him an effusive telegram of congratulations.³² In a sign of his pleasure, Nicholas awarded Poincaré the Order of Saint Andrew, Russia's highest order, citing the Tsar's "sincere attachment to France as well as MY esteem and MY personal friendship for you".³³ The Emperor's letter deeply touched the French President who requested permission to publish it,) which the Russian ambassador to Paris authorized.³⁴ [The published letter created a sensation in France]with the entire press, regardless of 'parti pris', remarking on the letter's cordial tone and the [importance of such friendly sentiments when Germany was beginning new armament projects.³⁵]

With a French President he liked personally and agreed with on matters of foreign policy, Nicholas felt more at ease with his French ally than he had in a long time. Although Nicholas had always regarded the Dual Alliance as

³¹Bing, *op.cit.*, 8 August 1912, p.271.

³²AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d.118, l.11, Nicholas to Poincaré, 1 February 1913.

³³*Ibid.*, d.124, l.11, 5 February 1913.

³⁴LN, vol.2, secret telegram from Izvolsky, 12/25 February 1913.

³⁵LN., vol 2, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 14/27 February 1913, p.31.

the base of his foreign policy, he had also taken it for granted. The original enthusiasm he had felt when he visited France as a young Tsar in 1896 only resurfaced when Poincaré assumed the leadership and began to represent French interests more vigorously on the international stage.

This pattern of detached loyalty contrasts sharply with the real affection Nicholas held for the British royal family and British aristocratic life. Great Britain had been the traditional foe for the Russian Empire throughout much of the nineteenth century but this did not prevent Nicholas from developing a deep attachment to Britain, perhaps partly because Britain was the land of his courtship and the childhood home of his beloved wife. In many ways Nicholas II resembled an English country gentleman more than he did a Russian Tsar. In his youth Nicholas had had an English tutor, a Mr. Charles Heath, whom the Emperor always remembered fondly.³⁶ The Emperor spoke English fluently and idiomatically and had a thorough knowledge of English literature.³⁷ The Imperial couple always spoke to one another and corresponded in English. According to an intimate of the Empress, the Emperor "merely wished to live the quiet life of a well-bred gentleman: chivalrous by

³⁶N.V.Tcharykov, "Reminiscences of Nicholas II" Contemporary Review cxxxiv, 1928, p.449.

³⁷R.J.Barrett, Russia's New Era (London, 1908), p.14.

nature, he ... came nearer the British public school idea than any other."³⁸

Nicholas was passionately fond of tennis, hunting and walking and had a kennel of English collies in which he took great pride.³⁹ Moreover his extremely well-honed manners and his emphasis on duty and service were primarily Victorian attributes.

An important factor in Nicholas's regard for Britain was the close and warm family ties that bound the House of Windsor and the Romanovs. As Tsarevich, Nicholas attended the wedding of his English cousin George, who was to become George V. The young Tsarevich's letter home reveals his sheer pleasure at his first visit to London and the ease he felt with the British royal family.

How nice it is to feel as if one were among family. I immediately felt quite at home.... I am delighted with London, I never thought I would like it so much.⁴⁰

Nicholas thoroughly enjoyed himself visiting Westminster Abbey, Saint Paul's and the Tower. He also attended a ball at Buckingham Palace but as he wrote his mother he "didn't see many beautiful ladies. It's really much more fun to go to Rotten Row in the morning, where the whole of Society goes riding: what a

³⁸Lili Dehn, The Real Tsaritsa (Boston, 1922), p.89.

³⁹Anna Viroubova, Memories of the Russian Court (New York, 1923), p.17.

⁴⁰Bing, op.cit., 24 June 1893, p.71.

pity we have nothing of the kind!"⁴¹ Nicholas also spent a pleasant idyll in Britain with his fiancée in 1894 just prior to his father's death.

And so we spent three ideal days in their cosy cottage on the Thames quite quietly, not seeing anybody. We were out all day long in beautiful summer weather, boating up and down the river, picnicking on shore for tea. 'A veritable idyll.' I'm delighted by this only too short stay at Walton.⁴²

It was probably the last carefree interlude the young man had before he assumed the onerous duties of Emperor, which must have rendered his memories all the more poignant.

Nicholas, even after he became Emperor, maintained a close relationship with his cousin George. The two first cousins resembled each other so much that they could have passed for identical twins and even members of their family would sometimes confuse them. They corresponded regularly and quite cordially. In one letter Prince George assured Nicholas of his constancy: "What a long time it is since we met, you are often in our thoughts dear Nicky, I am sure you know that I never change and always remain the same to my old

⁴¹Ibid.,p.72.

⁴²Ibid.,p.82.

friends."⁴³ George gratefully acknowledged the role Nicholas played in the improvement of relations between their two countries.

I am so happy to think that the relations between our two countries are so good now, they never ought to be otherwise and I know how much you have done to bring this about, but then you have always been a friend of England's.⁴⁴

The death of Edward VII in 1910 shook Nicholas II, who felt great sympathy for what his cousin now had to endure. Nicholas himself had sobbed "I am not ready to be Tsar" when his father died.⁴⁵ To his mother, who attended the funeral, he commented: "It is with great pleasure to read and hear how well, with what composure and intelligence, Georgie has begun to attend to his difficult work. May God help him to go on with it and to follow in dear Uncle Bertie's footsteps."⁴⁶ The official condolences referred to the deceased King as "a sincere friend of Russia", an opinion shared by Nicholas II.⁴⁷ Although unable to attend the funeral, the Emperor and Empress attended the memorial

⁴³TsGAOR, f.601, op.1, d.1219, no.9, Prince George to Nicholas II, 28 December 1907.

⁴⁴Ibid., no,10, Prince George to Nicholas II, 29 December 1908.

⁴⁵ Marc Ferro, Nicholas II (London, 1991), p.1.

⁴⁶Bing, op.cit., 8 June 1910, p.255.

⁴⁷AVPR, f.133, 1910g., op.470, d.186, l.12, 24 April 1910.

service held at the Anglican church in Saint Petersburg⁴⁸ and "the Emperor went far beyond the conventional to mark his feelings."⁴⁹

The sympathy and support that his Russian cousin expressed touched the new English King deeply.

I thank you from the bottom of my heart for your dear letter and am deeply touched by the sympathy which you have shown me at the irreparable loss which I have sustained in the death of dearest Papa.... I saw Sir Arthur Nicolson today and he told me of all your kindness and sympathy which has touched me deeply and all the sorrow which has been expressed in Russia.⁵⁰

This heartfelt letter stressed the King's desire for good relations with Russia and his conviction that his Russian cousin shared his opinion completely on this matter. George emphasized the value he placed on their old friendship. Moreover, he stated his belief that "if only England, Russia and France stick together then peace in Europe is assured. I believe these are also your sentiments."⁵¹ On this matter George V was right. As the Central Powers became more aggressive, Nicholas II became convinced of the need to

⁴⁸Ibid., l.46, A.Nicolson to Izvolsky, 30 April/ 13 May 1910.

⁴⁹ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.21, Newsletter dated 28 May (Communicated to Foreign Office by Professor Pares June 1, 1910), p.35.

⁵⁰TsGAOR, f.601, op.1, d.1219, no.13, George V to Nicholas II, 27 May 1910.

⁵¹Ibid.,

strengthen the Entente. A close and easy relationship with George V, which contrasted sharply with the strained relations between Nicholas and his German cousin, facilitated this process and made Nicholas perhaps more amenable to it than he might have been.

Nicholas followed the details of his cousin's coronation, which the Dowager Empress Marie attended, with great interest.⁵² The correspondence between Nicholas and George became more frequent and substantive after George became King. The affable tone remained and the two monarchs seemed able to discuss important matters frankly and without rancour. The theme of the letters concerned their common conviction that good relations between England and Russia be maintained and even strengthened. In this vein in March 1911 George V wrote:

It is my great object, as I know it is yours, that the friendly relations between Russia and England should not only be maintained but become more intimate than they are now. I feel convinced that if Russia, England and France have mutual understandings that the Peace of Europe will not be disturbed,.... I know you don't mind me writing quite frankly what I think, as we have always been such good friends, I like to tell you everything.⁵³

⁵²Bing, op.cit., 18 June 1911, p.261.

⁵³TsGAOR, f.601, op.1, d.1219, no.18, George V to Nicholas II, 15 March 1911.

In the summer of 1913 the two cousins met in Berlin and had a chance to say in person what they had been communicating through letters and their ambassadors. Apparently the meeting, although short, went off smoothly and no difference of opinion marred the event. Rather, it seemed to have reinforced their desire to work together for "the peace of Europe".⁵⁴ Just prior to the outbreak of World War One, George V sent his cousin a private letter outlining his concerns about Persia, the one matter which he believed caused tensions between the two countries. He called upon Nicholas's "friendship of so many years" to do what he could to clear up any misunderstandings.⁵⁵ This last peacetime letter from King George reveals plainly the close working relationship between the two cousins and monarchs which both used to further cooperation and goodwill between their two countries.

Nicholas II felt more affection toward Britain than is sometimes acknowledged. Although he did have major reservations about the British political system and as his attitude toward the Duma indicated he certainly never considered emulating it in Russia, he did regard himself as a friend of Britain and was consistent in that friendship. In 1905 Nicholas expressed his pleasure to an English journalist at the large number of sympathetic letters he

⁵⁴Ibid., no.22, George V to Nicholas II, 30 December 1913.

⁵⁵Ibid., no.23, George V to Nicholas II, 16 June 1914.

had received from England in the past year. He called them "nice letters, such nice, sympathising, kind letters."⁵⁶

At Sir Arthur Nicolson's first audience as British ambassador, the Emperor made a dignified impression and convinced Nicolson of his sincere desire to secure a mutually beneficial agreement between Russia and Great Britain.⁵⁷ Interestingly, given Nicholas's known conservatism, he also told Nicolson that he thought that the matter would be facilitated by the Liberal government in England. Nicolson had been appointed British ambassador to negotiate an agreement with Russia. The convention, concluded in August 1907, marked the beginning of substantially improved relations between the two empires. Such an important foreign policy agreement could not have been reached without the approval of the Russian Emperor. Stolypin informed Nicolson that the Emperor "was equally pleased" that the Convention had been signed.⁵⁸

By 1909 Nicolson could report that the Emperor was "cordially in favour of maintaining close relations with England."⁵⁹ When Sir George

⁵⁶ Joseph Baylen, "The Tsar's 'Lecturer-General'. W.T.Stead and the Russian Revolution of 1905 with two Unpublished Memoranda of Audiences with the Dowager Empress Maria Fedorovna and Nicholas II", Georgia State College School of Arts and Science Research Papers no.23, (July 1969), p.52.

⁵⁷ AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.66, l.71, Nicolson to Grey. 4 June 1906.

⁵⁸ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.9, Nicolson to Grey, 18 October 1907, p.36.

⁵⁹ Ibid., doc.74, Nicolson to Grey, 16 May 1909, p.284.

Buchanan became British ambassador in 1910 Nicholas had fully convinced the British of his friendship. Buchanan admired the Tsar and in his memoirs wrote that "there was, if I may say so without presumption, what amounted to a feeling of mutual sympathy between us."⁶⁰ Buchanan regarded Nicholas II as "a true and loyal ally".⁶¹ In the spring of 1914 the actions of some Russian consuls in Persia marred what otherwise were smooth relations with Britain. But, in an audience with Buchanan the Emperor said

I can only tell you, as I have so often told you before, that my one desire is to remain firm friends with England and, if I can prevent it, nothing shall stand in the way of the closest possible understanding between our two countries.⁶²

At this point the Tsar even advocated a defensive alliance between Russia and Great Britain. He believed that the absence of such an alliance meant that Great Britain could not give Russia "the same effective support as France."⁶³ The question of an alliance with Britain occupied entirely the last meeting the Tsar had with Sazonov in April 1914 before he went to the Crimea.⁶⁴ Upon his return from Livadia, the Emperor pushed the issue forcibly

⁶⁰ George Buchanan, op.cit., p.170. See also BD/CP, vol.6, doc.62, Annual Report on Russia for 1910, p.105.

⁶¹ G.Buchanan, op.cit., p.x.

⁶² Ibid., p.117.

⁶³ Ibid., pp.138-139.

⁶⁴ LN, vol.2, Paléologue to Doumergue, 18 April 1914, p.258.

with the British ambassador. Nicholas commented on the division of Europe into two camps and the disquieting international situation, observing that, "What I should like to see is a closer bond of union between England and Russia, such as an alliance of a purely defensive character."⁶⁵ The Emperor's main concern was that the present Anglo-Russian agreement be extended either in some fashion like the one he had suggested or "by some written formula which would record the fact of Anglo-Russian cooperation in Europe."⁶⁶ The Emperor's desire for an alliance covering Anglo-Russian cooperation in Europe was a significant departure in the tradition of Russian foreign policy.

By the spring of 1914, therefore, Nicholas II had assumed a more active role in foreign policy. He had moved from passive acceptance of the need for an Entente with Britain to settle colonial differences to active advocacy of an alliance guaranteeing Anglo-Russian cooperation in Europe. The changing nature of international relations and the heightened threat that all participants had begun to see in European affairs wrought this change in Nicholas's thinking. Germany was the power disturbing European equilibrium. Russia and Great Britain were, by the beginning of the twentieth century, 'status quo' powers that could not afford major changes in the European balance of power. As such it was natural that they should seek each other out

⁶⁵G.Buchanan, op.cit., pp.183-184.

⁶⁶Ibid., p.184.

to balance what they perceived to be the growing German threat. Seen in this light Nicholas II's desire to embrace Great Britain as an ally was the logical act of a ruler who sought above all else to maintain his Empire and his dynasty, both fast becoming anachronisms in the modern world.

Given the pragmatic reasons which governed Nicholas's attitude toward Anglo-Russian relations, it is not contradictory that he also held serious reservations about Britain. Not a little of the Tsar's resentment sprang from the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902, which he thought had encouraged the Japanese to believe they could wage war successfully against Russia. In 1905 he described this treaty as "a moral backing that encouraged her [Japan] to attack us."⁶⁷

The English press often irritated the Tsar when it portrayed events in a light unflattering to the Russian state. In October 1905 he complained to his mother about the English press's reporting of recent pogroms, which he regarded as the spontaneous anger of the people against the revolutionaries. Because "nine tenths of the trouble-makers are Jews, the People's whole anger turned against them." He lamented that

In England, of course, the press says that these disorders were organised by the police; they still go on repeating this worn-out fable.⁶⁸

⁶⁷Baylen, loc.cit., p.54. See also Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, pp.32-33.

⁶⁸ Bing, op.cit., 27 October 1905, pp.190-191.

To the English journalist, W.T. Stead, the Tsar bemoaned "these stupid lies published in some books in England."⁶⁹

The nature of the British political system also offended Nicholas. To his German cousin, Wilhelm II, Nicholas complained about anarchists who could live freely in certain countries, particularly Britain, and plot to assassinate people.⁷⁰ Nicholas viewed the impetuous comments of the British Prime Minister, Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, after the dissolution of the First Duma as insulting and inappropriate. Campbell-Bannerman had declared to a visiting Duma delegation in London that "the Duma is dead: long live the Duma!" Izvolsky records that Russian government circles perceived the exclamation as a challenge and an impertinence to the Emperor. Izvolsky

had the greatest trouble to explain to my colleagues and to convince the Emperor himself that Mr. Campbell-Bannerman had only paraphrased, in applying it to the Duma, the time-honoured announcement which expressed in ante-revolutionary France the idea of the continuity of the monarchical principle: 'le Roi est mort: vive le Roi.'⁷¹

A later incident enraged the Emperor even more. The news that "a grotesque deputation is coming from England with an address to Mouromtseff

⁶⁹Baylen, loc.cit., p.62.

⁷⁰Grant, op.cit., p.229.

⁷¹Izvolsky, op.cit., pp.204-205.

[President of the First Duma] and his friends" infuriated Nicholas. He complained to his mother about the English government's inability to prevent the visit.

Uncle Bertie informed us that they were very sorry, but were unable to take any action to stop their coming. Their famous 'liberty', of course! How angry they would be if a deputation went from us to the Irish to wish them success in their struggle against their government!⁷²

In 1914 when the Irish question erupted, although Nicholas admitted he did not understand it, he did fear that it might deprive Britain of her international standing.⁷³ Such incidents appear, however, to have strengthened Nicholas's belief that the English maintained a double standard in their judgement of Russia and that they should view Russia on Russian, not English terms. [As Izvolsky explained to Sir Edward Grey the Tsar was "by training and education not on the Liberal side", and it was possible to keep him on the side of the Entente with Britain only by proving that such a policy benefitted Russia.⁷⁴ }

In general Nicholas II disliked foreign things and regarded himself as a true Russian patriot. In a telling letter to Stolypin about the Naval General

⁷²Bing, op.cit., 27 September 1906, p.219.

⁷³ R.J.Crampton, "The Decline of the Concert of Europe in the Balkans, 1913-1914" Slavonic and East European Review 1974, 52 (128), p.417.

⁷⁴ Grey, op.cit., letter from Grey to Nicolson, 14 October 1908, pp.177-178.

Staff, Nicholas wrote after his instructions: "Such is My will. Remember that we live in Russia and not abroad".⁷⁵ Frequently Nicholas would refer disparagingly to "the Jews abroad", revealing an anti-semitic view of the world, typical of Russian conservatives.⁷⁶

It is significant that Nicholas had little affection for his ancestor Peter the Great, the Romanov who forced Russia to look west and become a European power for the first time. On the bi-centenary of the foundation of Saint Petersburg, Nicholas commented to A.A.Mossolov, the head of the Court Chancellery, that Peter I was

the ancestor who appeals to me least of all. He had too much admiration for European "culture".... He stamped out Russian habits, the good customs of his sires, the usages bequeathed by the nation, on too many occasions.⁷⁷

In contrast Nicholas's favourite ancestor was Alexis the Mild, Peter's father and the last of the purely Muscovite tsars.⁷⁸

For similar reasons Nicholas II disliked words of foreign origin which had infiltrated the Russian language. On one occasion he said:

⁷⁵KA, vol.5, 1924, Nicholas to Stolypin, 25 April 1909, p.120.

⁷⁶Bing, op.cit., 12 January 1906, p.212.

⁷⁷ Mossolov, op.cit., p.16.

⁷⁸ Massie, op.cit., p.65.

The Russian language is of such wealth that it is possible to give Russian equivalents for every expression in any foreign language; no word of non-Slav origin should be allowed to disfigure our speech.⁷⁹

To that end Nicholas would underline in red any word of foreign extraction he found in his ministers' reports. When he discovered incidentally that Izvolsky and his political assistant, N.V.Tcharykov, corresponded in Russian not French, as had their predecessors, the Emperor was "pleasurably surprised".⁸⁰

Any discussion of Nicholas II's attitudes toward foreign policy must at least briefly consider the views of the Imperial family and the court. Although in general the Tsar did not discuss foreign policy questions with his suite or his family, there were a few major exceptions, notably his mother and his wife.⁸¹ It is worth noting that most of those closest to the Tsar in his small circle of intimates were anti-German and pro-Entente, which contradicts the traditionally accepted view that the Emperor was surrounded by a circle of pro-Germans who exercised considerable influence on the execution of foreign policy.⁸²

⁷⁹ Mossolov, op.cit., p.19.

⁸⁰ Tcharykov, "Reminiscences of Nicholas II", p.452.

⁸¹ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.70. And A.Verner, op.cit., p.68. Also Mossolov, op.cit., pp.127-128.

⁸² For an example of the traditional view see Hosking, op.cit., p.229.

Maria Feodorovna, the Danish born wife of Alexander III, exercised considerable influence over her son, Nicholas II, especially in the early years of his reign. Although her ascendancy over her son declined as he matured and his wife began to play a more dominant role, Nicholas II continued to correspond regularly with his mother and valued her opinions. The Dowager Empress was vehemently anti-German because of what Prussia had done to her native Denmark. She regarded herself as a Westerner⁸³ and held the English royal family in high affection as her sister was married to Edward VII, for whom she had "the greatest regard".⁸⁴

Like her son, the Empress Marie was hostile toward the foreign press, including the English. She told W.T. Stead, the English journalist who interviewed her in 1905, of her distaste for freedom of the press.

Yes, but if you only saw the horrid things they publish in the papers. They print all manner of horrid lies and then the foreign press reprint all these lies. If that is freedom of the press, you cannot wonder that we don't like it much.⁸⁵

She also received anonymous, abusive letters from Britain which she resented.⁸⁶

⁸³Baylen, loc.cit., p.35.

⁸⁴Ibid., p.41.

⁸⁵Ibid., p.35.

⁸⁶Ibid., pp.45-46.

Despite her dislike of certain British institutions such as a free press, the Dowager Empress spent much of her time after 1906 in Britain with her sister. She made her first visit in thirty-four years to Britain in February 1907 and was thrilled to be back. She had nothing but praise for the British royal family, Windsor Castle and Buckingham Palace.

Everything is so tastefully and artistically arranged -- it makes one's mouth water to see all their magnificence!... Everyone is so kind and friendly to me. It is most touching.⁸⁷

From 1907 to 1914 the Dowager Empress Marie made almost annual visits to her sister in Britain. All the visits were pleasant affairs which reinforced her affection for the English royal family, Britain and the Entente. While in Britain she would write to her son so he was well aware of his mother's feelings. On these visits to England she often dined with influential Englishmen, including Lord Rosebery, former Foreign Secretary and Prime Minister, and Sir Edward Grey.⁸⁸

At home she did what she could to promote better relations between Great Britain and Russia. She favoured strongly the appointment as Foreign Minister of Alexander Izvolsky, a strong proponent of improved relations with Britain. She also frequently invited the British Ambassador, Sir George

⁸⁷Bing, op.cit., 28 February 1907, p.222.

⁸⁸Ibid., p.232 and pp.232-233.

Buchanan, to her informal luncheon parties, a privilege he considered to be a great honour.⁸⁹

As the Dowager Empress's influence waned that of Empress Alexandra waxed, although she was not as powerful as has often been suggested. She had throughout her married life an extremely intimate and caring relationship with her husband -- an unusual circumstance for a royal marriage. Although Alexandra was a German princess, her mother had been Queen Victoria's daughter. Consequently, Alexandra was as English as she was German. Alexandra's mother died when her daughter was seven. After her mother's death, the young princess became very close to her maternal grandmother.⁹⁰ The young 'Alix' became Queen Victoria's favourite granddaughter and was largely brought up at the English court.⁹¹

When Alexandra became Empress of Russia, her grandmother's early influence did not disappear. A large portrait of Queen Victoria hung in one of the chief living rooms at Tsarskoe Selo.⁹² According to a friend of the Empress she was "a typical Victorian; she shared her grandmother's love of law

⁸⁹ G.Buchanan, op.cit., p.175.

⁹⁰ Frankland, op.cit., p.19.

⁹¹ Pierre Gilliard, Thirteen Years at the Russian Court (London, 1921), p.47.

⁹² Bernard Pares, "Introduction" in The Nicky-Sunny Letters. Correspondence of the Tsar and the Tsaritsa (Hattiesburg Mississippi, 1970), p.ix.

and order, her faithful adherence to family duty, her dislike of modernity."⁹³

Alexandra's "conception of the bedroom was 'à-la-mode de' Windsor and Buckingham Palace in 1840."⁹⁴ Although she eventually spoke Russian fluently, more than ten years after her arrival in Russia the Empress retained an English accent.⁹⁵ She and family always conversed together in English. Her command of French was comparatively poor, a distinct disadvantage as French was often spoken at court in the late nineteenth century. Such attitudes and habits did not blend in well with the cosmopolitan Russian court and helped to contribute to the Empress's alienation from Russian high society, a problem that worsened the longer she lived in Russia.

Despite the ugly reputation she gained during the war as a German sympathiser and even spy, the Empress in fact preferred Britain over Germany and was loyal to the Dual Alliance.⁹⁶ When the Imperial couple visited Cowes in 1907 the Empress was overjoyed to be back where she had spent the happiest days of her childhood. She wrote of the hospitality shown them by Edward VII that "dear Uncle Bertie has been most kind and attentive."⁹⁷

⁹³Dehn, op.cit., p.59. See also, Countess Kleinmichel, Memories of A Shipwrecked World (London, 1923), p.214.

⁹⁴Ibid., p.66.

⁹⁵Dehn, op.cit., p.40.

⁹⁶ Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, p.294.

⁹⁷Massie, op.cit., p.471.

She raised her family in the English manner and the private life of the last Tsar was English in its customs and activities. For example, the sitting room of the Empress at the gloomy hunting lodge at Spala in Poland was decorated in bright English chintzes.⁹⁸ Tea was always served in the English fashion.⁹⁹ The children slept on camp beds and had a cold bath every day.¹⁰⁰ When it came time for the eldest Grand Duchess Olga to marry, a match with Edward, the Prince of Wales, was mentioned but nothing came of it.¹⁰¹ Before the war and the Emperor's move to the front to command the army the Empress was relatively uninvolved in politics.

Of all his many uncles, the one to whom the Tsar paid the most attention was the Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaievich, the Inspector-General of Cavalry and commanding officer of the Petersburg Military District. According to D.C.B.Lieven, the Grand Duke was suspicious of Germany and regarded Austrian ambitions with grave misgivings. He inherited from his father

a tradition of support for the French alliance, and Laguiche, the French military attaché in Petersburg from 1912, records that the Grand Duke was much moved by the warm reception he received in France

⁹⁸Viroubova, p.91.

⁹⁹Ibid., p.57.

¹⁰⁰B.Pares, The Nicky-Sunny Letters p.xii.

¹⁰¹Massie, op.cit., p.251.

that year and greatly impressed by the efficiency of the French army.¹⁰²

The Grand Duke's 1895 visit to French manoeuvres pleased him. According to the Emperor, his uncle had been "delighted with his long and interesting stay in France".¹⁰³ He telegraphed Saint Petersburg after the 1912 manoeuvres and stressed "the gratifying impression" they had made on him.¹⁰⁴ His attachment to the Dual Alliance was clearly a long term and constant one. In fact, after the Revolution the Grand Duke chose to spend his exile in France.

The other Grand Dukes were a varied lot almost spanning the spectrum in terms of political sympathies, a reality that conflicts with the prevailing stereotyped image of the Romanovs as reactionary to a man. On the whole, they were a cosmopolitan group who spent a great deal of time abroad, particularly in western Europe. When forced to leave Russia because of hismorganatic marriage, the Grand Duke Mikhail Mikhailovich chose to spend the rest of his life in London.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰² Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War p.71. See also, I.V.Bestuzhev, "Russian Foreign Policy, February - July 1914", pp.103-104.

¹⁰³Bing, op.cit., 28 September 1895, p.105.

¹⁰⁴AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1912g., d.176, l.64, secret telegram, 12/25 September 1912.

¹⁰⁵Alexander, Grand Duke of Russia, Once a Grand Duke (New York, 1932), p.149.

The Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich, the Inspector-General of Artillery and an influential Romanov, had sympathies similar to the Grand Duke Nicholas. In Lieven's opinion, Sergei Mikhailovich's "admiration for the French artillery and general friendship for the French armed forces was a factor making for closer trust and cooperation between the allied armies."¹⁰⁶ The Grand Duke assisted at French military manoeuvres in 1911.

The political attitudes of the historian, Grand Duke Nicholas Mikhailovich, contrasted sharply with those of his military brother Sergei Mikhailovich. Nicholas Mikhailovich had Frenchified political views so much so that his nickname in the Chevalier Guards was 'Philippe Egalité'. He wrote a monumental biography of Alexander I. The French Academy elected him a member and he was often invited to lecture before French historical societies. According to his brother he was

an enthusiastic admirer of the parliamentary regime and an inveterate follower of the Clemenceau - Jaurès duels.... My brother had all the necessary qualifications of a loyal president of a civilized republic, which led him often to mistake the Nevsky Prospect for the Avenue des Champs-Élysées.¹⁰⁷

¹⁰⁶Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War pp.70-71.

¹⁰⁷Alexander, Once a Grand Duke, pp.147-148.

Not surprisingly, given his liberal sympathies, the Grand Duke became good friends with the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan, who admired him as "a liberal-minded and a cultured man".¹⁰⁸

The liberal historian's brother, the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, conforms more closely to the stereotype of a Grand Duke. In hindsight he described the Triple Entente as "nonsensical and eventually fatal".¹⁰⁹ The original alliance with France he viewed as a "perilous pact", and he could not imagine how a sensible man like Alexander III had approved of it.¹¹⁰ This Grand Duke categorically rejected the European way for Russia. He strongly disapproved of the 1905 constitution. In his opinion the Tsar of Russia had become "a mere parody on the King of England in a country that was kneeling before the Tartars in the days of the Magna Carta."¹¹¹ Alexander regarded Sazonov as a mere puppet of the English and the French who followed policies that could only lead to trouble with the Central Powers.¹¹² The extended Romanov family thus was not uniformly pro-German and in

¹⁰⁸ G.Buchanan, My Mission to Russia, p.177. See also M.Buchanan, Dissolution of an Empire, p.49.

¹⁰⁹Alexander, Once a Grand Duke p.30.

¹¹⁰Ibid., p.68.

¹¹¹Ibid., p.225.

¹¹²Ibid., p.190.

reality those closest to Nicholas II were strong supporters of the Dual Alliance and the Entente with Britain.

The court was no more homogeneous in its attitudes toward Britain and France than was the Imperial family. An anti-Entente faction did exist,¹¹³ but its limited influence waned as the years passed and German behaviour became more threatening. During negotiations for the Anglo-Russian Convention, British diplomats regularly reported to London about the "temporary ascendancy of the reactionary party around the Tsar", which they found troubling and obstructive to their efforts to reach an agreement.¹¹⁴ An influential Russian at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs informed Nicolson that the Emperor favoured

a complete understanding with Great Britain, but that it must be borne in mind that there were several influences at work in favour of the Russian Court and government receiving advice and guidance from Berlin.¹¹⁵

Nicolson identified General Trepov, the Commander of the Winter Palace, and Baron Frederiks, the Minister of the Court, as pro-Germans at court.¹¹⁶ By all

¹¹³ BD/CP Vol.5, doc.4, Memorandum by Bernard Pares, June 1907, p.14.

¹¹⁴ Grey, Twenty-Five Years letter from Nicolson to Grey, 6 November 1906, p.158.

¹¹⁵ BD/CP, vol.4, doc.57, Nicolson to Grey, 6 June 1906, pp.96-97.

¹¹⁶ ibid., p.97.

accounts Frederiks was the official closest to the Imperial couple. He lunched often with the intimate Imperial family circle, participated in all court ceremonies, hunted frequently with the Tsar and attended family occasions such as birthdays and Christmas.¹¹⁷ Frederiks regarded Germany as the last bastion of the monarchical principle and believed that "Britain would never be a loyal ally, and he predicted the worst perils" for Russia.¹¹⁸

The pro-Germans believed that no essential interests divided Saint Petersburg and Berlin. They also feared, almost prophetically as it transpired, that war with Germany would cause a socialist revolution in Russia. According to Lieven, their connections with the Emperor, the court and high officialdom, and not public support, gave the pro-Germans their strength.¹¹⁹ By 1914, however, the pro-Germans were on the decline. Almost all the well-known pro-Germans in the Foreign Ministry were either retired or in secondary posts. They could draw Nicholas's attention to individual memoranda, as P.N.Durnovo did in February 1914, but they had no constant influence of the sort available to Sazonov or Izvolsky.¹²⁰ The events of 1909 to 1914 had weakened the

¹¹⁷A.Verner, op.cit., p.60.

¹¹⁸Mossolov, op.cit., p.109. See also Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.69.

¹¹⁹D.C.B.Lieven, "Pro-Germans and Russian Foreign Policy" in The International History Review, II,1, January 1980, p.44.

¹²⁰ibid.,p.45.

German faction and "by 1914 the pro-Germans were in a small minority in Petersburg high society, the press, the officer corps and educated society as a whole."¹²¹

Pro-Entente sentiments also existed at court and everything English became fashionable in the years preceding the War. The court thus reflected the tastes of the Imperial family. By the beginning of the twentieth century, English had supplanted French among the Russian aristocracy. According to a court intimate, Lili Dehn, English

was invariably spoken at Court, and, although [it was] once more fashionable to have German nurses, the fashion in 1907 was to have only English ones, and many Russians who could not speak English spoke French with an English accent! The great shopping centre was 'Druce's' where one met one's friends and bought English soaps, perfumery and dresses. The 'Druce habit' primarily emanated from the Court where everything English was in special favour.¹²²

It had also become something of a fashion for Russian noblemen to study in England as did Prince Felix Yusopov, the future assassin of Rasputin, at Oxford.¹²³

¹²¹Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.75.

¹²²Dehn, op.cit., pp.44-45.

¹²³Felix Yusopov, Gibel Rasputina (Moscow, 1990), p.15.

After the 1905 revolution it became common among some monarchists to look to the French Revolution as an ominous example and to compare Nicholas II to Louis XVI.¹²⁴ The Countess Kleinmichel wrote that in the sons of the local agents and managers she saw "a little Marat of fourteen and a Théroigne de Méricourt of thirteen".¹²⁵ She also believed that Nicholas II resembled Louis XVI in that neither of them "knew how to grant at the right moment what they had not the power to refuse."¹²⁶

The Countess Kleinmichel occupied a prominent position at the Russian court and in Saint Petersburg society. She was an ardent anglophile and francophile. Her aunt married Honoré de Balzac and the Countess herself spent a winter in Paris when she was young as part of her training as a lady.¹²⁷ In her youth she knew and was charmed by Edward, the Prince of Wales, whom she met at Cannes. When he became King he sent her a diamond brooch representing Diamond Jubilee, his horse.¹²⁸ The Countess professed herself to be an admirer of England and retained an English

¹²⁴ Dimitri Shlapentokh, "The French Revolution in Russian Intellectual and Political Life, 1789-1922" (University of Chicago Ph.D dissertation, 1988), p.290.

¹²⁵Kleinmichel, op.cit., p.222.

¹²⁶ Ibid., p.101.

¹²⁷ Ibid., p.29.

¹²⁸Ibid., p.145.

companion for sixteen years.¹²⁹ The Countess exemplified the growing favour with which all things British were viewed at the Court. The views of the people surrounding the last Emperor, therefore, were more varied than has sometimes been supposed, ranging from wholehearted sympathy for the Triple Entente to strong support for a closer relationship with Germany based on shared monarchical principles.

[In the first decade of Nicholas II's reign, Asian questions were to the fore; in the second Russian diplomacy became preoccupied with the developing European crisis. In 1906 Nicholas and his statesmen struggled to salvage something from the wreckage of the Russo-Japanese War and the revolution. A reconsideration of Russia's limited options forced a reorientation of Russia's foreign policy. Although initially a somewhat reluctant adherent to the Triple Entente, Russian resentment at the country's humiliation during the Bosnian annexation crisis and the growing aggressiveness of the Central Powers prompted the Emperor to increase his commitment to the Dual Alliance and to advocate closer ties with Great Britain.¹³⁰ From 1906 to 1914 the Emperor's views evolved and hardened to reflect the changing reality of a Europe dividing into two armed camps.]

¹²⁹Ibid., p.145, p.148, and pp.262-263.

¹³⁰Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.67.

A strong Russian patriot whom the West often exasperated, Nicholas II pursued a foreign policy designed, he believed, to strengthen Russia and ensure the survival of the Romanov dynasty. To that end the Triple Entente was a pragmatic arrangement and the Emperor did not allow his personal feelings of revulsion for western liberal traditions to affect his loyalty to it. He viewed the Triple Entente as the best means to preserve the existing state of affairs both at home and abroad. The "revolutionary" implications of the alignment of Tsarist, autocratic Russia with the democratic west escaped Nicholas II or were ignored by him. [The alignment between Russia, France and Great Britain was a marriage of convenience between the 'status quo' powers designed to bolster Russia's sagging prestige and world position in return for support against German ambitions. Nevertheless, once the Emperor had entered into the marriage he was loyal to it, as was his wont, to the bitter end. It proved to be a match that extracted a heavy toll for loyalty -- war, revolution, abdication and execution.] Ironically, the diplomatic policy which was to ensure the security of Imperial Russia became one of the instruments of the Empire's destruction. Nicholas II and those closest to him failed to recognize that Russia's internal salvation required far more than an utilitarian diplomatic arrangement designed to maintain the balance of power. The time for such measures had passed.

CHAPTER FOUR

The Vanguard of the Entente Policy:

Foreign Ministry Attitudes toward Britain and France

As Foreign Ministers A.P.Izvolsky and S.D.Sazonov followed a radically different foreign policy than their predecessors, but one that had the Emperor's approval. (A consistent policy of maintaining and strengthening the Dual Alliance was buttressed by the, at times, ardent pursuit of friendship and, eventually, alliance with Great Britain, Russia's traditional nineteenth-century foe. From 1906 to the outbreak of World War One, men sympathetic to Britain and France dominated the Russian Foreign Ministry.) Exceptions existed, but contradictory voices were not regularly heeded and their imprint on the overall course of Russian foreign policy was minimal. This 'revolution' in foreign policy coincided with the inauguration of the new constitutional regime in Russia and was partly affected by it. Despite the liberal and Western sympathies of several Russian diplomats, however, the Triple Entente policy was pursued primarily as a means of regaining Russian greatness with only passing concern about democratic development. (The need to combat German expansionist and hegemonic aspirations preoccupied Russian diplomats from 1906 to 1914 and drove them to accept, almost overwhelmingly, as it had Nicholas II, alignment

with the Western constitutional states for reasons of realpolitik, not ideological sympathy. }

As a result of the lost war with Japan and the barely suppressed revolution at home, the necessity to preserve peace and to reorient foreign policy to achieve this primary objective preoccupied Russian foreign policy makers. Considerable debate ensued within Russian government circles, and led to the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian agreement in August 1907. The desire to maintain peace as a precondition of domestic stability remained a constant of Russian foreign policy until 1914.¹ A superficial understanding of domestic affairs, however, was common among men who had spent the greater part of their careers outside Russia. Such a remoteness from domestic concerns sometimes hampered Russian diplomats from understanding the true balance of state interests.²

Russian diplomats and Foreign Ministry bureaucrats were, arguably, the most westernized men in Russia, drawn almost exclusively from the upper reaches of the Russian elite and most of them educated at the Imperial Alexander Lycée.³ Candidates for the foreign service in 1912 were

¹ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.16.

² Lieven, Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime, p.197.

³ For a succinct account of education at the influential Lycée see Sinel, op.cit., pp.37-44.

recommended to read Manuel Historique de Politique Etrangère by Emile Bourgeois.⁴ The library of the Foreign Ministry also purchased many western titles, including Albert Sorel's L'Europe et la révolution française and J.Morley's The Life of W.E.Gladstone.⁵ Among Russian diplomats two tendencies coexisted, not always harmoniously, a European orientation and an Asian one. The Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs tended to be very anti-British.⁶ The proponents of Asian expansion believed that Russia's mission lay outside European Russia in the development of Siberia and the spread of Russo-European culture in Asia.⁷ As a majority under Izvolsky and Sazonov, however, the Europeanists were able to flourish. In general, and not surprisingly given their backgrounds and education, they favoured closer relations with Britain and maintenance of the Dual Alliance, as did their Ministers and Emperor.⁸

Count V.N.Lamsdorf, Foreign Minister from 1900 to 1906, haltingly began the new era in Russian foreign policy. Since the early 1890s, the Dual

⁴ Ibid., p.88.

⁵ TsGIA, f.1278, op.2, d.2719, ll.242-256.

⁶ A.D.Kalmykov, Memoirs of A Russian Diplomat (Yale, 1971), p.26.

⁷ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.90.

⁸ Cecil Spring-Rice, The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice: A Record, (London, 1924), vol.2, 2 May 1906, Spring-Rice to Grey, p.36.

Alliance had been the basis of Russian foreign policy but Lamsdorf did not regard this as tying him in any way. He preferred a policy of retaining "les mains libres".⁹ French conduct during the Russo-Japanese War had disappointed Lamsdorf. He believed it necessary, nonetheless, to maintain the alliance "in order to hold restless France in check".¹⁰ Even so, Lamsdorf supported France at the Algeciras Conference partly because he feared that a refusal "might result in a strong nationalist movement" which could "force France into war".¹¹ Lamsdorf also expressed gratitude to Lord Revelstoke, an influential English banker, and Sir Edward Grey for their part in securing British participation in the Russian loan.¹² In his cautious fashion, Lamsdorf recognized that a new era in Russian diplomacy had begun.

A.P.Izvolsky succeeded Lamsdorf in May 1906 and began to chart Russia's new course. In both personality and political orientation, Izvolsky differed from the aged Lamsdorf. Izvolsky belonged to the rural gentry, although his family was not wealthy. In his memoirs he noted with pride a maternal ancestor who took part in the murder of Paul I. He pictured this man as

⁹ B.J.Williams, loc.cit., p.103.

¹⁰ Wilhelm von Schoen, Memoirs of an Ambassador (London, 1922), p.29.

¹¹ AVPR, f.133, 1906g., d.65, op.470, l.64, 24 February 1906, Spring-Rice to Grey.

¹² Ibid., d.97, part II, ll. 38,39, l.41,42, correspondence with Benckendorf.

an emulator of Brutus. It is more than probable that this contributed to inculcate at an early age the aversion which I have always felt for autocracy, and to turn my mind toward liberal and constitutional ideas.¹³

For such an important post he was relatively inexperienced. He had never occupied any of the prestige embassies in the Great Power capitals. According to D.I. Abrikossov, a Russian diplomat in London, Izvolsky and Count Benckendorf connected the inauguration of the Duma with the need to reorient Russian foreign policy radically.

The two diplomats agreed that with the appearance of the Russian Duma with its liberal tendencies, the foreign policy of Russia must be radically changed; and the Minister-to-be declared that he would base his policy on two principles: an understanding with England and a bid for friendship with Japan.¹⁴

Izvolsky worked diligently against serious obstacles for improved relations with Britain and for the maintenance of the Dual Alliance. He hoped to achieve this without alienating Germany, a task that proved impossible to fulfil. As a firm believer in the European traditions of Russian diplomacy, he wanted Russia to accept her exclusion from China, settle with Japan and secure British support in Europe.¹⁵

¹³ Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, p.158.

¹⁴ D.I.Abrikossov, Revelations of a Russian Diplomat (Seattle, 1964), p.128.

¹⁵ A.W.Palmer, "The Anglo-Russian Entente" History Today no.11, 1957, p.752.

Whatever his intentions, Izvolsky inherited a difficult situation.

Relations with France and Great Britain were strained as a result of the Russo-Japanese War. Also, those who directed Russian foreign policy viewed "with disquietude and disfavour the advent to office in France of a Government with an advanced Socialistic programme."¹⁶ The British ambassador, Nicolson, also noted that doubts existed "whether the material and moral force of France would at a critical moment render her a valuable ally." Sympathy for Britain was also at a low ebb because of her role in the recent war. Many Russians believed that Britain's alliance with Japan had fostered a climate that had encouraged Japan to attack Russia.)

Izvolsky perceived himself as a Minister in a constitutional government. This conceptualization of his role was one of the most striking differences between him and his predecessors. The Foreign Minister considered public opinion as an important factor and wanted to work with the newly constituted Duma. Izvolsky's support of the Duma, the October Manifesto and the idea of cabinet government reflected his pro-western sympathies. Ironically, disgruntled public opinion was to be a major factor in his fall from grace during the Bosnian annexation crisis. His appointment as Foreign Minister had neatly coincided with the opening of the First Duma. Nicholas II told him that Lamsdorf was "a typical functionary of the old regime, who could not and would not

¹⁶ BD/CP, vol.4, doc.187, 2 January 1907 Report, Nicolson to Grey, p.282.

accommodate himself to the new order of things".¹⁷ By this Nicholas implied that Izvolsky was to conduct himself differently, which he did.

Izvolsky welcomed the changes wrought by the October Manifesto.¹⁸ When his colleagues criticized the behaviour of the First Duma, Izvolsky defended it much to the chagrin of the more conservative Ministers.¹⁹ The growing conflict between the new parliament and the government worried Izvolsky. He argued at the Council of Ministers for a "Cabinet capable of reconciling the moderate members of the Duma." He also spoke to the Emperor about this matter.²⁰ His proposals, however, fell on deaf ears. Izvolsky's concern as to the fate of the First Duma was prompted partly by his sincerely held liberal convictions but also because he worried about the impact of the crisis in Europe. He believed that Russia could not aspire to recover her international position until a working arrangement with the Duma was struck. This uncommon attitude, as David McDonald points out, "lent a radically new cast to official Russian thinking on foreign policy."²¹

¹⁷ Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, p.15.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp.19-20.

¹⁹ Kokovtsov, Out of My Past, p.165 and 173.

²⁰ Alexander Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie. Correspondence diplomatique 1906-1911 (Paris, 1937), Izvolsky to Nelidov, 22 June/ 5 July 1906, p.208.

²¹ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.304.

Although his attempt to save the First Duma proved futile, Izvolsky continued to work with the second Duma. One of his first administrative acts was to designate a special ministerial liaison with the Duma.²² In 1908 and 1909 he received the Emperor's permission to report substantively on foreign policy to the Duma during its debate on the Foreign Ministry estimates.²³ He was the only minister who could appear before the assembly without a storm of protest.²⁴ In another departure Izvolsky cultivated contacts with the Russian press, even going so far as to grant off-the-record briefings on current policy. He also established a new press department in the Ministry which compiled, edited and forwarded to the Emperor press reports from foreign and Russian newspapers.²⁵

Izvolsky sought to forge a consensus in the government in support of his policy. In this, too, he was unlike his predecessors who, with the Emperor's support, had worked in splendid isolation from their colleagues, often not even fully informing them about important matters. This consensus-building approach, however, was as much a result of Izvolsky's limited support as it was of his

²² Ibid., p.299.

²³ Hosking, op.cit., p.228.

²⁴ Kalmykov, op.cit., p.175.

²⁵ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.388.

liberal views. Izvolsky did become actively involved, however, in legislative projects and supported Stolypin's reforms, especially his agrarian ones.²⁶

{ The conclusion of the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement was a hard fought victory for Izvolsky and in some ways the culmination of his career. George Sanders argues that had it not been for Izvolsky and Sir Arthur Nicolson, the long negotiated accord would not have come to fruition.²⁷ The Russian Foreign Minister overcame strong opposition among the General Staff, the Council of Ministers, and the press to realize his primary goal of an understanding with Britain. }

Izvolsky promoted the agreement as part of a programme to ensure peace "from Kamchatka to Gibraltar for about ten years".²⁸ In this sense the accord was designed merely to alleviate trouble spots in the Near East and Izvolsky went to great pains to convince Berlin that the agreement could in "no case" lead "us into a political combination directed against Germany."²⁹

{ Izvolsky, however, had other more ambitious designs for the convention. He

²⁶ Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, pp.241 and 244.

²⁷ George Sanders, "Diplomacy and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907" UCLA Historical Journal, 1982, 3, p.62. See also B.J.Williams, "The Strategic Background to the Anglo-Russian Entente of August 1907" The Historical Journal ix, 3 (1966), p.373.

²⁸ As quoted in D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.360.

²⁹ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Izvolsky to Neliudov, 26 October/ 8 November 1906. See also von Schoen, op.cit., pp.39-41.

knew from former negotiations that such an agreement would open the London money market to Russian loans. He also wanted to shift Russian efforts from the Far East to the Balkans and eventually obtain access to the Dardanelles for the Black Sea Fleet, thereby gaining the long-coveted entrance to the Mediterranean. To accomplish this goal, Izvolsky realized that he would need diplomatic support against Austria-Hungary. Russian renunciation of any action in the Middle East that would threaten India was the prerequisite for agreement with Britain. As this only acknowledged the reality that Russia no longer had the military capability to face a threat of war from Britain, Izvolsky shrewdly calculated that it was more profitable to negotiate the sacrifice and gain what he could by it. Finally, he realized that, in the light of the Entente Cordiale between Britain and France, the best means of strengthening the Dual Alliance was improved Anglo-Russian relations.³⁰

Thus, the 1907 convention was only the first step in Izvolsky's ambitious programme designed to reassert Russia's influence and interests. Nonetheless, the Anglo-Russian convention was a frail mechanism, one which the British Foreign Office believed had to be nurtured carefully. (The only real bond tying the two countries in 1907 was mutual distrust of Germany.)³¹ Within

³⁰ John F.V. Keiger, France and the Origins of the First World War (London, 1983), p.23.

³¹ G. Sanders, loc.cit., p.69.

the Russian government itself, conflicting views existed as to the purpose of the accord and few ministers shared Izvolsky's grandiose vision.³² Many of his dreams for the accord proved ephemeral, especially his hope of British backing in Russia's quest for access to the Mediterranean.

The 1907 Anglo-Russian convention on Persia, Afghanistan and Tibet secured Izvolsky's reputation as an anglophile both at home and abroad. It was, on the whole, an earned and accurate reputation. The British government was aware of Izvolsky's admiration of Britain and its importance³³ Under Izvolsky the Russian government cooperated harmoniously with Great Britain in Persia for the first time, a fact frequently and appreciatively noted by British diplomats in Saint Petersburg. In his annual report for 1908, Nicolson praised Russian conduct:

I think that they have shown always a desire to meet the wishes of Great Britain, and when the traditions, habits, and methods of Russian bureaucracy and diplomacy are taken into consideration, it is to my mind remarkable and satisfactory that the cooperation of Russia has been so cordial and of so liberal a character.³⁴

³² D.M.McDonald, op.cit., pp.362-363.

³³ BD/CP, vol.4, doc.187, 2 January 1907, Report from Nicolson to Grey, p.291. Also BD/CP, vol.5, doc.103, Annual report on Russia for 1909, p.370.

³⁴ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.61, Annual Report for the year 1908, p.216. Also BD/CP, vol.5, doc.20, p.89, doc.103, pp.357, 350 and 362.

Nicolson also praised Izvolsky personally for acting "so loyally and straightforwardly with Great Britain" when there was considerable pressure on him to deviate from such a course. Izvolsky's faithful adherence to the 1907 convention regarding such contentious issues as the Baghdad Railway, telegraph negotiations and the dethronement of the Shah exemplify his heartfelt commitment to the accord, which he had helped to create.

Despite his faithful and sometimes unrewarding adherence to the new arrangement with Britain, Izvolsky occasionally became exasperated with British interference in Russian domestic affairs. On these occasions his reactions were typical of all Russian statesmen. In the fall of 1906, for example, a deputation of the British parliament planned to visit Russia, an event viewed with much trepidation by government officials who feared demonstrations and disorder. As we have seen, the proposed visit infuriated the Emperor. Izvolsky, although not as annoyed as Nicholas II, was also concerned. Consequently he asked the English ambassador if his government could disavow the deputation, since he realized that it could not be officially stopped. Izvolsky also telegraphed Benckendorf in London to this end and requested him to protest to the British government.³⁵ On another occasion, he informed Nicolson of his annoyance at British protests on the Jewish question. Izvolsky told Nicolson that

³⁵ AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, part II, l.147, secret telegram to Benckendorf, 27 September 1906.

they were being continually reproached for the condition of anarchy in Russia, and when they took steps to suppress the revolutionary movement they were stigmatized as adopting repressive measures.³⁶

The Russian government considered that when such protests were made by the representatives of foreign governments they were "overstepping somewhat their province in adopting such a course."³⁷ The British government could also irritate Izvolsky when it acted without informing him of its intentions in Tibet and Japan.³⁸

In a similar fashion, certain actions of the French government frustrated Izvolsky despite his loyalty to the Dual Alliance. Secret negotiations between Britain, France and Spain in 1907 and Russian exclusion from Anglo-French negotiations with Japan annoyed him and caused him some trouble with the domestic press, which questioned the solidity of the alliance.³⁹ When the reactionary newspaper Grazhdanin insulted the French ambassador, Maurice Bompard, Izvolsky officially tried to smooth over the incident but in private he forcibly expressed his exasperation with the erratic behaviour of the

³⁶ BD/CP, Vol.4, Doc.146, Nicolson to Grey, 20 September 1906, p.222.

³⁷ Ibid., p.223.

³⁸ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.62, Annual Report on Russia for 1910, p.119 and p.121.

³⁹ Bompard, Mon Ambassade en Russie, p.267 and p.273.

ambassador, who had abruptly left the capital.⁴⁰ Such minor irritations in Izvolsky's relationship with France were just a foreshadowing of what was to be the nadir of his career, the Bosnian annexation crisis.

When Izvolsky visited Paris in October 1908 after his Buchlau meeting with the Austrian Foreign Minister, he received a cold reception from the French Foreign Minister and the French press.⁴¹ As the crisis unfolded, he began to doubt, correctly, as events were to prove, whether France would support Russia.⁴² Izvolsky's bitterness toward France knew no bounds. He described the French ambassadors at Vienna and Berlin "as advocates of surrender to the Central Powers."⁴³ In February 1909 the French government's approval of an unofficial Austrian proposal that would have humiliated Serbia

produced an explosion of wrath from M.Izvolsky, who went so far as to declare that France had gone over 'bag and baggage' to Austria, and had practically denounced the alliance with Russia. As he had expressed it at the time 'France wished Russia to join in a step which she

⁴⁰ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1908g., d.179, l.3, copy of a letter from Izvolsky to Bompard, 19 January/1 February 1908. LI.8-9, telegram from Izvolsky to Nelidov, 22 January 1908. L.10 Draft of a letter from Izvolsky to Panafieu, French Chargé d'Affaires. LI. 13-15, draft of a private letter from Izvolsky to Nelidov.

⁴¹ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.220-223, Effront to Kokovtsov, 2/15 October 1908.

⁴² BD/CP, vol.5, doc.61, Annual Report on Russia for 1908, p.205.

⁴³ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.103, Annual report on Russia for 1909,p.336.

knew Serbia would not accept, and she also suggested that Russia should humiliate herself and hand over defenceless Serbia to the tender mercies of Austria.⁴⁴

In retrospect Izvolsky bemoaned the lack of sincerity which had characterized French behaviour in 1909 and the "double role" played by Jules Cambon in Berlin by "serving as a channel for Austro-German proposals."⁴⁵

Izvolsky reserved a certain amount of wrath for the British government which had been unwilling to offer any significant support to Russia. In February 1909 Izvolsky even suspected the British government of reaching an agreement with Germany on the Near East behind Russia's back. The British ambassador managed to placate the harried Foreign Minister and convince him that Britain's feelings toward Russia had not changed.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, such suspicions indicate the sensitive state of mind in a man unnerved by events.

{ The Bosnian annexation crisis was a watershed for several reasons. Despite the well-established fact of his own personal ineptitude and responsibility in this matter, Izvolsky felt humiliated, isolated and betrayed. The fiasco effectively ended Izvolsky's career as Foreign Minister. The crisis proved

⁴⁴ Ibid., p.338.

⁴⁵ LN, vol.1, letter from Izvolsky to Sazonov, 25 October/ 7 November 1912.

⁴⁶ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.103, Annual Report on Russia for 1909, p.336.

to be a bitter lesson. Prior to the uproar it had seemed that Russia's diplomatic situation had improved with the acquisition of British friendship in conjunction with the French alliance. The Bosnian fiasco "showed that this improvement was more apparent than real."⁴⁷ According to Andrew Rossos, the crisis showed that collaboration with Austria-Hungary, the basis of Russian Near Eastern policy, had backfired. As a result the two powers plunged into "a mortal duel for influence in the peninsula"⁴⁸, a duel which they both lost. Izvolsky, not unlike other influential Russians, resolved to strengthen the Triple Entente. The major lesson Russia's rulers learned from these unpleasant events "was that if a similar humiliation were to be avoided in the future both the Russian armed forces and the Empire's links with London and Paris would have to be strengthened."⁴⁹

As ambassador from 1910 to 1917 in Paris, Izvolsky's influence over Russian foreign policy declined, and he clearly was not happy in his new role. In his letters to Saint Petersburg he often criticized French personalities and a certain bitterness pervaded the correspondence. Nevertheless, despite his own personal resentments, he worked diligently as ambassador to strengthen the Triple Entente and, if possible, to transform it into a full-fledged alliance. Given

⁴⁷ Rossos, op.cit., pp.5-6.

⁴⁸ Ibid., p.7.

⁴⁹ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.37.

the increasingly belligerent posturing of Germany, Izvolsky believed Russia had no alternative.

Izvolsky's reaction to the Second Moroccan crisis was typical of the slightly schizophrenic attitude he held toward France throughout the tenure of his ambassadorship. In general he supported the French government loyally throughout the crisis but certain French actions and what he considered to be the relative inexperience of the men leading French foreign policy concerned him. In one letter he described the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, C. Cruppi, as "completely sincere" but he worried "that M.Cruppi, who does not have much experience as a diplomat, is abandoning himself to a dangerous and insufficiently founded optimism."⁵⁰ In a subsequent letter, however, Izvolsky described the programme of the French government as "without reproach", although he did acknowledge that the problem would lie in carrying it out.⁵¹

In his memoirs Izvolsky used the Agadir crisis as a reason to praise France highly.

I was convinced that the French nation,
in spite of superficial appearances, had

⁵⁰ LN, vol.1, letter from Izvolsky, 11/24 April 1911, p.81. Letter from Izvolsky, 28 April/ 11 May 1911, p.103.

⁵¹ Ibid., letter from Izvolsky, 24 May/ 6 June 1911, p.119.

lost nothing of its attachment to the great principles of justice, liberty and progress which had made France the beacon-light of the world.⁵²

Izvolsky argued that, as a result of the Agadir crisis, the Triple Entente had to be fortified to prepare for the inevitable German aggression. In such an event, Izvolsky felt confident that Russia could rely on French loyalty and

at the supreme hour the French people would arise as one man against the aggressor, regaining in a moment their patriotic 'elan' and their traditional valour.⁵³

Izvolsky attributed the successful conclusion of the Franco-German dispute over Morocco to the power of the Triple Entente. The Entente was a "powerful factor for the maintenance of the peace and the equilibrium in Europe" and had frightened the German Chancellor, Bethman-Hollweg, into a retreat.⁵⁴

In his correspondence with Saint Petersburg, Izvolsky stressed frequently his belief that the Dual Alliance formed the immutable base of Russian foreign policy. When French politicians such as S.Pichon or A.Ribot publicly reaffirmed French support of the alliance, Izvolsky's letters would be full

⁵² Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, p.129.

⁵³ Ibid., p.130.

⁵⁴ LN, vol.1, letter from Izvolsky, 24 November/ 7 December 1911, p.170.

of praise and a little relief, betraying his residual anxiety from the Bosnian affair.⁵⁵ Izvolsky explained realistically to Stolypin that to fail to honour the alliance would discredit Russia in the eyes of her allies and make it impossible for her to contract future alliances, thereby reducing Russia to the ranks of "a second class power if not worse".⁵⁶ Izvolsky maintained a genuine enthusiasm for the 1912 Franco-Russian Naval Convention.⁵⁷ He also was anxious that the French government pass the law that would have made three years military service compulsory for young Frenchmen. He believed that the benefits of such a law would be many.

The combat capacity of the army will be considerably enlarged, mobilisation better ensured and the instruction of the army will respond to modern requirements.⁵⁸

The fall of the Ribot cabinet, which had planned to repeal the three year law, thrilled Izvolsky. He told M.Paléologue, the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, that he had "trembled for our alliance.... Never perhaps had the

⁵⁵ LN, vol.1, letters from Izvolsky, 5/ 18 January 1911, p.28, 31 March/ 13 April 1911, p.71, 24 November/ 7 December 1911, p.170

⁵⁶ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.2, Izvolsky to Stolypin, 21 July/ 3 August 1911, p.300.

⁵⁷ LN, vol.1, Izvolsky to Neratov, very secret, 5/ 18 July 1912, p.298.

⁵⁸ LN, vol.2, memorandum from Izvolsky, 28 February/ 13 March 1911, p.43.

German peril been more menacing".⁵⁹ In Izvolsky's opinion a repeal would have been "a craziness, an abdication, a suicide."⁶⁰

As the clouds of war gathered over Europe, Izvolsky also worked for the extension of the Triple Entente into an alliance as did Nicholas II, Sazonov and Benckendorf. Izvolsky used the visit of George V to Paris in the spring of 1914 to broach the issue of a closer Anglo-Russian Entente.⁶¹ In June Izvolsky told Paléologue that he saw the only guarantee of European peace in "European equilibrium, that is to say, the equilibrium of alliances, therefore the equilibrium of military forces."⁶² Similar views were widely held among the men who directed Russian foreign policy, especially after Germany's attempt to establish her influence at Constantinople during the Liman von Sanders affair.

As ambassador, Izvolsky's relations with French politicians were often fraught. Although his relationship with Raymond Poincaré did not begin well, Izvolsky eventually became one of Poincaré's many Russian admirers. Izvolsky felt Poincaré was a "passionate character," had too much "self love" and therefore had to be handled carefully so that he would not become

⁵⁹ M.Paléologue, Au Quai d'Orsay. A la veille de la tourmente (Paris, 1947), p.305.

⁶⁰ Ibid., p.305.

⁶¹ LN, vol.2, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 5 / 18 March 1914, Izvolsky to Sazonov, pp.249-251.

⁶² Paléologue, op.cit., p.306.

offended, something that could harm good Franco-Russian relations.⁶³

Apparently the suspicion was mutual. Poincaré believed that inadequate diplomatic representation in Paris and Saint Petersburg was partly responsible for the unsatisfactory state of relations between the two allies when he became Minister of Foreign Affairs.⁶⁴

Despite his criticisms of Poincaré as Minister of Foreign Affairs, Izvolsky believed that Poincaré as President would best serve Russian interests should war break out, for he was a strong personality and much preferable to some other French politicians who in recent years had led France.⁶⁵ In Izvolsky's opinion, a defeat for Poincaré in the presidential election would be a "catastrophe" for Russia because it would be "the debut of an era of Combisme".⁶⁶ Izvolsky's fears reflected a feeling prevalent in Russian governing circles toward French radicalism and what this meant for the alliance. Izvolsky regarded Poincaré's election victory as "the decisive triumph of the moderate elements of politics over the extreme radicalism which had always

⁶³ LN, vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 1/14 March 1912, p.216. Izvolsky to Sazonov, 7/20 June 1912, p.281.

⁶⁴ Keiger, op.cit., p.94.

⁶⁵ LN, vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 22 November/ 5 December 1912, p.364.

⁶⁶ LN, vol.2, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 3/16 January 1913, p.9. As French Premier from 1902 to 1905, Emile Combes waged a ruthless anti-clerical campaign.

made proof of hostility with regards to Russia and the Franco-Russian alliance."⁶⁷ In long conversations, the new President and the new Minister of Foreign Affairs, Charles Jonnart, convinced Izvolsky that France would fulfil her obligations to Russia "with all the necessary 'sang-froid'" and "that the final result of actual complications perhaps for him [meant] the necessity of French participation in a general war."⁶⁸ Izvolsky continued to report that if Russia did not act unilaterally, France would support Russia in the Balkans, a state of affairs he dearly would have liked to see to erase the effect of his Bosnian fiasco.⁶⁹

Despite all his diligent work as ambassador to increase the effectiveness of the Dual Alliance and his professed liberalism, Izvolsky was a nervous critic of the French domestic scene. The electoral strength of the French left was a regular subject in his reports to Saint Petersburg. Typically, Izvolsky approved of the French government's firm stand against disorder on May Day in 1911.⁷⁰ He also noted with pleasure that the Socialist Party was weakened and divided after its annual conference held at Saint-Quentin.⁷¹ He

⁶⁷ LN, vol.2, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 17/ 30 January 1913, p.19.

⁶⁸ Ibid., p.20.

⁶⁹ Ibid., pp.19-20.

⁷⁰ LN, vol.1, Memorandum from Izvolsky, 28 April/ 11 May 1911, p.97.

⁷¹ Ibid., pp.98-101.

kept officials in Saint Petersburg informed about French worker unrest, acts of sabotage and the French government's reaction to such events.⁷² The underlying tone of these reports reveals Izvolsky's dislike and fear of the workers' movement and his penchant for order and stability. His attitude toward French domestic unrest reveals his anxiety about similar developments occurring in Russia.

The spring elections of 1914 and their outcome preoccupied Izvolsky. He criticized the outgoing Chamber of Deputies which had been responsible for a number of measures which he found distasteful, particularly the unsatisfactory state of French finances and the enfeeblement of the French military because of the introduction of two years' military service.⁷³ Izvolsky worried that the probable election victory of people like Jaurès, Clemenceau and Caillaux would lead not only to a repeat "of the sad experiences of the last legislature, but even to their aggravation."⁷⁴ Izvolsky believed that the results of these elections were important to Russia, since France's value as an ally was related to her internal stability. Despite all his fears about the spectre of socialism and domestic unrest in France, Izvolsky could be moved by a display of French

⁷² LN, vol.1, telegram from Izvolsky, 4/ 17 December 1912, p.570.
Memorandum from Izvolsky, 12/ 25 April 1911, p.87.

⁷³ LN, vol.2, Memorandum from Izvolsky, 21 November/ 4 December 1913, p.247.

⁷⁴ Ibid., pp.247-248.

patriotism, such as that he witnessed during the Bastille day celebrations of 1913 which he described in detail to Sazonov.⁷⁵

As ambassador Izvolsky was vocal in his criticisms of French politicians. In fact, his complaints become an almost tedious refrain in his correspondence with Saint Petersburg. On different occasions the Naval Minister, the Monis cabinet, C.Cruppi and J.de Selves, Ministers of Foreign Affairs, the Foreign Ministry itself, George Louis, Paléologue and Caillaux's ministry came under fire from Izvolsky.⁷⁶ The common complaint was these men's lack of experience and judgement. Such constant, almost petty, criticism seemed to be Izvolsky's method of venting his spleen at no longer occupying a ministerial post and his frustration at his loss of power. On another level it reflected his dissatisfaction with French support of Russia, a constant thorn in his side, especially after his Bosnian disgrace. Bosnia haunted Izvolsky in his dealings with the French. He believed a 1911 French loan to Hungary

⁷⁵ AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d.116, ll.44-45, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 4/17 July 1913.

⁷⁶ LN, vol.1, Memorandum from Izvolsky, 20 January/ 2 February 1911, p.29. Letters from Izvolsky; 17 February/ 2 March 1911, p.43. 31 March/ 13 April 1911, p.74. 29 September/ 12 October 1911, p.147. 13/16 October 1911, p.152. 26 October/ 8 November 1911, p.155. 10/23 November 1911, p.164. End of December 1911, pp.174-175. 29 March/ 11 April 1912, p.231. 10/ 23 May 1912, p.257. 29 March/ 11 April 1912, p.231-2. 21 November/ 4 December 1913, p.196.

threatened the alliance. He told the French Minister of Foreign Affairs that every loan given to Austria-Hungary or Hungary alone enfeebled Russia.⁷⁷

Izvol'sky's attitude toward France, therefore, was a mixture of admiration, frustration and deeply rooted distrust. He firmly believed in the value of the Dual Alliance for Russia but French actions which he regarded as at best inadequate and at worse disloyal frequently galled him. Nonetheless, at no point did he consider abandoning an occasionally unsatisfactory relationship for greener diplomatic pastures. His commitment to the Dual Alliance and the Entente with Great Britain was steadfast. It was based on his fear of Germany and his belief that the Entente best allowed Russia to pursue her self interests. Although Izvol'sky believed in constitutional government, this was not the determining factor in his support of the Triple Entente. His country's strategic interests took precedence over his ideological preferences. Fortunately in his case, the two coincided but there is no doubt as to which was the more influential. Both as Foreign Minister and as ambassador to Paris, Izvol'sky wanted to rebuild Russia's stature and influence in the world after the disaster of the Russo-Japanese War. His alternating satisfaction and dissatisfaction with his Entente partners reflected his assessment of their contribution toward that end.

⁷⁷ LN, vol.1, letter from Izvol'sky, 12/25 April 1911, p.91.

S.D.Sazonov replaced Izvolsky as Russian Foreign Minister in 1910.

Sazonov maintained the basic contours of his successor's foreign policy.

Sazonov was more critical of French and British behaviour than Izvolsky had been, but he did nothing significant to disrupt the smooth functioning of the Entente. By 1914, despite a few sobering lessons on the elastic meaning of British 'friendship', he even wanted to transform the Triple Entente into a Triple Alliance. During Sazonov's tenure as Foreign Minister, Russia recovered her strength and wanted to pursue a slightly more aggressive policy than had previously been possible. When France and Great Britain proved reluctant to back all Russia's foreign policy adventures, Sazonov chafed at the bit.

Saint Petersburg society considered Sazonov inexperienced for such a senior ministerial position. He had been a career diplomat but, like Izvolsky, he had not had stellar postings. It was frequently charged that his main qualification for the job was the fact that Stolypin was his brother-in-law.⁷⁸ Sazonov's appointment did secure for Stolypin a trustworthy colleague who would conduct the Empire's foreign policy along lines with which Stolypin agreed. Most importantly, Sazonov shared Stolypin's conviction that it was necessary for several years to avoid any European complications until Russia had perfected her defences.⁷⁹ The nomination also demonstrated the extent of

⁷⁸ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.487.

⁷⁹ S.D.Sazonov, Les Années Fatales (Paris, 1927), p.35.

Stolypin's power and influence.⁸⁰ Many contemporaries considered Sazonov a weak Foreign Minister.⁸¹ A lengthy illness early in his tenure compounded the isolation of his being an outsider to the Saint Petersburg bureaucratic scene. While he was Foreign Minister, a number of Russian diplomats abroad, including Izvolsky in Paris and Hartwig in Belgrade, displayed an alarming independence of action that he was unable to control.⁸² Nevertheless, he did have the support of Stolypin and later Kokovtsov in their capacity as Prime Minister. Because of this crucial support, Sazonov was by no means a lame duck minister, although he was never a strong one.

Central to Sazonov's thinking on foreign policy was his belief that Russia was primarily a European power. In April 1912 he told the Duma:

One must not forget ... that Russia is a European power, that the state was formed not on the banks of the Black Irtych but on the banks of the Dnieper and of the river Moskva. Increasing Russian possessions in Asia cannot be a goal of our foreign policy; this would lead to an undesirable shift in the state's centre of gravity and consequently to a weakening of our position in Europe and in the Middle East.⁸³

⁸⁰ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., pp.489-490.

⁸¹ For a contemporary's assessment see Kalmykov, op.cit., p.214.

⁸² D.M.McDonald, op.cit., pp.494 - 495.

⁸³ As quoted in Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.90.

His thoughts fitted the pattern of Russian diplomacy since the dismal failure of the Far Eastern adventure in 1905. Izvolsky had held similar views.

Also like his predecessor, Sazonov gained a reputation as an Anglophile largely as a result of his long posting to London at the beginning of the century, which made him better informed on British affairs than was usually the case for Russian Foreign Ministers.⁸⁴ During these years he acquired the conviction, which he never lost, that Anglo-Russian hostility was only "the result of a long misunderstanding".⁸⁵ Sazonov thought that if there were ever "two nations predestined to collaborate it was surely Russia and England." They had no common frontier and different military organizations, one naval, one land, which made attacking each other difficult; yet a conflict existed because neither side "examined 'sine ira et studio' and eliminated the cause of this animosity."⁸⁶ Sazonov attached "the highest importance" to the 1907 Anglo-Russian accord partly because it was "in the domain of the great European questions and the first step toward more confident and more normal relations."⁸⁷

⁸⁴ C.de Grunwald, op.cit., p.283. M.Taube, op.cit., p.248. And N.V.Tcharykov, "Sazonoff" Contemporary Review, cxxxiii (1928), p.288.

⁸⁵ Sazonov, op.cit., p.23.

⁸⁶ Ibid., p.24.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p.24.

Before Sazonov was even officially appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs, he accompanied Nicholas II to Potsdam for a visit with Wilhelm II where the question of the Baghdad railway was discussed and a tentative agreement reached. Like Izvolsky before, Sazonov was anxious to cultivate good relations with Germany while at the same time maintaining the Triple Entente. It would require experience as Minister of Foreign Affairs before Sazonov would realize, as Izvolsky had, that the two goals, given German ambitions and Anglo-German hostility, were not reconcilable. Unintentionally, Sazonov's Potsdam visit created great uneasiness in Paris and London about his intentions toward the Triple Entente. The British embassy reported that Sazonov's actions "all combined to produce the impression that a serious blow had been struck at the stability of the Triple Entente."⁸⁸ Once Sazonov realized the seriousness of the situation he sought to remedy it as best he could. The British were eventually mollified and convinced that "M.Sazonoff was at heart a firm advocate of the maintenance" of the Anglo-Russian understanding.⁸⁹ As a result of the Potsdam meeting, however, Sazonov acquired in Paris an undeserved reputation as a Germanophile.⁹⁰ To counteract this dangerous impression, his first official trip abroad as Minister was to France in the fall of 1912 after he had

⁸⁸ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.92, Annual Report on Russia for 1911, p.205.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p.205.

⁹⁰ LN, vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 1/14 March 1912, p.217.

recovered from a lengthy illness. He told the French government that good relations between Russia and Germany should not worry them but rather comfort them. Such relations allowed Russia

to exercise a pacifying influence on the German government to the profit even of France. And that we had done -- many times with success -- in the most critical moments of Franco-German conflict, from 1875 until the incident at Agadir.⁹¹

After a shaky start in Anglo-Russian relations Sazonov quickly established an amicable working relationship with the British ambassador, Sir George Buchanan. Buchanan and Sazonov had known each other from Sazonov's London days. According to Buchanan, Sazonov gave him

a most cordial welcome on my paying him my first official visit, and we soon became fast friends. A Russian of the Russians when it was a question of defending his country's interests, he was always a staunch friend of Great Britain;... I ever found in him a loyal and zealous collaborator for the maintenance of the Anglo-Russian understanding.⁹²

The easy relations Sazonov had with Buchanan contrasted sharply with the strained relations between Sazonov and the French ambassador, George Louis. Only the recall of Louis and his replacement by Theodore Delcassé rectified the situation and paved the way for more harmonious Franco-Russian relations.

⁹¹ Sazonov, op.cit., p.43.

⁹² G.Buchanan, My Mission to Russia, vol.1, pp.92-93.

During Sazonov's tenure the Anglo-Russian convention on the whole worked well. Numerous disputes over Persia arose but they were usually settled amicably.⁹³ Sazonov was willing to make what he perceived to be sacrifices in Persia because he believed in the accord's value. Much as Izvolsky had Sazonov attributed to it "a political importance which surpassed the limits of the countries which were the object of it."⁹⁴ At a difficult point concerning Persia, for example, Sazonov told Buchanan that the Anglo-Russian understanding was

the alpha and omega of his policy, and he only regretted that it had been Iswolsky and not himself, who had put his signature to it. Its maintenance was essential to the vital interests of the two countries, and, were it to break down, German hegemony would at once be established in Europe.⁹⁵

Several days in 1912 spent as the guest of George V and Queen Mary at Balmoral in Scotland -- where he had talks with the King, Grey and Bonar Law, the Leader of the Opposition -- pleased Sazonov and reinforced his confidence in Britain. Years later he looked back fondly on the "amiable hospitality" he received from the royal family.⁹⁶ He reported to Nicholas II that

⁹³ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.62, Annual report on Russia for 1910, p.114. Doc.92, Annual Report on Russia for 1911, p.221. Doc.135, Annual Report on Russia for 1912, pp.299-300. Doc.172, Annual Report on Russia for 1913, pp.359-360.

⁹⁴ Sazonov, op.cit., p.64.

⁹⁵ G.Buchanan, op.cit., p.111, copy of a letter from Buchanan to Grey.

⁹⁶ Sazonov, op.cit., p.61.

the King had deigned to grant him "an excessively cordial welcome" and had stressed his attachment to continued friendship with Russia.⁹⁷ While at Balmoral Sazonov and Grey had the opportunity for "several long and most friendly conversations".⁹⁸ The two ministers discussed the possibility of British naval support in the event of a war, as well as Persia, India, Tibet, and the Balkans.⁹⁹ These talks laid the foundation for close Anglo-Russian collaboration during the Balkan Wars.¹⁰⁰ After his successful visit to Britain, Sazonov travelled to Paris where he received another warm welcome.¹⁰¹

Shortly after this visit the First Balkan War broke out, which was followed quickly by the Second Balkan War. On the whole Russia, France and Great Britain cooperated well during these tense months, mainly because they all agreed that the fighting could not be allowed to spill over into a general European conflict. Nevertheless Britain and France frustrated Sazonov because of their occasional reluctance to support wholeheartedly the Russian position. Before the First Balkan War even began, France had expressed to Russia her

⁹⁷ LN, vol.2, Sazonov's Report to the Tsar, p.346.

⁹⁸ TsGAOR, f.601, op.1, d.1219, letter from George V to Nicholas II, 6 October 1912.

⁹⁹ LN, vol.2, Sazonov Report to Nicholas II, p.347.

¹⁰⁰ G.Buchanan, op.cit., vol.1, p.109.

¹⁰¹ LN, vol.1, Sazonov's Report to Nicholas II, p.359.

displeasure at Russia's role in the conclusion of the Serbian-Bulgarian alliance. During Poincaré's August 1912 visit to Saint Petersburg, Sazonov mollified the French Foreign Minister but the seeds of discord remained.¹⁰² Poincaré reminded Sazonov that the letter of the alliance treaty called on France to fulfil her obligations toward Russia only if Germany attacked Russia.¹⁰³ When the fighting began, Sazonov complained to Buchanan that the Triple Entente was at a disadvantage in the crisis because of its lack of solidarity compared to the Triple Alliance. Specifically, he bemoaned the fact that no one knew what Britain would do in the event of a general European war.¹⁰⁴ Nonetheless, the Triple Entente survived the test of the crisis. The British embassy in Saint Petersburg reported that Sazonov fully appreciated the diplomatic assistance and support which the British government provided.¹⁰⁵

In a manner similar to Nicholas II, Sazonov did not regard France as warmly as he did Britain. He frequently expressed annoyance at French behaviour and minor irritants played a prominent role between the two allies during his stewardship of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Most notably during the Agadir crisis of 1911 Russia refused France any real support on the grounds

¹⁰² Sazonov, op.cit., p.60.

¹⁰³ LN, vol.2, Sazonov's Report to Nicholas II, p.356.

¹⁰⁴ G.Buchanan, op.cit., pp.137-138.

¹⁰⁵ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.135, Annual Report on Russia for 1912, p.294.

never for Fr. view of Balkans

that Russia was unwilling to go to war over a French colonial dispute.¹⁰⁶ In 1912 Sazonov was unhappy with the ambassadorship of Georges Louis, and the lukewarm French support of Russian mediation proposals for the Turco-Italian war.¹⁰⁷ During 1913 a misunderstanding over the level of French interest in the Ottoman 'Conseil de la Régie des Tabacs' and French contracts for Turkish railroads marred relations between Paris and Saint Petersburg.¹⁰⁸

Sazonov remarked to Izvolsky that lately it had become

more and more difficult to respond to the doubts and the questions expressed by the representatives of the press and society, which notices a constant disagreement between us and our ally on questions much more essential for us than for them.¹⁰⁹

The advent of Raymond Poincaré to the French Presidency partially calmed Sazonov's apprehensions about the state of the Dual Alliance. Sazonov described Poincaré to the Emperor as "an ardent and convinced partisan of a close union between France and Russia and a permanent exchange of views between the two allies on all the most important questions of international

¹⁰⁶ J.Keiger, op.cit., p.89.

¹⁰⁷ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.135, Annual Report on Russia for 1912, p.295.

¹⁰⁸ LN, vol.2, Sazonov to Izvolsky, 8 August 1913, pp.137-138. Also secret telegram from Sazonov to Izvolsky, 22 July 1912, p.116.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p.116.

politics."¹¹⁰ Sazonov feared what he regarded as the German policy establishing Central Power dominance in the Balkans economically and quasi-politically. He was relieved, therefore, that the man at the head of France was one in whom he had "full confidence."¹¹¹ Poincaré's electoral victory so pleased the Russian government that it took the unusual step of immediately awarding him the Order of Saint Andrew.¹¹²

The Liman von Sanders affair of late 1913 and early 1914 became a test of the soundness of the Triple Entente. When the German Emperor bade farewell to the von Sanders mission to Constantinople, he called on its officers "to create for me a new strong army which obeys my orders." Wilhelm II also stated that the mission's first priority was "the Germanisation of the Turkish army through [German] leadership and direct control of the organisational activity of the Turkish Ministry of War."¹¹³ Such grandiose and anti-Russian aims alarmed Sazonov and persuaded him that the mission must be thwarted. Angered by German tactics during the Agadir crisis, the French government was prepared to give Russia much greater support in this area than it ever had

¹¹⁰ LN, vol.2, Sazonov to Nicholas II, 24 October 1913, p.360.

¹¹¹ Sazonov, op.cit., p.159.

¹¹² AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1913g., d.124, ll.6-7, from Sazonov to the Paris embassy, 2 February 1913. See also Sazonov, Les Années Fatales, p.158.

¹¹³ Quoted in Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.46.

before.¹¹⁴ But to Sazonov's mind such support alone was not sufficient to force Germany to remove von Sanders from his new post, which so threatened Russian interests.

British conduct during these months enraged Sazonov. He believed that Germany and Turkey would yield if Russia, France and Britain took a firm stand. Germany might risk war against Russia and France, he believed, but she could not face the additional danger of a naval war with Britain. The British Embassy was aware of Sazonov's discontent.

The Russian government treated this as the first question seriously involving Russian interests in which they had sought for British support, and therefore as one furnishing a test of the value of the Triple Entente; and M.Sazonof declared that the Triple Entente had proved a failure in the present question.¹¹⁵

The Liman von Sanders crisis marked a double turning point in Russian policies. It seems to have persuaded both Nicholas II and Sazonov of the impossibility of reaching an understanding with Germany. It also prompted Sazonov to seek a proper alliance with Britain which would stand Russia in better stead during the next crisis than had the Entente during this one.¹¹⁶ As

¹¹⁴ Ibid., p.48.

¹¹⁵ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.172, Annual Report on Russia for 1913, p.357. See also G.Buchanan, op.cit., p.149.

¹¹⁶ Sazonov, op.cit., pp.137-139.

Izvol'sky had from the Bosnian debacle, Sazonov emerged from the Sanders affair embittered and distrustful of Britain, but at the same time resolved to strengthen the Entente to further Russian interests. Unlike Izvol'sky's, however, Sazonov's career as Foreign Minister was not abruptly curtailed by this lack of Entente solidarity.

By late 1913 there was a sense of urgency in Sazonov's actions that previously had been lacking. His fear of German hegemony and all that that entailed for Russia had increased dramatically. He believed Germany's policy of 'Weltpolitik' threatened the existence of independent states in Europe and was incompatible with the existence of the Russian, French and British empires.¹¹⁷ A desire to maintain the status quo in Europe motivated Sazonov as it did Nicholas II. Sazonov believed that Britain had as much reason as Russia to fear a disruption of the balance of power in Europe which war with Germany would cause.¹¹⁸

Sazonov regarded the Dual Alliance and the Franco-Russian Naval Convention as adequate guarantees of French support in case of a showdown with Germany.¹¹⁹ He was not as confident of Britain and sought firmer commitments. He began to lobby intensely for a new Triple Alliance of Russia,

¹¹⁷ Sazonov, op.cit., p.136.

¹¹⁸ LN, vol.2, Sazonov to Benckendorf, 2/15 April 1914, p.314.

¹¹⁹ Sazonov, op.cit., pp.61 and 136.

France and Britain to counterbalance the old Triple Alliance of Germany, Austria-Hungary and Italy. In late 1913 Sazonov approached the British ambassador about this matter, saying that the lack of solidarity in the Triple Entente made it a less effective diplomatic instrument, although it was stronger as a fighting combination than the Triple Alliance. Consequently, like Nicholas II, he argued for "an alliance of a defensive character" which would allow the combination "to impose respect for our wishes without war."¹²⁰ To Izvolsky, Sazonov described the conversion of the Triple Entente into a defensive alliance as "an essential problem", which would guarantee Russia's international position.¹²¹

A naval convention was broached as the first concrete step toward the realization of Sazonov's goal. When the British government in May 1914 agreed to negotiate a convention limited to the Baltic, Sazonov was delighted. He told the French ambassador, Paléologue, that "the accord we are going to conclude with England will ensure the balance and the peace. The tranquillity of Europe will no longer depend on German caprice."¹²² Sazonov showed his pleasure by making substantial concessions in Persia, although Grey had agreed reluctantly to the negotiations more to please the French than the

¹²⁰ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.172, Annual Report on Russia for 1913, p.360.

¹²¹ LN, vol.2, Sazonov to Izvolsky, 20 March 1914, p.255.

¹²² LN, vol.2, Paléologue to Doumergue, 16 May 1914, p.266.

Russians.¹²³ Neither a naval agreement nor an alliance, however, was concluded before the dreaded conflict with Germany began in the summer of 1914. Sazonov had worked diligently to achieve an alliance but traditional British reluctance to become entangled on the Continent prevented any agreement.

Sazonov's push for an alliance with Britain was partly motivated by his concern about British domestic affairs, which he monitored closely in 1914. He associated Britain's vacillating position in foreign policy with her internal instability. To Benckendorf Sazonov complained bitterly about "the wavering and hollow policy of the English cabinet" which, preoccupied with Home Rule and "other utopias as dangerous", wanted to abstain from any foreign policy initiative.¹²⁴ Sazonov also referred to "the strange blindness of Grey". The Triple Entente's existence, he wrote, was as difficult to prove as that of a "sea monster".¹²⁵ He informed Buchanan that the Russian government watched anxiously as the crisis over Ulster unfolded. He also expressed his "apprehension lest internal dissensions and disaffection in the army might so

¹²³ Keiger, op.cit., p.141.

¹²⁴ LN, vol.2, Private letter from Sazonov to Benckendorf, 6/19 February, 1914, p.307.

¹²⁵ Ibid.,p.307.

weaken England's position as to render her voice of no account in the councils of nations."¹²⁶

A renewal of Anglo-Russian rivalry in Persia and a desire on the part of Britain to revise the 1907 accord also perturbed Sazonov.¹²⁷ Despite his frustrations Sazonov was prepared to work hard to maintain the good relations which had always been a priority in his foreign policy.¹²⁸ After enumerating a long list of complaints against Britain, Sazonov reiterated his

promise to remain faithful, to the last limits possible, to my determination to cultivate and to strengthen the ties of friendship with England. This end entails certain sacrifices which we are completely disposed to make. That the English do not demand from us anything too great!¹²⁹

Given Sazonov's peacetime worries about the value of British friendship, it is not surprising that British actions during the July crisis disappointed him, while he was gratified by French support, which he described as "particularly precious".¹³⁰ Sazonov viewed London's role in the crisis as

¹²⁶ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.174, Buchanan to Grey, 31 March 1914, p.380.

¹²⁷ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., d.192, ll.25-26, Sazonov to Benckendorf, 11/24 June 1914.

¹²⁸ Ibid.,

¹²⁹ Ibid., l.26.

¹³⁰ LN, vol.2, Secret telegram from Sazonov to Izvolsky, 16/29 July 1914, p.289.

crucial. He came to believe that a firm commitment by London to the Triple Entente would have prompted Berlin to counsel moderation in Vienna and the war might have been avoided.¹³¹ British wavering confirmed Sazonov's view that an alliance was the only means of ensuring adequate British support. In the end Britain did join Russia and France in the war but Sazonov's main goal in aligning Russia with Britain and France had been to avoid such a devastating and ultimately suicidal conflict for Imperial Russia.

Count A.K. Benckendorf was the Russian ambassador to London throughout the years covered in this study. He consistently used this position to improve Anglo-Russian relations. He was a firm supporter of the main lines of Izvolsky's foreign policy.¹³² He did not particularly admire, however, the British form of government or wish Russia to emulate it. His desire for Anglo-Russian friendship, although nourished by a fondness for the British monarchy and aristocracy, was fuelled primarily by fear of German designs and a belief that the Entente would best serve Russian strategic interests. Like most Russian government officials Benckendorf was well aware of Russia's need for peace. According to him "nothing was less discussable."¹³³ The Count was a

¹³¹ Sazonov, op.cit., pp.192-193.

¹³² Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 28 June/ 11 July 1906, p.330.

¹³³ Ibid., Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 8/21 August 1906, p.352.

diplomat 'par excellence', who believed "that in diplomacy there can be no traditional friends or enemies".¹³⁴ Consequently, he would not accept the view that Germany was a traditional friend and Britain a traditional enemy. He also thought that many "intelligent men" in Russia misunderstood Britain, not realizing that she merely pursued her own interests, rather than deliberately undermining those of other countries.¹³⁵

Like Izvolsky and Sazonov, Benckendorf acquired a reputation as an anglophile. A former Russian diplomat who opposed the Triple Entente felt that Benckendorf's fondness for Britain was detrimental to Russian interests. In Benckendorf,

admiration for the British Empire, for all that was English and, in particular, for the royal court, obscured sometimes the clear comprehension of the economic and political interests of the state and the people that he represented at London and which for him, at base, were completely foreign.¹³⁶

¹³⁴ Abrikossov, op.cit., p.117.

¹³⁵ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 27 July/ 9 August 1906, p.349. Also Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 24 June/7 July 1906, p.324.

¹³⁶ Taube, op.cit., p.160.

Whether Benckendorf merited Taube's criticism, there is no doubt that the ambassador enjoyed English society and that during his posting he and the Russian embassy occupied a high position in London society.¹³⁷

Benckendorf had a close relationship with Edward VII, which helped to facilitate the rapid improvement in Anglo-Russian relations after 1906. The King often singled out the Russian ambassador for personal attention. Edward VII on various occasions had Benckendorf as a house guest for extended periods at Goodwood, Sandringham, and Balmoral.¹³⁸ At Ascot in 1906 the King drove through the crowd three times with Benckendorf seated by his side, an attention Benckendorf especially appreciated as it came after the public furore over the violent pogrom at Bielostok.¹³⁹ Benckendorf became genuinely attached to Edward VII, whom he regarded as a sincere and real friend of Russia.¹⁴⁰ Benckendorf also established a close relationship with George V, although it was not the same as with his father.¹⁴¹ Benckendorf was attached

¹³⁷ Abrikossov, op.cit., pp.102 and 110.

¹³⁸ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 3/16 July 1906, pp.332-33. 25 July/7 August 1906, p.339. Vol.2, 20 December 1906/ 2 January 1907, p.11. 21 July/ 3 August 1908, p.187. 10/24 September 1909, p.242.

¹³⁹ Ibid., vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 14/27 June 1906, p.316.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 28 April/ 11 May 1910, p.263.

¹⁴¹ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.96-99, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 6/19 December 1910.

to British aristocratic society in a sentimental way. When a rumour surfaced that he was to be transferred to another posting, he informed Izvolsky that he felt he could only be ambassador at London and nowhere else.¹⁴² His family became so anglicised during its stay in Britain that his daughter married an Englishman.¹⁴³

Benckendorf was a strong and early advocate of an Anglo-Russian understanding. In 1906 he regarded British policy as "pacifist and appeasing", a rare attitude among Russian officials.¹⁴⁴ Once negotiations were underway Benckendorf pressed for a speedy conclusion because he feared international nervousness would be produced by prolonged talks.¹⁴⁵ Benckendorf worried that a failure would lead to an Anglo-German accord.¹⁴⁶ Moreover, he believed that a failure in 1907 would set back Anglo-Russian relations for a generation and all Russian interests would be affected. In the end failure would lead to a war "for which in every way we will pay the price, and who says war,

¹⁴² Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 20 July/ 2 August 1910, p.288.

¹⁴³ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, l.187, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 3/16 January 1911.

¹⁴⁴ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 25 July/ 7 August 1906, pp.339-340.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 2/15 May 1907, p.39.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 13/24 June 1907, pp.59-60.

says revolution." Benckendorf also believed that an Anglo-Russian agreement was necessary to maintain the alliance with France.¹⁴⁷ For his efforts in negotiating the Anglo-Russian convention of 1907, the King awarded Benckendorf the Royal Victorian Order, as a personal gift.¹⁴⁸

As ambassador to London, Benckendorf regularly sympathised with the British point of view on all manner of questions, revealing his belief that Britain should be trusted. While the negotiations were underway, a delegation of the First Duma visited London and the British Prime Minister, Campbell-Bannerman, made his famous remark: "the Duma is dead; long live the Duma!". As we have seen, Saint Petersburg did not respond well to his comment and instructed Benckendorf to inform the Prime Minister that the Russian government found his remark tactless. Apparently, however, Benckendorf had not found the remark offensive and did not want to jeopardise relations over what he regarded as a trivial incident. Instead of an official note, Benckendorf simply took Campbell-Bannerman aside at a gathering and explained the Russian government's point of view, whereupon the Prime Minister expressed his regret at having produced such a negative impression in Russia. This was

¹⁴⁷ Ibid., Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 27 June/ 10 July 1907, pp.62-63. See also Abrikossov, op.cit., pp.112-113.

¹⁴⁸ AVPR, FDLCixd, op.464, d.295a, l.6.

transmitted to Saint Petersburg as an apology.¹⁴⁹ This small anecdote shows both Benckendorf's sympathy and understanding for British customs and also the gulf between Russian diplomats posted abroad and Russian officialdom in Saint Petersburg.

Benckendorf's sympathetic explanations of British behaviour also extended to the British side of Anglo-Russian political or territorial disputes. The ambassador on different occasions argued Britain's case about the detention of a British subject in Russia, the actions of Russian consuls in Persia, and the retention of Russian troops in Persia in 1909.¹⁵⁰ At one point the actions of his government over Persia and their negative effect on Anglo-Russian relations so frustrated Benckendorf that he berated the assistant Foreign Minister, A.A.Neratov, about the need to have faith in Britain, arguing that she deserved complete trust.

The facts seem clear to me, the two great Powers of the world are tied by a convention, who says convention, says cooperation,... In the actual case, it seems to me that we must make more of an effort to conserve the viable, in the sense of a political card on the table.¹⁵¹

¹⁴⁹ Abrikossov, op.cit., pp.137-138. See also Sir E. Grey, op.cit., pp.149-150.

¹⁵⁰ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, l.85, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 18/31 August 1909. AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, part 1, ll.187-188, memorandum from Benckendorf, 1/14 August 1906. Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 19 June/ 2 July 1908, p.176. Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 21 September/ 4 October 1909, p.254.

¹⁵¹ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.126-129, letter from Benckendorf, 22 November/ 5 December 1911.

Despite his deep-seated distrust of Germany, Benckendorf also on occasion defended British actions which could be construed as friendly overtures to Berlin. As a result of the Potsdam meeting between Nicholas II, Wilhelm II and their Foreign Ministers in November 1910, Benckendorf believed that Anglo-German negotiations would have to take place but that they were not to be feared because Britain had "a robust faith in Russia's future" and was not contemplating abandoning the Triple Entente.¹⁵² The Haldane Mission to Berlin did not overly perturb Benckendorf, unlike others in the Russian government. The British government informed the Russian ambassador about the trip and the reasons for it. Benckendorf told Grey that he saw "only advantages for the peace that the relations of England with Germany should be as good as her Entente ties with Russia and France permit."¹⁵³ Benckendorf acknowledged to Sazonov that it was a problem that Germany and Britain were not on speaking terms. Benckendorf believed the Haldane Mission to be necessary to rectify such an undesirable situation, although he did criticize the publicity attached to the visit.¹⁵⁴

¹⁵² AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.176-179, Benckendorf to A.A.Neratov, 30 March/ 12 April 1911.

¹⁵³ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1912g., d.174, ll.5-7, Confidential letter from Benckendorf to Sazonov, 27 January/ 9 February 1912.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., ll.8-12, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 28 January/ 10 February 1912.

When it came to British domestic politics Benckendorf was not always as tolerant as he was of British diplomacy. Certain of the more radical elements of British society repulsed the Russian aristocrat in much the same way that French socialists did Izvolsky. Benckendorf did, however, admire the Liberal Party and particularly Sir Edward Grey.¹⁵⁵ Like many Russian diplomats, Benckendorf viewed criticism of Russian imperialism as the result of Jewish agitation. He attributed the British opposition to the proposed 1906 British fleet visit to Russia to the Jewish press and a few Labour members in the House of Commons, which included two Jews.¹⁵⁶ He also held the City in disdain describing it as "half German, Jews, Americans of whom the nationality is completely vague."¹⁵⁷

The acerbity of British domestic politics during an election dismayed Benckendorf.¹⁵⁸ He complained to Izvolsky that trying to conduct diplomacy in

¹⁵⁵ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 21 July/ 3 August 1907, pp.75-76. AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.182-184, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 30 January/ 12 February 1911. L.122, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 7/20 December 1911.

¹⁵⁶ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 28 June/ 11 July 1906, pp.327-329.

¹⁵⁷ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.94-95, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 3/16 December 1910.

¹⁵⁸ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 21 September/ 4 October 1909, p.253.

London while there was an election on was like "drinking sea water."¹⁵⁹

Because of the election no one was available to see Benckendorf and everything was on hold, a state of affairs Benckendorf found difficult to tolerate.¹⁶⁰ Once the election was over and the Liberals returned to power, diplomacy returned to normal, much to Benckendorf's relief.¹⁶¹ The suffragette movement and the struggle for Home Rule also preoccupied Benckendorf.¹⁶²

In his opinion the crisis over Home Rule in 1914 had at least one salutary effect on British foreign policy in that there was less debate about foreign policy in the House of Commons.¹⁶³

When Sazonov first broached the idea of a defensive alliance with Britain, Benckendorf initially supported it, only later to defend British reservations about the plan. In February 1914 Benckendorf told Sazonov that he agreed "entirely and without reserve", although he did caution that the

¹⁵⁹ Ibid., p.256.

¹⁶⁰ Ibid., Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 23 December 1909/ 5 January 1910, p.260.

¹⁶¹ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.96-99, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 6/19 December 1910.

¹⁶² AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d.20, ll.4-5, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 16/ 29 January 1913. LL.6-7 Benckendorf to Sazonov, 27 February/ 12 March 1913. AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.188-190, Benckendorf to Sazonov, December 1910/ January 1911. AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d.20, ll.2-3, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 15/28 January 1913.

¹⁶³ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., ll.16-20, Benckendorf to Sazonov.

"terrible insular spirit" of Britain was still "too general".¹⁶⁴ Benckendorf was more sanguine about Anglo-Russian relations at the beginning of 1914 and more tolerant than Sazonov of the constraints placed on British foreign policy by the nature of her political system, history and geography. Benckendorf was well aware that the British government's preoccupation with domestic affairs militated strongly against the possibility of an alliance being concluded soon.¹⁶⁵ By May Benckendorf was convinced that an alliance was for the moment an impossibility, although he was not worried. He informed Sazonov that he doubted one could

find a stronger guarantee for military cooperation in the case of war than the spirit of this Entente, such as it has revealed itself, reinforced by the military provisions which exist.¹⁶⁶

The decision to begin naval conversations between the two powers pleased Benckendorf.¹⁶⁷ During the July crisis, however, he was forced to eat his words about the reliability of the Entente when he decried "the slow English imagination" as "deplorable". England's preoccupation with Ulster meant that

¹⁶⁴ LN, vol.2, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 12/25 February 1912, pp.308-309.

¹⁶⁵ Ibid., Benckendorf to Sazonov, 25 March/ 7 April 1914, pp.312-313.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid., Benckendorf to Sazonov, 22 April/ 5 May 1914, p.316.

¹⁶⁷ Ibid., Benckendorf to Sazonov, 7/20 May 1914, p.324.

she was "still not awakened enough" to the need to provide Russia appropriate support.¹⁶⁸

A devoted supporter of the 1907 Anglo-Russian accord, Benckendorf was much more ambivalent toward France. In general, he was critical of Russia's long-standing ally and, in this, he was representative of a general dissatisfaction with the alliance in Russian government circles. Benckendorf did not want Russia to be solely dependent on France. Such an arrangement meant that Russia was "easily and often" put into conflict with Germany. Russian subservience to "French panics and nervousness" was insupportable.¹⁶⁹ Benckendorf recognised Russia's financial reliance on France, since she was the only power which supported Russian credit without which Russia would go bankrupt. For Benckendorf that meant revolution.¹⁷⁰ Nonetheless he believed, as did other prominent Russians, that France would be willing to fight a war for French interests alone. In such a war Russia would be at a disadvantage as she would have to fight two powerful enemies while France would have only one with which to contend. Consequently Russia would

¹⁶⁸ Ibid., Benckendorf to Sazonov, 13/26 July 1914, p.330.

¹⁶⁹ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 23 August/ 5 September 1906, p.361.

¹⁷⁰ Ibid., vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 17/ 30 March 1908, p.147.

probably be weaker than France at a peace conference.¹⁷¹ Nevertheless, despite his serious concerns about France's value as an ally, Benckendorf would occasionally defend France and certainly never contemplated abandoning the alliance.¹⁷²

Prince Grigorii Nikolayevich Trubetskoy was a diplomat, publicist and liberal-imperialist. From 1906 to 1912 he was retired from the diplomatic service and wrote frequently on foreign policy. In the summer of 1912 Trubetskoy was appointed head of the Near Eastern Department of the Foreign Ministry, which covered Balkan and Ottoman affairs. According to B.E.Nolde, Sazonov "felt toward Trubetskoy a very sincere trust and was subject to his undoubted influence".¹⁷³ With his brother the philosopher, Evgeni Nikolayevich, Grigorii Nikolayevich edited the liberal and slavophil Moscow weekly, Moskovskiy Yezhenedel'nik. G.N.Trubetskoy was a friend of P.B.Struve and was close to Muscovite liberal-imperialist intellectual and business circles. Lieven regards Trubetskoy's appointment as head of the Near Eastern Department as "a remarkable step" which showed "how very close in sympathy were Sazonov and his assistants to the 'responsible Slavophil' elements in public opinion of which Trubetskoy was such a leading and well-known representative."¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ LN, vol.2, Letter from Benckendorf, 12/13 February 1913, p.306.

¹⁷² Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.2, Benckendorf to Izvolsky, 9/23 April 1909, p.223. AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.156-160, Benckendorf to A.A.Neratov, 30 August/ 12 September 1911.

¹⁷³ Quoted in Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.91.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid., p.92.

G.N.Trubetskoy came from one of Russia's oldest aristocratic families, with strong Slavophil connections. Throughout his life he maintained a profound attachment to Orthodox Christianity. Trubetskoy's intense Slavophilism and his belief in the balance of power as the best method to preserve the peace shaped his approach to foreign policy. He believed that Orthodox and Slav ideals should form the basis of Russian foreign policy and that the Slav idea would aid the development of a unifying patriotism. As a result of his Slavophil views, Trubetskoy believed that Russia's real interests were in the Black Sea and the Balkans as they had been since the reign of Catherine the Great.¹⁷⁵ Trubetskoy regarded the maintenance of Russia's status as a great power as the main goal of Russian foreign policy.

For Trubetskoy, as for Izvolsky and Sazonov, "the threat to European peace came from Germany"¹⁷⁶, which had grown increasingly powerful since unification in 1870. Because of the German threat, Trubetskoy regarded the Franco-Russian alliance as imperative. His commitment to the French alliance was complete. He criticized the 1907 agreement to preserve the status quo in the Baltic as an effort by Izvolsky to please Berlin. Trubetskoy complained that

one cannot close one's eyes to the evident

¹⁷⁵ G.N.Trubetskoy, "Rossiya kak Velikaya Derzhava" in Velikaya Rossiya (Moscow, 1910), p.31.

¹⁷⁶ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.95.

necessity as regards the question of mutual security in Europe to choose between France and Germany. To seek a middle way is equivalent to wanting to sit between two stools. This is scarcely either a profitable or an honourable position.¹⁷⁷

Trubetskoy in 1906 was also a strong advocate of better relations with Great Britain. He accepted the 1907 Anglo-Russian agreement gladly, although he was dissatisfied with some of its terms.¹⁷⁸

A clear exposition of Trubetskoy's views on foreign policy can be found in the two essays he wrote for Velikaya Rossiya, an influential two-volume work edited by the industrialist, P.P.Ryabushinsky, and published in 1910 and 1911. Trubetskoy's two essays "Russia as a Great Power" and "Some Thoughts on Russia's Foreign Policy" form a substantial and important part of the work, which Ryabushinsky sponsored in order to bring together the worlds of the liberal intelligentsia and Moscow business.

Trubetskoy's article, "Russia as a Great Power", written in October 1910, is a long, thoughtful essay in which he discussed all aspects of Russian foreign policy. Trubetskoy mentioned the alliance with France only infrequently in "Russia as a Great Power" creating the impression that he took it for granted. He did describe the Franco-Russian alliance as mutually beneficial, as it

¹⁷⁷ Ibid., p.95.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid., p.98.

provided France security against the German threat while Russia gained "great freedom of action released at the same time from political influence of the Berlin cabinet and economic dependence on the Berlin Exchange."¹⁷⁹

Trubetskoy, however, also recognised inherent dangers in the alliance. He explained that he did not wish to deny the alliance's value and that it was unlikely that France would avoid her obligations in the case of a war. On the other hand, Russia would also have to reciprocate and in Trubetskoy's opinion the question of war for France was "more serious than for the majority of great powers."¹⁸⁰ Trubetskoy's interpretation of the Dual Alliance is strikingly similar to Benckendorf's.

In his harshest criticism, Trubetskoy questioned France's loyalty to Russia during the Bosnian annexation crisis of 1908-1909. Trubetskoy, like Izvoisky, objected vehemently to France reaching an agreement with Germany over Morocco while Russia was in a "duel" with Austria-Hungary over Bosnia-Herzegovina.¹⁸¹ This episode led him to question France's reliability as an ally and to wonder if she seriously envisioned "the possibility of showing us such real support" as Germany did for Austria with her "'friendly' advice in

¹⁷⁹ Trubetskoy, "Rossiya kak Velikaya Dershava" loc.cit., pp.29-30.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., p.89.

¹⁸¹ Ibid., p.90.

Petersburg", a bitter allusion to the German ultimatum.¹⁸² Trubetskoy's frustration and sense of betrayal ran deep since the international humiliation Russia suffered during 1908-1909 struck at both his Slavophilism and his Great Russian patriotism.

In contrast to the scant attention paid to France, Trubetskoy wrote a good deal about Anglo-Russian relations, particularly with regards to Persia. The essay "Russia as a Great Power" reflected Trubetskoy's ambivalence toward Britain. He wanted and valued British friendship, but at the same time he criticized British behaviour and was aware of the traditional Anglo-Russian hostility. Trubetskoy enumerated Russia's many long-standing grievances against Great Britain: the Crimean War, the British attitude during the Russo-Turkish War, Anglo-Russian colonial competition in the Near East and also conflict in the Far East, particularly the Anglo-Japanese alliance which Trubetskoy felt, as did Nicholas II, gave Japan the latitude to wage a humiliating war against Russia.¹⁸³ He regarded the 1907 Anglo-Russian Convention, however, as a positive achievement for Russia and as a "further

¹⁸² Ibid., p.91.

¹⁸³ Trubetskoy, "Rossiya kak Velikaya Derzhava", pp.30-31, pp.21-22, p.44, pp.57-58.

important step" in the formation of a new grouping of powers, France, Britain and Russia, facing Germany and Austria with Italy floating in between.¹⁸⁴

Nevertheless, Trubetskoy had serious reservations about friendship with Great Britain, not least because of the spectre of British isolationism and the fear that Russia would be forced to pull British chestnuts out of the fire. He wrote, rather caustically, that Britain "probably would prefer that in Europe, as not long ago in Asia, her friends and rivals without her, but for her, settled her scores." Despite his doubts about both Britain and France, instead of rejecting them as partners, he called for strengthened agreements and specific plans which would prove useful in the event of war.¹⁸⁵

Trubetskoy discussed in some detail the usefulness of an actual alliance with Great Britain. He concluded that in the Far East at least such an alliance would be "useless" and "not feasible" because of Russia's improved relations with Japan and the Anglo-Japanese alliance.¹⁸⁶ In Europe his conclusions were not as clear cut. He believed Russia's next war in Europe would be against Germany and her allies. In such a scenario Britain would probably send 100,000 men to aid France, but he questioned the utility of such an expeditionary force for Russia. Although a British Expeditionary Force struck

¹⁸⁴ Ibid., pp.76-77, 80.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid., p.91.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., p.94.

him as largely irrelevant to Russia's needs, he did conclude that the British fleet could protect Russia from a hostile landing in the Baltic and in this respect an alliance with Britain might prove beneficial.¹⁸⁷

Although Trubetskoy acknowledged that an alliance with Britain had some strategic value, the possibility of unnecessarily enraging Germany by such a union deeply troubled him.¹⁸⁸ He feared that Russia could be drawn into an Anglo-German conflict, an event he thought likely given their trading and industrial rivalry. Unprovoked, Trubetskoy argued, Germany would not risk war with Russia since Germany would not wish to lose access to the valuable Russian market. He argued that there was no reason for Germany to wage war against Russia unless Germany "had serious reasons to fear an Anglo-Russian alliance," which would give concrete foundations to the "coalition nightmare". Germany would be forced to strike a blow against the coalition. He worried that Germany would choose a moment when Britain was occupied elsewhere and then attack Russia.¹⁸⁹

Having painted such a bleak picture, Trubetskoy concluded that an alliance with Britain would be too destructive to Russo-German relations and

¹⁸⁷ Ibid., p.95.

¹⁸⁸ Ibid., p.95.

¹⁸⁹ Ibid., pp.100-101.

therefore not worth the attendant risks.¹⁹⁰ In this respect he differed from his friend Sazonov. Instead, Trubetskoy proposed "an awakening of Pan-Slavic tendencies in Russian foreign policy."¹⁹¹ He believed that Britain, France and Italy understood that "assistance to the independent development of Slavic states and people serves as the best protection against the growth of pan-Germanism." He concluded that public opinion and responsible politicians in London, Paris and Rome were ready to aid Russia in this direction.¹⁹²

In Trubetskoy's contribution to the second volume of Velikaya Rossiya, he sounded many of the same themes: Pan-Slavism, the need to maintain peace, and ambivalence toward Britain. He discussed Turkey and the Dardanelles, Persia and Britain, and the Far East. Trubetskoy devoted considerable space to Russo-German relations and the November 1910 meeting of Wilhelm II and Nicholas II at Potsdam. He relished British and French alarm over the meeting as revenge for French behaviour during the "height of the battle of the Bosnian incident when Russia had greater grounds to count on correct restraint from the Paris cabinet." Trubetskoy regarded the

¹⁹⁰ Ibid., p.99.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., p.101.

¹⁹² Ibid., p.104.

Potsdam meeting as a warning to those "who were inclined to recognize for Russia only responsibility, forgetting about her legitimate rights."¹⁹³

Despite his lingering irritation with the French, Trubetskoy still preferred French over German capital investment in Russia. He criticized the government's August 1911 decision to grant a concession to build a new port on the Black Sea to the National Ottoman Bank, a German concern. The Black Sea was the focal point around which his Slavophil vision of Russian foreign policy revolved and consequently he regarded German influence there as extremely dangerous and detrimental to Russian interests. He would have preferred the concession to have gone to French interests.¹⁹⁴

In the 1911 article Trubetskoy was even more critical of Britain, particularly concerning Persia, than he had been in 1910. The results of the 1907 Anglo-Russian convention by which Russian "diplomacy completely forfeited" her "independence in this relationship" did not please him. The issue of a constitution for Persia particularly irked Trubetskoy who resented what he perceived to be Russian dependence on the British cabinet, which in turn was bound by "a democratic and even radical course of public opinion."¹⁹⁵ He believed that Britain did not allow Russia enough freedom of action in Persia

¹⁹³ Trubetskoy, "Nekotorie Itogie Russkoi Vneshnei Politiki", p.335.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid., p.333.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., p.346 and p.349.

and called for the revision of the 1907 agreement, arguing it was necessary to maintain Russian independence.¹⁹⁶ He did add a conciliatory qualification at the end of his diatribe in an apparent attempt to soften the blow. He asserted his belief that Britain and Russia had "so many deep and weighty grounds to maintain a good agreement."¹⁹⁷ Despite his protests of friendship and good will, however, suspicion and mistrust dominated "Some Thoughts on Russian Foreign Policy" and were the 'leitmotif' of Trubetskoy's attitude toward Britain in 1911. Although different in some respects, Trubetskoy's thinking closely paralleled Sazonov's on the main issues.

Other members of the Russian diplomatic corps shared the two basic tendencies within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: reluctant acceptance of the alliance with France and more enthusiastic endorsement of the new relationship with Britain. The diplomats at the Russian embassy in Paris represented well the ambivalent acceptance in official Russian circles of the necessity of maintaining the Dual Alliance, despite a clear appreciation of the deficiencies of this arrangement.

The Russian ambassador to Paris before Izvolsky, Nelidov, was a faithful adherent to the Dual Alliance. He recognized the important contribution made by Maurice Rouvier, Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs, to the

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., pp.352-353.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., p.353.

successful conclusion of the 1906 loan which had been so vital to the Russian government's strategy of stabilization and recovery.¹⁹⁸ Nevertheless, Nelidov often criticized the French government's attitude toward socialists and the connection between French socialists and Russian revolutionaries.¹⁹⁹ Near the end of his tenure as ambassador in Paris, Nelidov reached the conclusion that the Triple Entente needed "to be consolidated and developed to oppose a more effective resistance to the aggressive and expansive ambitions of the Triple Alliance".²⁰⁰ It is no coincidence that Nelidov reached this conclusion so shortly after Russia had been forced to accept Berlin's ultimatum in the Bosnian annexation crisis. Nelidov's reaction to Russia's diplomatic humiliation was very similar to Izvolsky's.

The resigned and wary attitude of the Counsellor of the Russian embassy in Paris, Nekliudov, was typical of diplomats posted to France and reflected the stable but cool relations between the two countries in 1907.²⁰¹

¹⁹⁸ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.107, part 1, ll.188-189, Nelidov to Lamsdorf, 31 January/ 13 February 1906. Ll.190-191, Nelidov to Lamsdorf, 9/22 February 1906.

¹⁹⁹ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1907g., d.104, ll.33-34, Nelidov to Izvolsky, 25 January/ 7 February 1907. Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Nelidov to Izvolsky, 5/18 January 1908, p.241.

²⁰⁰ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Nelidov to Izvolsky, 28 May/ 10 June 1909, p.252.

²⁰¹ Similar sentiments toward France were held by Russian diplomats, Sevastopoulo and Demidov. See LN, vol.1, pp. 125-127, 307, and 315-320;

He sent Saint Petersburg lengthy reports on the erratic political situation in France.²⁰² He recognised that

the conduct of French society and the French government vis-à-vis Russia -- from our first serious reverses in the Japanese war -- opens them to well founded criticisms, and to very bitter considerations.²⁰³

Nekliudov's list of French offences included: the Entente Cordiale with Britain, a country diplomatically ranged on Japan's side during the conflict; the attitude of the French government and its ambassador in Saint Petersburg toward internal events in Russia; the refusal of French credit without Duma approval; acrimonious reproaches addressed to Russia by French capitalists supposedly threatened by the policies of the Russian government; the terms of the Franco-Japanese trade treaty ratified in Paris despite repeated Russian advice.²⁰⁴ After enumerating this lengthy list of grievances, Nekliudov concluded that Russia's only option was to take stock of the changes that had occurred and to adapt "without useless regrets and dangerous animosities, using well what

vol.2, pp.6-7, 11,158-159. Also AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d,118, ll.21-22 and l.26.

²⁰² AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1907g., d.104, ll.346-348, Nekliudov to Izvolsky, 14/27 June 1907.

²⁰³ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1907g., d.104, ll.349-355, Confidential letter from Nekliudov to Izvolsky, n.d.

²⁰⁴ ibid.,

remains and face bravely our loss of what is no longer."²⁰⁵ Such a stoical acceptance of a negative situation reveals clearly the difficult diplomatic predicament facing Russia in the years immediately following the defeat against Japan. The alliance with France left much to be desired from a Russian perspective, but Russia had no choice but to accept its inadequacies or be completely without allies.

Relations did not improve over night and Nekliudov often complained to Saint Petersburg about French conduct. On one occasion he accused the French of "blackmail" over their attempts to have a large Russian contract awarded to a French firm.²⁰⁶ French attempts to separate Austria-Hungary from Germany he regarded as futile and naive.²⁰⁷ He did, however, acknowledge that the radicalism of the French government was nothing to worry about. Once in power the radical-socialists acted like any other government and were "true bourgeois Frenchmen".²⁰⁸ Despite his genuine concerns about the effect of militant atheism and radical-socialism on France, Nekliudov concluded that for many years to come "France will be an organism

²⁰⁵ Ibid.,

²⁰⁶ AVPR, f.133, 1908g., op.470, d.195, ll.16-25, marked "highly secret", Nekliudov to N.V.Charkov, 4/17 September 1908.

²⁰⁷ LN, vol.1, Memorandum from Nekliudov, 1/14 December 1910, p.9.

²⁰⁸ Ibid., p.3.

more or less strong and sensible, and conforming to that, her role in international politics will still have significance and force."²⁰⁹ Clearly, what mattered to Nekliudov was French diplomatic and military strength and as long as they were intact Imperial Russia could hold her nose and maintain a mutually beneficial alliance. Another attraction of the alliance was that France desired a conflict with the Central Powers as little as Russia and regarded the Triple Entente as a means of maintaining "the peace and the status quo".²¹⁰ Nekliudov concluded that although Franco-Russian friendship no longer existed, France was a faithful ally.²¹¹

The anglophiles in the Russian diplomatic corps were more numerous and enthusiastic than any genuine francophiles. In part, this was the result of the fact that the friendship with Britain was new and therefore there had been fewer opportunities for disillusionment. Moreover, the conservative monarchical cast of British mainstream political life corresponded more closely to the ideal favoured by those in the Russian elite who became diplomats than the more bourgeois French republicanism. The anglophiles also came from different social groups and different branches of the Foreign Ministry, signifying the widespread appeal of Britain among Russian diplomats.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., p.6.

²¹⁰ Ibid., Memorandum from Nekliudov, 1/14 December 1910, p.16.

²¹¹ Ibid., pp.16-17.

N.V.Tcharykov was a prime example of an ardent anglophile. He came from the landed nobility in the Province of Samara, where his father was Governor. He entered the diplomatic corps as a young man and became Izvolsky's political assistant in 1908. Later he became Russian ambassador to Turkey from 1909 to 1912. Tcharykov was one of many Russian nobles who believed in British ideals, having been greatly influenced during his secondary education in Edinburgh.²¹² He attributed his admiration for parliamentary government, as practised in Britain, to a 1881 visit to the House of Commons during which Charles Parnell tried to make the government adopt Home Rule for Ireland.²¹³ On one occasion Tcharykov, as acting Foreign Minister, was confronted by Stolypin threatening to resign. During this confrontation Tcharykov kept in mind "the British Parliamentary custom -- never to let a Cabinet crisis develop out of a question of foreign policy."²¹⁴ Tcharykov's attitudes resembled those of his Minister and no doubt had contributed to his appointment.

D.I.Abrikossov was a rarity in the Russian Foreign service, a bourgeois. He spent almost four years in London as an attaché and developed a strong passion for Edwardian Britain. Abrikossov liked the conservatism of the British

²¹² N.V.Tcharykov, Glimpses of High Politics (London, 1931), pp.12 and 80.

²¹³ Ibid., p.247.

²¹⁴ Ibid., p.448.

people and had "boundless admiration" for the British parliamentary system.²¹⁵ He thought the crucial difference between Russia and Britain was that Britain had an intelligent King and a number of clever statesmen, whereas Russia had a weak Emperor and practically no statesmen. This difference, he believed, allowed Britain to survive the calamity of World War One, while Tsarist Russia did not.²¹⁶ London, the brilliance of Edwardian society, the beauty and peacefulness of the English countryside and the dignified tranquillity of Oxford all charmed Abrikossov.²¹⁷ Implicit in his fulsome praise for Britain was a deep-rooted dissatisfaction with the tumultuous and brutal workings of his own country. Abrikossov envied the British their stability and prosperity, which contrasted so sharply with the unrest and poverty in Russia.

A final example of a Russian anglophile in the Foreign Ministry was A.D.Kalmykov. He was unusual in his admiration for Britain in that he worked for the Asian Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a department not noted for its sympathy for Britain. Like other anglophiles, Kalmykov was a "confirmed liberal".²¹⁸ In 1906 he told Izvolsky that "there was no major

²¹⁵ D.I.Abrikossov, Revelations of a Russian Diplomat (Seattle, 1964), pp.98 and 125.

²¹⁶ Ibid., p.140.

²¹⁷ Ibid., pp.95, 99, 109, 118, 130 and 142.

²¹⁸ A.D.Kalmykov, Memoirs of a Russian Diplomat (Yale, 1971), p.6.

conflict of interests, and the existing friction was groundless and detrimental to both sides [Britain and Russia]" in the Middle East.²¹⁹ Kalmykov regarded the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 as the crowning achievement of Izvolsky's career.²²⁰ Kalmykov's only criticism of the agreement was that it had not gone far enough and that unfortunately it did not encompass the Balkans.²²¹ Like Sazonov, Kalmykov believed that a more united Triple Entente could have prevented World War One.²²²

The desire to preserve and enhance Russia's friendship with Great Britain was widespread within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by 1914. An anonymous Ministry memorandum acknowledged that Russian relations with Afghanistan were "abnormal", that to live side by side with a country and have no relations or access was strange, but that relations with Britain had to be considered.²²³ To act contrary to the spirit of the 1907 agreement would have a ruinous affect on the friendly relations between Britain and Russia which were

²¹⁹ Ibid., p.177.

²²⁰ Ibid., pp.210 - 212.

²²¹ Ibid., p.90.

²²² Ibid., p.22.

²²³ AVPR, f.470, 1914g., d.191, ll.15 -18, undated 'spravka'.

so important.²²⁴ The memorandum also argued that the limited value of trade with Afghanistan was not worth jeopardizing the accord with Britain.²²⁵ Finally, the extent of British influence in Afghanistan was actually not that strong, although the British government did subsidize the Afghan government to the tune of 1,800,000 rubles a year. If problems ever arose, the Emir would probably look to Russia for help and then Russia could use this to extract some profit for herself.²²⁶ Although the Foreign Ministry clearly had serious concerns about Afghanistan in terms of access, trade and military security, it was not willing to jeopardize good relations with Britain, which were regarded as crucial. Consequently, the Russian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was willing to accept a less than perfect state of affairs in return for continued Anglo-Russian cooperation. Such a compromise was typical of the entire course of Anglo-Russian relations since 1907 and reveals the deep commitment on the part of Saint Petersburg to making the Entente work.

Support of the Triple Entente was not, however, universal in the Russian Foreign Ministry. A minority of bureaucrats and diplomats opposed this policy largely because they were suspicious of Britain and worried that Russia would not be able to pursue her own interests in such a combination. Count

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, l.15.

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, l.16.

²²⁶ *Ibid.*, ll.17-18.

N.D.Osten-Sacken, the ambassador to Berlin, N.G.Hartwig, the chief of the Middle East section of the Asian department and later minister to Belgrade, Baron R.R.Rosen, the ambassador to Washington, and Baron Taube, an international judge at the Hague, were members of this group. Osten-Sacken, for example, doubted Britain's reliability and blamed Britain for the loss of Port Arthur.²²⁷ Baron Rosen believed Russia's future lay in the east, not the west and that Russia must disentangle herself from the Entente which he thought made war inevitable.²²⁸ Such men and their sentiments were, however, in the minority in the Russian Foreign Ministry and as they did not share the views of the Ministers, Izvolsky and Sazonov, except Hartwig, they were unable greatly to influence Russian policy.

A new era in Russian diplomacy began with Izvolsky's appointment as Foreign Minister in 1906. He set Russia firmly on the path of cooperation with Britain and France. From 1906 to the 1917 Revolution, Imperial Russia remained faithful to this course. Frustrations and resentments were often felt within the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, but overwhelmingly it was believed that the benefits of this policy outweighed the disadvantages. Moreover, it was recognised that Russian options were strictly limited. Russia was a status quo

²²⁷ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Osten-Sacken to Izvolsky, 19 May/ 1 June 1906, pp.44-45. 23 March/ 5 April 1907, p.85.

²²⁸ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.90.

power. As such her diplomats were, on the whole, cognizant of the threat Germany posed and the consequent need to side with Britain and France, the other two status quo powers, to maintain the balance in Europe. For many of the men who formulated and carried out the Empire's foreign policy, alliance with a secular republic which had beheaded its king, and friendship with the sometimes unruly parliamentary state of Great Britain which also had regicide in its past, were ideologically distasteful. Over and over again, however, Nicholas II's diplomats set aside their scruples because their primary goal was the preservation of a great Russian empire which Austro-Hungarian aims, encouraged by Germany, threatened in the Balkans. Within the Foreign Ministry the Triple Entente was almost universally regarded as the only possible combination which would reestablish and then maintain Russia as a great power. Russian diplomats would often rail about French treachery or British aloofness, but in the final analysis they had nowhere else to turn and they knew it.

CHAPTER FIVE

Reluctant Partners:

Russian Officialdom and the Triple Entente

The remainder of the Russian government and bureaucracy entertained attitudes toward the Triple Entente similar to those of the Emperor and the Foreign Ministry. In general most other ministers and important government officials regarded the Entente as a political and financial necessity, although degrees of enthusiasm and approval were evident. Certain high-ranking exceptions did exist but they were unable to alter fundamentally the course on which Izvolsky had set Russia in 1906. While there was some sympathy in Russian bureaucratic circles for British and French political ideas, there was also doubt as to the relevance of these ideas for Russia. From 1906 to 1914 the domestic policy of retrenchment and rebuilding was inextricably linked with a cautious foreign policy. All senior members of the government and bureaucracy were aware of the imperative need for the breathing space which Izvolsky and Sazonov sought through the Triple Entente. Stolypin's reform programme was the domestic twin to the new foreign policy.

The men who ruled Russia formed a bureaucratic ruling elite, derived primarily from the aristocracy and the gentry.¹ The great majority of Nicholas's ministers and senior officials were aging career civil servants. In 1904 the average age of ministers was sixty-two while members of the State Council averaged over sixty-nine.² The top Russian officials of this era were European in their education, their culture and their values. Because of shared European historical and intellectual conceptions

they tended to believe that Western-style constitutional liberalism reflected an almost inevitable stage in universal development; even most conservative senior officials were more inclined to argue pragmatically that constitutionalism was premature in Russia, than that it was inherently useless or inappropriate.³

A small, but significant sign of this European orientation was the fact that the English Club was the club of choice in Saint Petersburg for the nobility and high officials.⁴

¹ Lieven, Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime, pp.289 and 292. See also G.S.Doctorow, The Introduction of Parliamentary Institutions in Russia During the Revolution of 1905-1907 (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1976), p.13.

² D.C.B.Lieven, "Russian Senior Officialdom under Nicholas II" Jahrbücher für Geshichte Osteuropas vol.32, 1984, pp.200 and 217.

³ Lieven, Russia's Rulers under the Old Regime, p.220.

⁴ Karl Baedeker, Russia. A Handbook for Travellers (A Facsimile of the original 1914 edition) (New York, 1971), p.93.

Many inefficiencies plagued the tsarist government prior to the 1905 revolution. It lacked clearly defined and generally recognised goals. Each minister sought to implement his own programme, counting on the trust of the tsar, and in the process often undercut other ministers.⁵ Such a state of affairs clearly did not lead to good government and the fiasco of the Russo-Japanese War made these failings patently obvious. Consequently the government of Nicholas II faced the choice of attempting to reform itself or being swept away by revolution.

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In the government discussions that led to the historic October Manifesto, the experience of western Europe was the constant point of reference. The condition for participation in the abortive Bulygin Duma was property ownership, a criterion that transcended to a certain extent the traditional barriers of birth and political rank and thereby confirmed the breakdown of the old estate order. The creators and defenders of this reform justified it as a "social and economic change and a political maturation process not unlike what Western Europe had experienced earlier".⁶ Opponents of this concept argued that a non-estate based Duma was "parliamentary, borrowed

⁵ G.S.Doctorow, The Introduction of Parliamentary Institutions in Russia, 1905-1906, pp.5-6. See also Verner, op.cit., pp.54-55.

⁶ A.M.Verner, op.cit., pp.214-215.

from Western examples,... foreign to the Russian people."⁷ An anonymous memorandum submitted to Nicholas II in August 1905, argued that, in light of the anticipated unanimity within the Duma, it would be necessary to form a "uniform ministry or, as it is accepted to call it in the language of political doctrines, a Cabinet."⁸ The author compared the gravity of the present situation to the meeting of the Estates General in 1789 when the French government had no programme to meet the gathering of representatives.⁹

From this heated debate emerged the October Manifesto of 1905 and the Fundamental State Laws of April 1906, which were to be the basis of the new order in Russia. The provisions on the legislature in Project Number One of the Fundamental Laws "came primarily from the constitutions of Western Europe and were liberal in tone."¹⁰ Prominent leaders of the liberal opposition, including, P.N.Miliukov, I.V.Gessen, and S.A.Muromtsev, criticized the draft Fundamental State Laws before they were promulgated. The scope of the executive decrees was reduced precisely to the extent recommended by the

⁷ Ibid., p.210.

⁸ Quoted in D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.277.

⁹ Ibid., p.278.

¹⁰ G.S.Doctorow, "The Fundamental State Laws of 23 April 1906" in Russian Review 35, no.1, (January 1976), pp.37-38.

opposition.¹¹ The reforms were bold but they were initiated under threatening circumstances by a weak government that displayed a strong ambivalence toward them and "an almost total lack of consensus about their meaning or their permanence."¹²

Whatever the limitations of the October Manifesto and the Fundamental Laws, they did mark an important turning-point in the development of Russian law, transforming "the Russian empire from an absolute and unlimited monarchy into a constitutional monarchy."¹³ A decree of 19 October 1905 created the Council of Ministers, the first Western-style cabinet in Russian political life. The new Council effectively ended the ministerial despotism which had been prevalent until then.¹⁴ Henceforth all edicts and commands issued by the Tsar had to be countersigned either by the President of the Council or one of the ministers.

The role of the new Council of Ministers in foreign policy is controversial. D.C.B.Lieven argues that the Council's role was limited but that it could have some influence. In Lieven's opinion, Russia in the decade before

¹¹ Ibid., pp.50-51.

¹² Ibid., p.287.

¹³ Lothar Schultz, "Constitutional Law in Russia" in E.Oberlander, Russia Enters the Twentieth Century 1894-1917 (New York, 1971) p.45.

¹⁴ Ibid., p.50.

1914 "stood somewhere between the old absolutist era and a more modern age in which social forces began to invade the hitherto sacrosanct world of kings and diplomats."¹⁵ D.M.McDonald, on the other hand, argues that the Council's role, especially that of the President, became increasingly important as domestic concerns remained the government's top priority and no foreign policy imbroglio could be allowed to jeopardize the delicate rebuilding process. While the Council's role was strengthened, the Emperor retained the final say. In the final analysis, Witte's, Stolypin's and Kokovtsov's power depended on the continued favour of Nicholas II.¹⁶

With the Third of June 1907 'coup d'état', the Russian government temporarily reestablished its supremacy over society. The two forces settled into a period of uneasy coexistence with the government being the acknowledged victor for the moment.¹⁷ Stolypin's law increased the predominance of ethnic Russians over minority nationalities and of the centre over the outlying territories, ensured the dominance of well-to-do voters over the masses, and institutionalized gerrymandering.¹⁸ The system aimed to

¹⁵ Lieven, Russia and the Origins of the First World War, p.64.

¹⁶ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.23.

¹⁷ Shaniin, Russia, 1905-07, p.58.

¹⁸ Doctorow, The Introduction of Parliamentary Institutions in Russia 1905-1906, pp.602-603.

produce a cooperative Duma representing the conservatism of its property-owning constituencies. The effect was to grant a virtual political monopoly to the landed nobility, the result of which was a legislative stalemate that "preserved the status quo and eventually allowed the gentry to withdraw into its own cultural, psychological, and political isolation."¹⁹ The implementation of the Third of June system coincided almost exactly with the birth of the Triple Entente. Both were attempts to maintain the Empire's status quo, one domestically, the other internationally. Both ultimately were failures.

The revamped Russian government's first foray on the international stage came with the 1906 loan negotiations with France and Great Britain. The French government took advantage of Russia's desperate need of money, demanding and receiving full Russian cooperation at the Algeciras Conference.²⁰ French tactics cut Russia off from Germany and thereby increased Russian reliance on France. Witte and Kokovtsov had wanted Germany to participate in the loan, but Germany refused because of Russian support of France at Algeciras.²¹ The intransigent German attitude persuaded the British that they were morally obligated to help the Russians. Cecil Spring-Rice, in charge of the British Embassy in the ambassador's absence, wrote to Grey:

¹⁹ Verner, *op.cit.*, p.341.

²⁰ Girault, *op.cit.*, p.434. See also P.Renouvin, "L'Emprunt russe d'avril 1906 en France", p.513.

²¹ *BD/CP*, vol.4, doc.25, Spring-Rice to Grey, 11 April 1906, p.44.

It is therefore of the greatest importance that France and England, who are accomplices in the crime for which Russia is made to suffer, should do their best to help her. It appears to be of the nature of an honourable obligation, which cannot be avoided without serious consequences.²²⁾

All Russian officials aware of their country's financial condition enthusiastically greeted the final signing of the loan. Witte looked upon the loan as a long, hard-fought battle and a personal victory.²³ Nicholas II regarded the loan as Witte's main accomplishment and as "a great moral success of the government and a guarantee for the future tranquillity and peaceful development of Russia."²⁴ To show its gratitude the Russian government decorated various French financiers for their help in securing the loan.²⁵

The 1906 loan, the largest international loan ever granted up to that time, had significant ramifications for Russia's position internationally. The loan enabled Russia to maintain the gold standard, ensuring a stable currency, so that in less than ten years the Russian economy was restored. By 1914 the

²² Ibid., p.45. Also doc. 23, Grey to Spring-Rice, 6 April 1906, p.42.

²³ J.W.Long, The Economics of the Franco-Russian Alliance 1904-1906 (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Wisconsin, 1968), p.191.

²⁴ Quoted in Verner, op.cit., p.324.

²⁵ TsGIA, f.560, op.26, d.619, l.2, Rafalovich to the Russian Minister of Finance, 18 May 1906. Also AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.108, l.472, telegram from Bentrovsky to the Russian Ambassador in Paris, 16 May 1906.

economic situation was more satisfactory than at any previous time.²⁶ (The loan also marked the end of "easy credit" for the Russian government in Paris.²⁷ German anger over the Algeciras Conference and her failure to subscribe to the loan prevented a Russo-German rapprochement. British participation in the loan and the repudiation of the anti-British clause of the 1901 military protocol were the first steps in the Anglo-Russian rapprochement.²⁸)

Most importantly, the April 1906 loan transformed the very nature of the Franco-Russian alliance. From the beginning of the alliance until the turn of the century, Russia had been the dominant partner and had exercised caution in formalizing the alliance. From 1901 to 1904 the two countries were more or less evenly matched, each preoccupied with pressing domestic problems. As a result of Russia's humiliating defeat by Japan and the 1905 revolution, the balance began to shift in favour of France. In April 1906 the French government "used its strong bargaining position as banker to Russia to rearrange the military agreement between the two countries and to subordinate Russia's financial interests to French interests."²⁹ The 1906 loan was a powerful symbol

²⁶ Long, The Economics of the Franco-Russian Alliance, p.224.

²⁷ Ibid., p.225.

²⁸ Ibid., p.227.

(²⁹ Ibid., p.181.

of Russian weakness in the international arena, and of French strength.³⁰ The negotiations for the loan revealed the essential relationships that were to dominate the emerging Triple Entente until 1914.

S.I.Witte played a preeminent role in both the transformation of Russia from an absolute autocracy to a semi-constitutional state and in the 1906 loan negotiations. In general, as Finance Minister and then as President of the Council of Ministers, Witte stood for the modernisation of Russia. His industrialization policy helped undermine the traditional religious and political loyalties on which the Old Regime was based and increased the size of the working and middle classes, elements hostile to the autocracy.³¹ The results of the rapid industrialization promoted under his leadership led him to advocate political reform. In his memoirs he asserted his belief that Russia would eventually have a constitution "as in other civilized states" and that the principles of civic freedom would take root.³² The form he favoured, however, was something like the Prussian system with himself at the head.³³ His admiration of the Prussian system corresponded with his preferences in foreign

³⁰ Girault, op.cit., pp.446-449. See also Olga Crisp, "The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia" The Slavonic and East European Review 39 (1961), p.508.

³¹ Lieven, "Pro-Germans and Russian Foreign Policy", p.37.

³² S.I.Witte, The Memoirs of Count Witte (New York, 1967), p.399.

³³ Verner, op.cit., p.141.

policy. During the crisis of 1905, he persuaded Nicholas II to grant the October Manifesto. In a report to the Tsar, Witte argued that man's natural striving for personal liberty had become the driving force of historical change. In this sense he linked Russia firmly with her European neighbours.³⁴ At this time Witte envisioned a western-style Council of Ministers which would settle its differences internally. Decisions taken in the Council would bind ministers and they would have to resign if they did not accept these decisions. Most significantly, Witte proposed that the President of the Council would nominate new ministers to the Emperor.³⁵ The Emperor accepted the proposals and made Witte the first President. Witte, however, did not remain in power long enough to put his stamp on the new government.

While in power, however, Witte did exercise considerable influence on foreign policy, as his role in negotiating the Treaty of Portsmouth and the 1906 loan indicate. In general he distrusted the French and desired some kind of agreement with Germany. When Witte stopped in Paris on his way to Portsmouth, the reception he received insulted him.

In the French capital my feelings as a
Russian patriot were hurt at every step.
The public treated me, the chief plenipotentiary
of the autocrat of all the Russias, as a

³⁴ Verner, *op.cit.*, p.232. See also, Doctorow, The Introduction of Parliamentary Institutions in Russia 1905-1906, p.632.

³⁵ Hosking, *op.cit.*, p.7.

representative of some political nonentity. Some--a slight minority--sympathised with me, others could not conceal their joy at our misfortune; but the majority treated me with complete indifference. . . . The attitude of the radical press toward the Emperor and our country were insulting.³⁶

Witte's injured pride was a typical reaction of Russian officials when confronted by Russia's sullied reputation abroad. Witte disliked the 'Entente Cordiale', referring to it as an "annoying error" and "this sad affair".³⁷ To his intense chagrin, the French firmly opposed "the idea of the consolidation of the continent."³⁸ Even after Witte left office, he did not abandon his critical opinions of French diplomacy. Izvolsky recollected that Witte

expressed the conviction that France had lost all remembrance of its ancient warlike virtues; that the immense majority of Frenchmen cared not a whit for the lost provinces, which were only of interest to a handful of chauvinists, possessing little or no influence in the country; and finally that the French nation imbued with the ideas of international socialism and the pacifist propaganda, would always shrink from an armed conflict with Germany, especially if it grew out of oriental affairs.³⁹

³⁶ Witte, op.cit., pp.136-137.

³⁷ BAR, Witte, box 10, delo 17, letter from Witte to Prince Eulenberg, 6 March 1906, pp.6-7.

³⁸ Ibid., p.5.

³⁹ Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, pp.128-129.

Witte was a longtime advocate of a continental alliance of Russia, Germany and France, which would attract all the other European countries. He had sounded the German Kaiser on this idea as early as 1897. He repeated his ideas to Prince Eulenberg, the Kaiser's intermediary, in February 1906, at the height of the Algeciras Conference and the loan negotiations.

If we continue mutually to worry each other, we shall only diminish the moral and material forces of Europe. And our elements of weakness will always be put to profit by the maritime powers.⁴⁰

Not surprisingly once out of power, Witte fulminated against the 1907 Anglo-Russian accord and in a March 1914 article in Novoe Vremya advocated a Russo-German understanding.⁴¹

Nonetheless, even Witte was forced to acknowledge Russian financial dependence on her ally in 1905-1906 and, despite his worries about French trustworthiness, to shape Russian policy accordingly. Witte pledged Russian government support at the Algeciras conference in return for the French government's promise that a loan would be forthcoming. He worried, however, that once the conference had been completed to French satisfaction,

⁴⁰ BAR, Witte, box 10, delo 17, letter from Witte to Prince Eulenberg, 6/20 February 1906. See also letter from Witte to Prince Eulenberg, 6 March 1906, pp.1-2. Witte, op.cit., .296.

⁴¹ Bompard, op.cit., p.278. Buchanan, My Mission to Moscow, pp.182-183.

they would not come through with the much-needed funds.⁴² To ensure that France fulfilled her part of the bargain, Witte instructed Kokovtsov to warn the French government and banks that if the Russian government should be unable to secure a loan, it would be in no position to protect the interests of foreign holders of Russian securities. He also warned the French chargé d'affaires that if no loan were forthcoming, Russia would be forced to abandon the gold standard which would adversely affect foreigners as much as Russians.⁴³ The new French government and in particular the new Finance Minister, Raymond Poincaré, disturbed Witte. He regarded Poincaré's first official action, his refusal to see E.Noetzlin, the French banker, and A.Rafalovich, Witte's agent in Paris, as a deliberate attempt to postpone the loan indefinitely and as an act of bad faith.⁴⁴

The German refusal to participate in the loan drew a reluctant Witte closer to France and Britain, as their participation became vital to the loan's

⁴² KA, 10 (1925), telegram from Witte to Kokovtsov, 27 December 1905, p.20. Telegram from Witte to Kokovtsov, 4 January 1906, p.14. See also B.A.Romanov, Russkie finansy i evropeiskaia birzha v 1904-1906 gg. Sbornik dokumentov (Moscow, 1926), doc. 153, telegram from Witte to Rafalovich, 7/20 March 1906, pp.282-283. AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.107, part 1, ll.196-198, Nelidov to Lamsdorf, 9/2 March 1906.

⁴³ Long, The Economics of the Franco-Russian Alliance, p.148.

⁴⁴ Ibid., pp.160-161 and 167-168.

success.⁴⁵ Witte even made informal approaches to the British government, through the British journalist E.J.Dillon, about the possibility of an Anglo-Russian understanding.⁴⁶ Witte's proposals came to nought and Spring-Rice was under no illusions as to what motivated Witte in this apparent volte-face: "Witte wants it [an agreement] because he wants money." (Nonetheless, Witte's overtures, whatever their motivation, were a marked turn-around for a man who had made a career of promoting a continental alliance against the maritime powers, especially Britain.⁴⁷ In this respect, he was merely coming into line with the new thinking emerging within Russian government circles)

It was, however, too little too late. Witte no longer had the confidence of his Imperial master. Once the loan was finalized, Nicholas II unceremoniously removed his First Minister and replaced him with the aging Goremykin. The Emperor rewarded Witte most perfunctorily and never again appointed him to a government post. His removal from the chairmanship of the Council of Ministers was as significant as Lamsdorf's from the Foreign Ministry,

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 143-145 and 173-174. See also Romanov, doc.176, telegram from Witte to Rafalovich, night 23/24 March/ 5/6 April 1906, pp.296-7. Doc. 179, telegram from Witte to Noetzlin, 24 March/ 6 April 1906, pp.297-298.

⁴⁶ Spring Rice, The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice, Spring-Rice to Lord Knollys, 3 January 1906, p.22.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, Spring-Rice to Grey, 29 March 1906, p.70.

which occurred at almost the same time. Goremykin was only a stopgap replacement.

The appointment of Peter Stolypin as Chairman of the Council of Ministers in July 1906 marked the real change in Russian domestic policy and it coincided with the beginning of the new foreign policy under Izvolsky. Stolypin's previous appointments as Governor of Grodno and then of Saratov province meant that he was an outsider to the Saint Petersburg bureaucratic scene, as was Izvolsky. Nevertheless, he quickly exerted his authority and became a dominant force in the Russian government. Stolypin has been portrayed variously as "a patriotic defender of new democracy based on Russia's peasant smallholders, to an early version of xenophobic fascism in the service of the Russian tsar, a true scion of Russia's reactionary nobility."⁴⁸

Whatever the assessment of Stolypin by historians, there is no doubt that he had a grand design for Russia. He planned to overhaul the administration and transform rural society. He wanted foreign relations to become more pacific, public education to be improved and a national welfare system established for urban workers. In defence of his agrarian programme he explained to the Duma his primary goal: "To you a great cataclysm is

⁴⁸ Shanin, Russia, 1905-1907. p.245.

necessary, to us a Great Russia!"⁴⁹ He sought the establishment of a strong class of Russian peasantry which would provide a bulwark both for the new state system and the Russian nationality. According to G.Hosking the example of the sturdy conservative French peasantry was always in Stolypin's mind.⁵⁰ Only the landownership and land-consolidation reforms, however, were even partially realized.⁵¹

Although Stolypin envisioned sweeping changes for Russia, he did not think the western political path appropriate for Russia. In October 1906 he stated that 'parliamentarianism' "does not and never can" exist in Russia.⁵² He told Sir Arthur Nicolson in August 1907 that

Political life and parliamentary ideals were enigmas to the vast majority of the nation, ignorant and unlettered as they were, and it was impossible to govern a vast Empire like Russia on the lines of advanced Western nations.⁵³

⁴⁹ M.P.Bock, Reminiscences of My Father, Peter A. Stolypin (Metuchen, N.J., 1970), p.304.

⁵⁰ Hosking, op.cit., p.23.

⁵¹ T.Shanin, Russia, 1905-1907, p.237.

⁵² BD/CP, vol.4, doc.169, "Report by Mr.O'Beirne on the Principal Events which have occurred in Russia during the past fortnight", 25 October 1906, p.247.

⁵³ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.6, Nicolson to Grey, 16 August 1907, p.32.

In the Duma Stolypin explained why Russia could not behave like "most mighty England" which gave broad rights to all because of a superfluity of strength.

Rather, he explained,

The Russian Empire owes its origin and development to its Russian roots, and with its growth grew also and developed the autocratic power of the Tsars. To this Russian stem may not be grafted a foreign and alien flower. (Cheers, Centre and Right.) Let our own Russian flower bloom on it.⁵⁴

From the beginning of Stolypin's tenure as Prime Minister, he behaved in a highly authoritarian fashion, thus substantiating his public utterances that Russia under his leadership would not follow the western path. At his direction papers were closed, editors and journalists arrested and exiled. The Ministry of the Interior's 'special funds' financed an increasing number of right-wing papers. Stolypin earned the unflattering sobriquet 'the hangman' and the gallows became known as 'Stolypin's necktie' because of the high number of executions.⁵⁵

In spite of this vigorous beginning, his hold on power slowly weakened. Ultimately, even before his assassination removed him from the political scene, his entire reform programme was sputtering from lack of

⁵⁴ BD/CP, doc.14, "Report by Mr.Bentinck on the proceedings in the Duma during the fortnight ending 4 December 1907. 'Reply of the President of the Council of Ministers in the Duma, 16/29 November 1907'", p.53.

⁵⁵ Shanin, Russia 1905-1907, p.54.

support. The left opposed him because of his repression of the revolution and the right because of his reforms. As T. Shanin has argued so convincingly, Stolypin attempted a 'revolution from above' with virtually no support from below.⁵⁶ He sought to transform Russia while using the old Russian method of imposing a solution from the top. One of his tools was the Triple Entente, which he felt would provide Russia with international peace, a prerequisite for successful reform.

His belief in the overwhelming need for peace was the leitmotif of Stolypin's attitude toward foreign policy. He expressed his views most emphatically to Izvolsky.

We need peace, war in the next years, especially for reasons which people do not understand, would be fatal for Russia and the dynasty. On the other hand each year of peace fortifies Russia, not only from a military and naval point of view, but again from a financial and economic point of view.⁵⁷

He believed that the risks of any foreign policy complication were so great that he, as overseer of Russia's restoration, must be consulted in foreign policy decisions because of their destabilizing potential within the Empire.⁵⁸

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p.249. See also Hosking, *op.cit.*, pp.147, 177-178, 182, and 213-214.

⁵⁷ Izvolsky, *Au Service de la Russie*, vol.2, Stolypin to Izvolsky, 28 July 1911, p.304. See also Bock, *op.cit.*, p.256.

⁵⁸ D.M.McDonald, *op.cit.*, p.20.

Consequently he took an active interest in Russian foreign policy. He interpreted the agreement with Britain in purely defensive terms and advocated a policy of inactivity in the Balkans.⁵⁹ Until the Bosnian annexation crisis, Izvolsky and Stolypin worked closely together as allies within the Council of Ministers. They shared a belief in the necessity of a working accommodation between state and society as the basis of the renewal of the Empire and a common view on the question of "cabinet solidarity".⁶⁰

Izvolsky's role in the Bosnian crisis and the threat it posed to Stolypin's grand plans effectively ended the close cooperation between the two ministers and strengthened Stolypin's belief that he must keep a close watch on the Empire's foreign policy. Stolypin was informed of the Buchlau meeting between the Russian and Austrian Foreign Ministers only after it occurred. Stolypin was angry that Izvolsky had undertaken concrete agreements in an area of notorious instability and of special Russian historic interest without informing the Council, and had thereby violated the principle of "United Government".⁶¹ Stolypin was not prepared to let the crisis develop into a military conflict. He told his eldest daughter that he would do everything in the strength of mankind not

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p.483.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p.330.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p.422.

to allow Russia to go to war because we have not yet accomplished our entire programme of internal recovery. We are unable to match an external enemy while we have not yet humbled the evil internal foes of Russia's greatness, the S.-R.s.... And what could create a more propitious atmosphere for revolution than war?⁶²

Stolypin's desire for peace made him a strong supporter of the 1907 agreement with Britain. At an August 1907 special conference he evaluated the benefits of the Anglo-Russian agreement:

The successful conclusion of the agreement with England represents a truly great matter of state. Our internal situation does not allow us to conduct an aggressive foreign policy. The absence of fear from the point of view of international relations is extremely important for us since it will give us the opportunity to dedicate with full tranquillity our strength to repair of matters within the country.⁶³

After the convention was completed, Stolypin spoke of it in the "warmest terms", saying that Izvolsky "could be well satisfied [with it], even if he never concluded anything else."⁶⁴ Stolypin continued to value British friendship

⁶² Bock, op.cit., p.241.

⁶³ Quoted in McDonald, op.cit., p.360.

⁶⁴ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.23, Nicolson to Grey, 3 March 1908, p.119. See also doc.45, Nicolson to Grey, 27 August 1908, p.148.

throughout his tenure of office and displayed interest in British domestic matters.⁶⁵ He told the influential Professor Bernard Pares that some day he would like to visit Britain and make a serious study of British public life, particularly the administration of the colonies.⁶⁶

The British came to rely on Stolypin as a strong supporter of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement. Professor Pares described Stolypin as "the only real hope of . . . the development of the Anglo-Russian friendship."⁶⁷ So important did the British feel Stolypin to be for their interests that the 1911 ministerial crisis that threatened Stolypin's position deeply concerned them.⁶⁸ News of Stolypin's assassination shook the British government. They felt they had lost a "loyal friend whose place it" would be "very difficult to fill."⁶⁹ Benckendorf described the shock the news from Kiev produced in London and the "astonishing confidence" Stolypin had inspired in Britain.⁷⁰

⁶⁵ Ibid., doc.86, Nicolson to Grey, 12 September 1909, p.305. Vol.6, Buchanan to Grey, 18 December 1910, p.74.

⁶⁶ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.85, Memorandum by Professor Pares, n.d., p.184.

⁶⁷ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.34, Memorandum by Professor Pares, 22 August 1910, pp.56-57.

⁶⁸ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.180-181, Benckendorf to Neratov, 16/29 March 1911.

⁶⁹ BD/CP., vol.6, doc.81, Buchanan to Grey, 20 September 1911, p.172.

⁷⁰ AVPR, f.320, op.812, d.10, ll.154-155, Benckendorf to Neratov, 14/27 September 1911.

Despite his repeated statements of loyalty to Britain and the British faith in him, however, Stolypin did have reservations about the trustworthiness of Russia's new partner. These doubts were typical of all Russian officials and were symptomatic of Russian lack of self-confidence. Stolypin told Sazonov that if Russia met disaster then all her allies would desert her.⁷¹ Just prior to his death, Stolypin believed that Britain was displeased that Russia was regaining her strength:

England fears that its exploitation of such countries as India will someday end and that it not only will be unable to play first violin in the international concert but might become like those great empires of the past which have appeared and declined. England therefore hates Russia above all and will sincerely rejoice if the monarchy in Russia should fall and Russia itself should no longer be a great nation but disintegrate into a number of independent republics.⁷²

Stolypin also thought France hated monarchical Russia and that the only tie holding the two countries together was French fear of Germany.⁷³ These notes reveal Stolypin's ambivalence toward Britain and France and confirm that for him the Entente was based on pragmatic notions, not ideological sympathy.

⁷¹ Zenkovsky, *op.cit.*, p.111.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p.55.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p.55.

Stolypin's successor as Chairman of the Council of Ministers was V.N.Kokovtsov. Before this appointment, Kokovtsov had been the Minister of Finance, a post he combined with his new responsibilities. In both positions he had important dealings with Britain and France. Unlike Witte and Stolypin, Kokovtsov was a bureaucrat 'par excellence'. He tried without success to uphold the "United Government" approach. He failed in part because he did not have Stolypin's vision of Russia nor did he have a comparable force of personality.⁷⁴ In its annual report on Russia for 1911, the British Embassy commented on Kokovtsov's weaknesses but concluded that there was no reason to fear that Stolypin's death would effect any serious change in relations with Britain.⁷⁵ Their assessment would prove to be correct.

In October 1911 Nicholas II granted Kokovtsov "the formal authority to intervene in foreign policy formation on a footing equal with that of the Minister of Foreign Affairs."⁷⁶ This signified an important departure, but was a pyrrhic victory. Kokovtsov was unable to take full advantage of the new powers as he never secured from Nicholas the same degree of support as had Stolypin. As a sign of Kokovtsov's new role, he addressed the opening session of the Fourth Duma on foreign affairs, the first discussion of such matters in the

⁷⁴ McDonald, op.cit., p.502-504.

⁷⁵ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.92, Annual Report on Russia for 1911, p.196.

⁷⁶ McDonald, op.cit., p.517.

Duma by a Council Chairman.⁷⁷ After this initial success, however, the Council under Kokovtsov became divided and therefore ineffective.

Like Stolypin, Kokovtsov believed that Russia was unprepared for parliamentarianism. Shortly after the inauguration of the First Duma he made this point forcibly in a manner which drew heated criticism from the opposition, exclaiming: "Thank God we have no parliament yet."⁷⁸ The example of Republican France frightened Kokovtsov as it did many Russian officials. At a February 1906 conference to revise the Duma statute he criticised Witte's scheme for two chambers by "referring to the example of republican France, where for half a century there had been an endless struggle to limit the power of the Senate but so far all such attempts had been in vain".⁷⁹ In June of the same year Kokovtsov opposed vehemently the idea of a cabinet drawn from members of the Duma. This, he believed, would pave the way to a system of the English type. Kokovtsov told Nicholas II,

We are not yet mature enough to have a one-chamber constitutional monarchy of a purely parliamentary type, and I believe it my duty to warn you, Sire, not to attempt this new experiment from which there may be no return.⁸⁰

⁷⁷ Ibid., p.537.

⁷⁸ Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.205.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p.106.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p.148.

Despite his doubts as to the applicability of the French and British political experiences to Russia, Kokovtsov, as Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Council of Ministers, was well aware of Russia's reliance, especially financial, on these two countries, and of the need to maintain good relations with them. In 1906, as the Russian government's envoy to Paris, Kokovtsov actively participated in the loan negotiations. French bankers had initially been reluctant to lend Russia money because of the instability plaguing the Empire. Kokovtsov credited the French government with applying political pressure on the banks to see that the loan came through. He acknowledged that French support came at the price of Russian acquiescence at the Algeciras Conference but, unlike Witte, he seemed to regard the deal as fair.⁸¹ He even described in retrospect his audience with President Loubet as "particularly gracious".⁸² Kokovtsov noted approvingly that the French public paid no attention to the Russian press or the Kadet delegation which was in Paris, trying to halt the loan as they felt it threatened the new Duma's authority.⁸³

⁸¹ KA, 10 (1925), p.14, telegram from Kokovtsov to Witte, 21 December 1905/3 January 1906. Kokovtsov, op.cit., pp.91-94.

⁸² Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.95.

⁸³ Romanov, op.cit., doc.213, telegram from Kokovtsov to Witte, 6/19 April 1906, 317. Doc.207, telegram from Kokovtsov to Witte, 4/17 April 1906, p.314.

Unlike Witte, Kokovtsov praised Poincaré's role in completing the loan, implying that his efforts had been critical.⁸⁴ Kokovtsov also attributed Austria's participation in the loan to the efforts of the French government.⁸⁵ Despite his gratitude, however, Kokovtsov acknowledged that the negotiations had been "extremely, extremely difficult".⁸⁶ For him the 1906 loan proved to be a lesson in the politics of dependence, and he was quick to appreciate the symbiotic relationship between Russian financial needs and her international position.

With this in mind Kokovtsov made it a practice to cultivate leading figures in French financial circles. His extensive correspondence with E.Noetzlin shows that he was an adept flatterer and realized the full value of such friendship for Russia.⁸⁷ Kokovtsov confided in Noetzlin on important matters, including the 1907 budget,⁸⁸ which Noetzlin described as a "tour de force".⁸⁹

⁸⁴ Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.119.

⁸⁵ Romanov, op.cit., doc.190, telegram from Kokovtsov to Witte, 31 March/ 13 April 1906, p.304.

⁸⁶ Ibid., doc.207, telegram from Kokovtsov to Witte, 4/17 1906, p.314.

⁸⁷ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.309 contains the Kokovtsov - Noetzlin correspondence. Romanov, Russkie Finansy also contains some of the letters.

⁸⁸ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.309, ll.34-39, Kokovtsov to Noetzlin, 14/27 November 1906.

⁸⁹ Ibid., ll.40-42, Noetzlin to Kokovtsov, 4 December 1906.

The two men also discussed international events including the Bosnian crisis. It is interesting to note that Kokovtsov did not think war likely as Russia was "not isolated" and her "alliance with France and the entente with England" was "one of the factors of high importance" with which Austria must reckon.⁹⁰

Kokovtsov developed similar contacts with de Verneuil, another important French banker, Louis Dorizon of the 'Société Générale',⁹¹ Jacques Outine, an executive at the Bank of Saint Petersburg, and Louis Dreyfus, head of Louis Dreyfus and Company, which had operated in Russia since 1850.⁹² In 1907 the Finance Minister visited Paris and, according to Effront, a Russian financial agent in Paris, made "the most favourable impression" among government and financial circles. The hesitations and uncertainties which had characterized the attitude of the Paris market toward Russian bonds completely disappeared as a result of Kokovtsov's visit.⁹³ Kokovtsov clearly regarded the protection of Russia's financial standing in Paris as one of his main functions as Minister of Finance.

⁹⁰ Ibid., ll.190-196, Kokovtsov to Noetzlin, 6 October 1908, marked confidential.

⁹¹ Ibid., d.309, ll.45-47, Kokovtsov to de Verneuil, 8/21 December 1906. D.271, l.177, Kokovtsov to Dorizon, 9/22 September 1908.

⁹² Ibid., d.318, l.177, Kokovtsov to French Ambassador, n.d. D.700, ll.1,9, 14, 21-24, 26, and 38.

⁹³ Ibid., d.312, ll.77-79, Effront to Kokovtsov, 18/31 October 1907.

In his effort to repair Russia's image in France, Kokovtsov did not neglect French politicians. He corresponded warmly with the French deputies, Paul Doumer and François Deloncle. In addition, he considered the French ambassador to Saint Petersburg, Bompard, to be a personal friend.⁹⁴ When the French Minister of Foreign Affairs, Pichon, defended the Franco-Russian alliance in the Chamber of Deputies, Kokovtsov was quick to take the opportunity to express his gratitude, linking the matter with his duty to defend Russian credit.⁹⁵

Despite Kokovtsov's awareness of Russian dependence on the French market and his eagerness to please French financiers and politicians, he did occasionally chafe at French dominance in the partnership. In a bitter confidential letter to A. Rafalovich, his agent in Paris, he complained about the French reaction to the awarding of a contract to a German firm to build Russian ships. The Finance Minister indicated that only one French firm entered the competition, and that its project was poorly prepared and contained grave faults. Nonetheless it seemed to Kokovtsov that

the knowledge which France has of her wealth
and the conviction that Russia can not forgo
her gold contributed to create this strange

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, d.271, l.142, Kokovtsov to Doumer, June 1908. D.318, ll.74-75, Kokovtsov to Deloncle, 11/24 May 1908. D.318, ll.150-151, Kokovtsov to Bompard, 9 October 1908.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, d.271, l.109, Kokovtsov to Pichon, 26 January/ 8 February 1907.

point of view that Russia must not do at home what is most useful and advantageous for her, but that she must inquire at first if such or such measure of a purely interior order is approved by this or that group representing, for the given moment, by its influence, the most important factor in the political life of France.⁹⁶

Kokovtsov also expressed the hope that his French colleague would realize that "alliance and friendship are not synonyms for yoke and servitude."⁹⁷

Kokovtsov's private reaction to this affair contrasted sharply with the almost obsequious way in which he normally dealt with French bankers and politicians.

In 1912 the French market and its stand on loans for Russian railroads annoyed Kokovtsov. In a long letter to Poincaré, he outlined his serious concerns.⁹⁸ He felt that Russia had been placed in an unreasonable situation not of her own making. In contrast to the situation in 1906, when the Russian government found the Paris market uncooperative, it now turned to London and Berlin where it had no difficulty meeting its needs. Russia's improved international and financial position meant that the government had greater room to manoeuvre than it had previously.

⁹⁶ AVPR, f.133, 1908g., op.470, d.195, ll.8-12, copy of a confidential letter from Kokovtsov to Rafalovich, 31 August/ 13 September 1908.

⁹⁷ Ibid., l.12.

⁹⁸ TsGIA, f.560, op.2, d.271, ll.290-294, Kokovtsov to Poincaré, May/June 1912.

In the fall of 1913 Kokovtsov visited Paris where he received a warm welcome from the French government and held long and frank discussions on all the essential questions between the two allies.⁹⁹ In his report to the Tsar, he remarked on the conversations' "exclusively amicable character" and the French government's devotion to the alliance.¹⁰⁰ The Chairman of the Council of Ministers did, however, express some serious reservations about Russia's ally. He cast doubt on the "French army's capacity for combat and the talent of its generals".¹⁰¹ "A strong stagnation of business" alarmed Kokovtsov.¹⁰² After condemning French market insecurity, he offered a damning assessment of France's finances as "far from satisfactory." "Living from day to day the Government will arrive inevitably at the situation . . . of deficit".¹⁰³ French pacifism also provoked comment but he did express gratitude to the French government for its help in securing loans for the construction of Russian railways, revealing that some things in the alliance had not changed.¹⁰⁴

⁹⁹ AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d.118, ll.59-60, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 7/20 November 1913. See also LN, vol.2, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 7/20 November 1913, pp.182-184.

¹⁰⁰ LN, vol.2, Kokovtsov's report to Nicholas II, 19 November 1913, p.393.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p.393.

¹⁰² Ibid., p.394.

¹⁰³ Ibid., pp.395-396.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.401-403.

Kokovtsov's report to Nicholas II therefore reflects, paradoxically, both his serious concerns and his belief that Russia could still depend on her ally for financial assistance. He never clearly denounced France or the alliance but he did cast aspersions on her two main assets, her army and her financial standing. This was bound to worry the Emperor. In the final analysis, however, the Russian Chairman of the Council of Ministers recognised Russia's continued dependence on her ally, whatever France's failings may have been.

Given his financial preoccupations and the preeminence of the Paris market, Kokovtsov spent less energy on Britain than France, but he was a firm supporter of the Entente and believed in the importance of increased trade between the two countries. The British regarded Kokovtsov as a believer in the rapprochement.¹⁰⁵ Kokovtsov told Buchanan that it was "his earnest hope that the two Governments would always keep in close contact and collaborate with each other on all questions of foreign policy."¹⁰⁶ Kokovtsov encouraged British trade in Russia. He maintained cordial relations with the important English banker, Lord Revelstoke.¹⁰⁷ In a confidential letter to his agent in Britain, M.V.Rutkovskii, Kokovtsov explained the importance of Britain to Russia, even

¹⁰⁵ BD/CP, vol.4, doc.187, Nicolson to Grey, 2 January 1907. p.291. See also G.Buchanan, My Mission to Russia, p.162.

¹⁰⁶ BD/CP, vol.6, doc.147, Buchanan to Grey, 15 May 1913, p.317.

¹⁰⁷ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.271, l.132, Kokovtsov to Revelstoke, 24 November/17 December 1907.

before the Anglo-Russian accord was concluded in August.¹⁰⁸ Pledging to do everything he could to help British businessmen invest in Russia, Kokovtsov said that he believed that Russia and Britain would "become good friends on the practical basis of mutual economic advantage."¹⁰⁹ He criticized British caution and made it clear that his government wanted British capital to help Russia develop her vast natural resources as quickly as possible.¹¹⁰

During his career Kokovtsov, like Izvolsky and Sazonov, developed a reputation as a pro-westerner for which the Russian right criticized him.¹¹¹ As Minister of Finance and Chairman of the Council of Ministers he had sought to maintain good relations with France and Great Britain. He was motivated, however, more by a deep understanding of his country's financial dependence on Western, particularly French, credit than by any ideological sympathy with the Western democracies. For him the Triple Entente was an 'unholy alliance' which allowed the Russian Empire to recover from the setbacks of war and revolution. He was shrewd enough to realize that even imperial beggars could not afford to be fussy about who provided the money. The resentment he

¹⁰⁸ Ibid., d.271, ll.145-146, Confidential letter from Kokovtsov to Rutkovskii, 5 June 1907.

¹⁰⁹ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.84, Report of an interview between the Russian Minister of Finance with an English journalist, summer 1909, p.303.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp.302-303.

¹¹¹ Kokovtsov, op.cit., pp.272-274, 307.

occasionally displayed toward French highhandedness was in keeping with the psychology of a dependent relationship in which the weaker partner does not respect or admire the stronger.

The Ministry of Finance's agents in Paris displayed suspicion of France and Britain, thus revealing their prejudices against socialists and Jews. Arthur Rafalovich had close dealings with the French banks and press.¹¹² During the 1906 loan negotiations Rafalovich believed that the French banks were "blackmailing" the Russian government in their attempts to control the government's behaviour.¹¹³ Later in the year Rafalovich worried that the French socialists, aided by Russian socialists, would pressure the French government into denying Russia another loan on the French market.¹¹⁴ Like Kokovtsov, he was well aware of Russian dependence on French loans even if he disliked the radical complexion of the French government. Consequently, when the reaction of the French public to the awarding of a naval contract to a German firm threatened to upset efforts to secure another loan, Rafalovich suggested pragmatically that the contract be awarded to a Russian firm or at

¹¹² See chapter five for further information on relations with the French press.

¹¹³ Romanov, Russkie Finansy, doc.158, Rafalovich to I.P.Shipov, 14/27 March 1906, p.288.

¹¹⁴ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.271, l.94, secret telegram from Rafalovich, 27 November/ 10 December 1906.

least that the results of the contest be delayed.¹¹⁵ As for the French Minister of Finance, Caillaux, Rafalovich described him as a "prisoner of the socialists".¹¹⁶ The extent of Austrian influence on French banks also worried Rafalovich. He noted in a memorandum that "the principal French groups" were "in a very intimate liaison with those of Austria" and that in this respect it was difficult to decide which of them was "the most subject to Austrian influence."¹¹⁷

Rafalovich's colleague in Paris, A.Effront, was even more critical of Britain and France and openly anti-semitic. In May 1907 he reported to Saint Petersburg that the fall in Russian stocks was due

principally to a pressure made by the Jewish Bank of London. The Israelite financiers of Great Britain, . . . have decided to hinder all upward movement in the market of Russian securities, as long as the Jews of Russia do not obtain civil rights.¹¹⁸

Effront also believed that "a clandestine, international organisation of Jewish bankers", called 'l'Oeuvre', had been formed in 1906. The conspirators, according to Effront, were located in New York, Paris and London and included the Rothschilds. Their aim was to spread

¹¹⁵ AVPR, f.133, 1908g., op.470, d.195, ll.13-14, Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 5 September 1908.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., l.15, Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 6 September 1908.

¹¹⁷ LN, vol.2, Memorandum from Rafalovich, 14 March 1914, p.265.

¹¹⁸ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.52-53, Effront to Kokovtsov, 2 May 1907.

systematically tendentious and pessimistic news about the financial and political situation in Russia, and to prevent in this way the rise of our State securities; by sowing trouble in the mind of the French 'rentier' and so rendering impossible the realisation abroad of a new Russian financial operation.¹¹⁹

While Effront's anti-semitism coloured his view of the financial world, his distaste for socialism and republicanism affected his judgements of the French government. He described the French cabinet in 1907 as "incoherent" and Clemenceau's Balkan policy as "regrettable" and contrary to Russian interests, even though Russia had supported France at Algeciras.¹²⁰ He noted with a certain smugness the difference between Clemenceau's public statements as a journalist and deputy and his actions as leader of the government. In Effront's opinion, Clemenceau had jettisoned his "subversive theories" to become "one of the most despotic chiefs of government".¹²¹ In addition to his harsh criticism of Clemenceau and his cabinet, Effront painted for the Russian Minister of Finance a devastating portrait of a decrepit French navy. According to Effront the navy was disorganised and lacked discipline, and

¹¹⁹ Ibid., d.271, ll.127-128, Effront to Kokovtsov, 28 June/ 11 July 1907.

¹²⁰ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.12-13, Effront to Kokovtsov, 7 February 1907. LI.119-120, Effront to Kokovtsov, 15/28 November 1907.

¹²¹ TsGIA, f.560, op.2, d.312, ll.186-188, Effront to Kokovtsov, 17/30 April 1908.

the ships were poorly maintained.¹²² The behaviour of the French socialist Jean Jaurès infuriated Effront who described Jaurès's ideas as "abominable theories of pure anarchy."¹²³ The anti-Russian campaign led by Jaurès's newspaper L'Humanité, "a quasi-official defender of Russian revolutionaries" particularly offended Effront.¹²⁴ The assumption of a link between Jaurès and Russian revolutionaries is telling. Effront's hatred of Jaurès paralleled his deeper aversion toward Russian revolutionaries who directly threatened his own privileged place in Russian society.

Both Rafalovich and Effront, in their attitudes toward Britain and France, were typical representatives of the Russian government and bureaucracy. Effront tended to be more alarmist than Rafalovich, but suspicion and distrust were a common theme in their reporting from Paris. Despite such negative assessments from his agents in the field, however, Kokovtsov never considered abandoning the alliance with France, primarily because he knew that Russia's financial needs could only be met in Paris.

After the crisis of 1905, when Russia faced bankruptcy, her financial situation gradually improved but her dependence on foreign credit remained. At the end of 1908 Russia's debt was 8,850,800,000 rubles, fifty-five percent of

¹²² Ibid., ll.26-27, Effront to Kokovtsov, 8/21 March 1907.

¹²³ Ibid., ll.131-132, Effront to Kokovtsov, 12 December 1907.

¹²⁴ Ibid.,

which was foreign loans. In 1909 400,000,000 rubles were needed to pay the interest on the debt. These interest payments swallowed twelve percent of the Russian budget.¹²⁵ Substantial alleviation of this burden could come only from national economic recovery. In 1909 Russia entered a period of economic expansion and in the wake of good harvests state revenues rose accordingly.¹²⁶ This economic upswing lasted from 1909 to 1914. Foreign observers thought Russia was a promising giant, stepping boldly into the future. Although the Russian economy expanded rapidly in these years, called by R.Girault the "golden age of liberal capitalism in Russia,"¹²⁷ Geyer underlines that the preponderant economic influence of other countries over Russia, particularly in the armaments industry, was not reduced. Moreover, the basic structural weaknesses of the Russian economy were not overcome by the industrial boom. Since the western economies grew at a faster rate, attempts to overcome Russia's relative backwardness were completely thwarted.¹²⁸

In this context the Russian government realized foreign trade and investment in Russia was crucial. Foreign trade showed marked growth, with exports rising from 716 million rubles in 1900 to 1,520 million in 1913. Over the

¹²⁵ Girault, op.cit., p.463.

¹²⁶ Geyer, op.cit., p.256.

¹²⁷ Girault, op.cit., p.492.

¹²⁸ Geyer, op.cit., pp.264-271.

same period imports rose from 626 million to 1,374 million rubles.¹²⁹ Foreign capital played an important role in the boom.¹³⁰ By 1917 thirty-three percent of the foreign capital in Russia was French, and Britain came second with twenty-three percent.¹³¹ French investments in Russian government and government-guaranteed loans rose from more than six billion francs in 1900 to ten billion in 1914. By 1914 Frenchmen had invested more than two billion francs in Russian joint-stock companies.¹³²

Clearly foreign capital was vital to the Russian economy and the Russian government actively encouraged such investment and entrepreneurs. In October 1907, shortly after the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention, Stolypin told Nicolson that he wanted private enterprise to develop Russia's railway system, and that "he would gladly welcome foreign capital to that end."¹³³ In a study of foreign entrepreneurs operating in Russia, J.P.McKay concluded that, in general, relations between the state and these entrepreneurs were "close and continuous".¹³⁴

¹²⁹ M.E.Falkus, The Industrialization of Russia, 1700-1914 (London, 1972), p.79.

¹³⁰ Ibid., p.81.

¹³¹ P.V. Ol', Foreign Capital in Russia (London, 1983), p.xii.

¹³² R.E.Cameron, France and the Economic Development of Europe 1860-1914 (Chicago, 1965), p.301.

¹³³ BD/CP, vol.5, doc.9, 18 October 1907, p.37.

¹³⁴ John P.McKay, Pioneers for Profit: Foreign Entrepreneurship and Russian Industrialization 1885-1913 (Chicago, 1970),p.268.

If, in the main, the Russian government welcomed foreign capital, in particular it welcomed and received large infusions of French money. By 1917 731.7 million rubles of French capital had been invested in Russian industry. The largest share, forty-three percent, was invested in mining and metallurgy. The second and third largest shares, twenty-one and fifteen percent respectively, were invested in metal processing and machine building and in credit institutions.¹³⁵ French concerns had a virtual monopoly in banking. Increased French control of Russian banks after 1907 gave French capitalists a new mechanism to pressure the tsarist government.¹³⁶ French interests also played an important role in the textile industry and the infant automobile industry. In 1907, of the one hundred and sixty-two automobiles in circulation in Moscow, seventy-two were French.¹³⁷ The interdependence of the French and Russian economies was complementary to political interdependence. Russia became the terrain of choice for French capitalists and according to Girault this was mutually beneficial. For example, the French helped to complete the network of railways in the Empire, which had important strategic significance for mobilisation.¹³⁸

¹³⁵ Ol', Foreign Capital in Russia, p.10.

¹³⁶ Girault, op.cit., pp.506 and 514.

¹³⁷ Ibid., p.528.

¹³⁸ Girault, op.cit., p.575.

French businessmen tried to use this favoured status to obtain permission to conduct business in Russia. In 1907 a Franco-American syndicate sought permission to build an Alaskan-Siberian railway. In the letter of application it was pointed out that as a large number of the signatories were French, this meant the company could not "have any end but the development of Siberia, in accordance with the views of the Government." Furthermore, their terms would not "impede its foreign policy".¹³⁹ Loicq de Lobel, head of the syndicate, came to Saint Petersburg recommended by the French President himself.¹⁴⁰ The Chief of the General Staff and the Ministers of the Imperial Court, Communications, Trade and Commerce, Justice and Foreign Affairs all supported the project. The Ministers of War, Internal Affairs, and Finance and the State Comptroller opposed the project.¹⁴¹

Despite close cooperation between the Russian government and French business, some serious problems did exist. The 1905 revolution caused many French businessmen to feel threatened. Some complained to their consuls that the tsarist government showed no consideration for their

¹³⁹ TsGIA, f.1276, op.1, d.125, l.63, letter from Loicq de Lobel to the Russian President of the Council, 7/20 March 1907.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid., ll.77-113, Untitled/ undated report on the question of the Trans-Siberian railway. l.78.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., l.86.

problems.¹⁴² Once the country was pacified relations improved, only to worsen again in 1910-1911. The French began to feel pushed to one side while the Russians asked themselves if they must remain dependent on French finance.¹⁴³ Up to 1914 a series of conflicts marred the relationship. A June 1914 drop in the Paris and Saint Petersburg stock markets did not reinforce confidence in the economic relationship between the two countries.¹⁴⁴ On the eve of war, three major problems existed in Franco-Russian economic relations: the role of French capitalists in Russian syndicates, the place of the French in Russia's rearmament effort, and the question of loans for Russian railway construction.¹⁴⁵

Historians have long debated the question of Franco-Russian economic interdependence. Girault described France as Russia's "golden chain" and argued a direct connection between the economic relationship and the alliance.¹⁴⁶ Soviet historians have made explicit the connection between economics and diplomacy, drawing a portrait of a bourgeois imperialist conspiracy that drew Britain, France and Russia together for the advancement

¹⁴² Girault, op.cit., p.584.

¹⁴³ Ibid., p.553.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid., p.575.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid., p.547.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid., p.584.

of capitalism, making war inevitable.¹⁴⁷ Other historians, however, have downplayed the degree of interdependence and its effect on Russian autonomy.¹⁴⁸ These works, however, ignore the depth of resentment felt within Russian government circles about their situation and the lack of a credible alternative, and seem to equate acceptance of the situation with pleasure over it. The Russian government could not afford to ignore the importance of French capital for its economy. Consequently, it sought to turn a necessity to its advantage.

Russia's economic relationship with Great Britain differed substantially from its longstanding and complicated relationship with France. When the new friendship with Great Britain began in 1907, trade between the two countries was not substantial. From 1907 to the War the Russian government actively sought to improve Anglo-Russian trade in an effort to consolidate the diplomatic friendship and to counterbalance its growing rivalry with Germany. Little of the resentment that characterized Franco-Russian economic relations marred the Anglo-Russian ones. In both cases trade and finance had diplomatic ramifications.

¹⁴⁷ See especially A.V.Ignatiev, Russko-Angliiskie otnosheniya nakanune pervoi mirovoi voiny (1908-1914) (Moscow, 1962), p.14.

¹⁴⁸ See for example J.P.Sontag, "Tsarist Debt and Tsarist Foreign Policy" Slavic Review, 27 (December 1968), pp.529-541. J.P.McKay, Pioneers for Profit (Chicago, 1970), p.275.

By 1917 the total British capital invested in Russian industry was 507.5 million rubles. The largest share was in mining which accounted for 60.7 percent of British investment.¹⁴⁹ The importance of British capital in the Russian mining industry is underlined by the fact that the production of copper by British-financed companies before the War and in the first year of the War was more than half of the entire copper production in Russia.¹⁵⁰ In 1914, British-financed companies produced 49.5 percent of the oil from the Grodno region.¹⁵¹ British businessmen also had interests in textiles, credit institutions, food processing, insurance, chemicals and real estate, among other things. Britain was Russia's second major creditor in the pre-War years. In 1914, Russian debts to Britain were 10.3 percent of Russia's total foreign indebtedness.¹⁵² Britain was second only to Germany in terms of exports to Russia just before the War.¹⁵³ From 1906 to 1911, British exports to Russia increased by 47 percent while Russian exports to Britain increased during the same period by fifty-two and a half percent.¹⁵⁴

¹⁴⁹ Ol', op.cit., p.55.

¹⁵⁰ Ol', op.cit., p.75.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., p.70.

¹⁵² A.V.Ignatiev, op.cit., p.26.

¹⁵³ Karl Baedeker, Russia. A Handbook for Travellers (A facsimile of the original 1914 edition) (New York, 1971), p.lv.

¹⁵⁴ Journal of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, no.1-2, 1912, p.38.

In 1908 a new Minister of Trade and Commerce, S.Timiriazev, who favoured the development of Anglo-Russian trade, was appointed. Shortly after his appointment, Timiriazev was reported to have said "that Anglo-Russian trade for years has been more or less stationary, and that measures must be taken to revive it."¹⁵⁵ In 1910 his Ministry issued a report on the importance of Anglo-Russian trade describing it as having "extremely serious significance".¹⁵⁶ Timiriazev also played an important role in the inauguration of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce and presided over it.¹⁵⁷ He was a member of the Anglo-Russian rapprochement committee, whose object was to give assistance to British visitors to Russia.¹⁵⁸ Probably seeking a British model, Timiriazev, in the winter of 1909, requested information on the British Board of Trade.¹⁵⁹ The equivalent Russian ministry was a recent innovation, having been created in 1905.

On the eve of war, in April 1914, the Ministry of Trade and Commerce submitted a report to the Duma strongly recommending the approval

¹⁵⁵ BD/CP vol.5, doc.61, Annual Report on Russia for 1908, p.254.

¹⁵⁶ TsGIA, f.23, op.27, d.836, ll.99-102, Printed report 1910.

¹⁵⁷ BD/CP vol.5, doc.61, Annual Report on Russia 1908, p.255.

¹⁵⁸ H.P.Kennard, The Russian Yearbook for 1913 (London, 1913), p.771.

¹⁵⁹ TsGIA, f.23, op.27, d.21, ll.1-2, Rutkovskii to Timiriazev, 23 February/ 8 March 1909.

of an Odessa-London cruiser line. The report stressed the importance of British trade for Russia and the advantages of opening "the rich English market" for goods from southern Russia.¹⁶⁰ Significantly, one of the major reasons advanced for supporting the line was Russia's commercial dependence on Germany. The report argued that an Odessa-London cruiser line would reduce that dependence and eliminate the need for Russian exports to Britain to be shipped by rail through Austria-Hungary and Germany. The report concluded that it was in Russia's political and economic interests to support the project, even though it might be unprofitable in the first few years.¹⁶¹

In addition to Timiriachev and the Ministry of Trade and Commerce, the Russian government as a whole worked to encourage Anglo-Russian trading links. R.J.Barrett, a British journalist and promoter of Russia, reported in 1908 that the Russian government was ready "to do all it fairly" could "to encourage British enterprise." Barrett went so far as to say that "no other country" would "give the capitalist such encouragement."¹⁶² According to Barrett, Russia respected Englishmen and preferred them over Germans.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ TsGIA, f.1278, op.6, d.1324, ll.3-27, Report from the Ministry of Trade and Commerce sent to the Finance Committee of the Duma, 14 April 1914.

¹⁶¹ Ibid., ll.22-23.

¹⁶² R.J.Barrett, Russia's New Era (London, 1908), p.219 and p.211.

¹⁶³ Ibid., pp.210 and 236.

Even the General Staff did not object to the Anglo-Terek Petroleum Company in 1913 increasing its capital from 120,000 to 160,000 pounds sterling.¹⁶⁴

The Russian government's interest in enhanced Anglo-Russian trade could also be seen in its role in the establishment and functioning of the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce. The Chamber received Imperial sanction for its statutes in 1908. In addition to the Russian Minister of Commerce who was President, an ex-Minister of Commerce was Assistant Vice-President. The Chamber also received a grant of 2,500 rubles from the Ministry of Finance and was under the control of the Ministry of Trade and Commerce.¹⁶⁵ Kokovtsov, Izvolsky and Sazonov were members of the Chamber¹⁶⁶, which suggests that the government regarded it as more than a conduit for improved trade. By 1913 the Chamber had a membership of over seven hundred.¹⁶⁷ Membership information in 1910 indicates that the majority of members resided in Russia, which seems to suggest that the Russian side had more interest in this venture than the British.¹⁶⁸ To promote its goal of increased Anglo-Russian trade, the

¹⁶⁴ TsGIA, f.23, op.25, d.296, l.159, from the General Staff to the Ministry of Trade and Commerce, Trade Department, 13 March 1913.

¹⁶⁵ BD/CP vol.5, doc.61, Annual Report on Russia for 1908, p.255.

¹⁶⁶ Ignatiev, op.cit., p.19.

¹⁶⁷ Kennard, The Russian Yearbook 1913, advertisement section, no page number.

¹⁶⁸ Journal of The Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, no.5, May 1911,

Chamber established correspondents throughout the Russian Empire and in the United Kingdom. The Chamber also sponsored lectures, a library and a journal published in both Russian and English. Furthermore, in 1909 and 1910 branches were opened in Odessa and Warsaw respectively. The Chamber served as a source of information and answered 2,300 inquiries from Russian sources in 1910.¹⁶⁹

By 1912 Anglo-Russian relations had improved to the point that the Russian government warmly welcomed a delegation of British politicians, clergy, businessmen and academics. The official hospitality extended to this delegation contrasted with the government's horror in 1906 when a similar visit was proposed. By 1912 the domestic situation had been pacified to the extent that visiting British parliamentarians no longer posed a revolutionary threat. A dinner honouring the British guests was held by the Russo-British Chamber of Commerce, and the Russian Minister of Commerce, Timiriazev, the Foreign Minister, Sazonov, the Mayor of Saint Petersburg and several assistant ministers attended.¹⁷⁰ In an enthusiastic speech Timiriazev stressed the importance of economic ties in the Anglo-Russian rapprochement. He argued eloquently that Russian and British strengths complemented each other. British

p.219.

¹⁶⁹ ibid., pp.215-217.

¹⁷⁰ ibid., nos1-2, 1912, p.45.

capital, enterprise and technical skill could be used to develop Russia's vast natural resources.¹⁷¹ Timiriazev praised the guests whose efforts had

made of your beautiful country an Eden of right and law, and liberty, which are so indispensable and valuable for every human achievement. We realise that the same elements have helped British trade to become so vast and powerful, always guided by principles of high rectitude and honour.¹⁷²

The reformed State Council, the upper house of the post 1905 legislature, also reflected the common official Russian acceptance of the Triple Entente. No less than one third of its members descended from Russia's pre-Petrine social elite.¹⁷³ A large number of Council members had attended the Western-style Alexander Lycée, as had Izvolsky and Sazonov.¹⁷⁴ Lieven concludes that Russian educated society, particularly the aristocracy, was highly westernised and that many liberal-westerners could be found in Nicholas II's State Council.¹⁷⁵ As examples Lieven describes the following: P.P.Semyonov, whose mother was of Huguenot origin and spoke to her children only in French; the Princes Alexander and Nicholas Dolgoruky, who were raised by an English

¹⁷¹ ibid., pp.37-39.

¹⁷² ibid., p.40.

¹⁷³ Lieven, Russia's Rulers Under the Old Regime, p.45.

¹⁷⁴ ibid., p.118.

¹⁷⁵ ibid., pp.168-169.

tutor; Andrei Saburov, "the embodiment of European Victorianism"; A.N.Schwartz, who was offered a chair at the Sorbonne and Oxford; and A.N.Kulomzin, whose Grand Tour of Britain as a young man made him an admirer of Britain throughout his life.¹⁷⁶ Many members of the State Council maintained close contacts with prominent men in Britain and France.¹⁷⁷ Prince Alexander Obolensky, a member of the State Council, was a vice-president of the Russo-French Chamber of Commerce.¹⁷⁸

While the majority of the Russian government and bureaucracy welcomed or at least accepted the Triple Entente as beneficial and necessary for Russia, certain elements remained hostile to the idea. Most significantly the Russian military establishment opposed the rapprochement with Britain and actively campaigned against its establishment. For example, in January 1906 an article offensive to Britain was published with the authorization of the Naval Minister. The Foreign Minister, Lamsdorf, was forced to apologize.¹⁷⁹ The General Staff vehemently opposed any agreement with Britain over Persia, which caused Izvolsky great difficulty and delayed the negotiations.¹⁸⁰

¹⁷⁶ ibid., pp.89-90,168, 178-180, 201-202, 231.

¹⁷⁷ See ТЗГИА, f.1642, op.1, d.366 for Kulomzin's correspondence with Jules Legras.

¹⁷⁸ AVPR, f.133, 1912g., op.470, d.201, l.101. List of the Executive of the Russo-French Chamber of Commerce.

¹⁷⁹ AVPR, f.133, 1906g., d.65, l.4, op.470, Spring-Rice to Grey, 5 January 1906.

¹⁸⁰ Izvolsky, Au Service de la Russie, vol.1, Izvolsky to Benckendorf, strictly personal, 14/27 September 1906, p.378. See also A.W.Palmer, loc.cit., p.752.

In the fall of 1906, General Palitsyn, the head of the General Staff, objected to Izvolsky's plans to forego an active policy along Russia's Asian borders. Palitsyn had three major concerns, all of which revealed his distrust of 'perfidious Albion'. He worried about the German reaction to an Anglo-Russian agreement, Britain's ultimate intentions given the tradition of Anglo-Russian enmity, and Britain's exploitation of temporary Russian weakness.¹⁸¹ Nicolson regarded Palitsyn as one of "the chief obstacles to an arrangement".¹⁸² In April 1907 Izvolsky presided over a special meeting to discuss Afghanistan during which he encountered significant opposition. The military group argued that the agreement would be an obstacle to continued Russian expansion in Central Asia.¹⁸³ Even Sir Edward Grey acknowledged in his memoirs that it

was no wonder that the Russian Foreign Minister had some difficulty in getting military authorities in Russia to give up something of real potential value to them, while we gave up what was of little or no practical value to us.¹⁸⁴

Nevertheless Izvolsky did manage to overcome their opposition and the agreement was concluded in August 1907. The lessons of the recent war and revolution and the consequent need to subordinate Russia's goals

¹⁸¹ McDonald, op.cit., p.359.

¹⁸² BD/CP vol.4, doc.187, Report from Nicolson to Grey, 2 January 1907, p.291.

¹⁸³ G.Sanders, "Diplomacy and the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907" UCLA History Journal 1982 3: p.66.

¹⁸⁴ Grey, op.cit., pp.154-155.

abroad to domestic pacification and reconstruction were so compelling that even General Palitsyn was forced to agree.¹⁸⁵ Such serious opposition meant that while the Russian military leadership accepted the new arrangement with Britain, they were not enamoured with it.¹⁸⁶ Like good military men, however, once the convention was signed they accepted the new arrangement and participated in British military manoeuvres and extended reciprocal invitations.¹⁸⁷

After the defeat in the Far East, the Russian army's relationship with France took on a more dependent cast. As a result of the tortuous 1906 loan negotiations, Russia was forced to revise the Franco-Russian military convention to France's advantage. The revised convention named Germany as the principal enemy of both countries and eliminated the anti-British clause that had been inserted in 1901. Henceforth only German mobilization obliged France and Russia to mobilize immediately, whereas Austrian or Italian mobilization required only that the two allies hold talks to agree to a plan of action. Clearly, this new arrangement was to Russia's disadvantage, since in 1906 there seemed a far greater chance that Austria would attack Russia than that Italy

¹⁸⁵ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.361.

¹⁸⁶ Sanders, loc.cit., pp.68-69.

¹⁸⁷ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1913g., d.91, l.6, 1911g., d.203, ll.4-5, 1909g., d.191, l.8, and 1910g., d.197, l.4.

would attack France.¹⁸⁸ The July crisis of 1914 made it perfectly clear that the French General Staff's obsession with rapid Russian mobilization had affected Russian mobilization plans, to Russia's detriment. There were excellent reasons for Russia to delay mobilization until a substantial part of the Austrian forces were entangled in Serbia. At the urging of her ally, however, Russia proceeded with full mobilization, with disastrous consequences.¹⁸⁹

This unequal situation elicited bitterness and resentment and the former War Minister, General Sukhomlinov, expressed both in his memoirs. Writing in retrospect and exile, he stated that the Dual Alliance had been of greater benefit to France than to Russia. He regarded France's military worth as "extremely insignificant" for Russia, saying that "military matters cannot be based on only platonic speeches, -- friendly advice and pretty gestures." He believed that the French valued the Russian people only as "cannon fodder"¹⁹⁰ and that the French bankers used their financial clout to meddle in Russian affairs particularly regarding railroads.¹⁹¹ Not surprisingly, given his conservatism and patriotism, Sukhomlinov disliked French radicals and

¹⁸⁸ Long, The Economic Aspects of the Franco-Russian Alliance, pp.193-197.

¹⁸⁹ L.C.F.Turner, "The Russian Mobilisation in 1914" Journal of Contemporary History 1968, p.69.

¹⁹⁰ V.Sukhomlinov, Vospominaniya (Berlin, 1924), pp.191-192.

¹⁹¹ Ibid., pp.192 and 195.

socialists, who he felt favoured Russian revolutionaries, Jews and Poles.¹⁹²

He also criticized Kokovtsov's and Izvolsky's policies, which he felt pandered to France and Britain and were not in Russia's interests.¹⁹³ Sukhomlinov did not even pay Britain the compliment of insulting her. To the Russian military mind, it would seem, British strategic significance was almost nonexistent.

The Comptroller of the Empire, P.Kh.Schwanebach, held views on France similar to those of Sukhomlinov. In January 1907 Schwanebach denounced the Dual Alliance to Sir Arthur Nicolson in the most violent terms "as having been disastrous to Russia". According to Nicolson, Schwanebach maintained that Russia had no interests in an alliance with France and had been drawn into one "in a moment of pique". The Comptroller worried that the alliance would cause an estrangement between Russia and Germany which would not be in Russia's interests. Nicolson summarized Schwanebach's devastating critique this way:

All that was subversive in Russia had been introduced from France, whilst all that was conservative had its origin in Germany. France was in decadence, while Germany had a great future before her, and the alliance with France, from whatever point of view it was regarded, was unnatural and pernicious.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹² Ibid., p.193.

¹⁹³ Ibid., pp.178 and 198.

¹⁹⁴ BD/CP vol.4, doc.193, Nicolson to Grey, 9 January 1907, pp.323-324.

Schwanebach's views are almost a stereotypical version of the conservative Russian official's attitude toward radical France as the source of revolutionary contagion.

The best known government critic of the Entente policy was P.N.Durnovo, onetime Minister of the Interior and Member of the State Council. He played a major role in the suppression of the revolution in 1905.¹⁹⁵ In the State Council he led the so-called Right Group from 1907 to his death in 1915. He came from the impoverished gentry and derived his political views from practical experience of Russian society and politics, not from the history of Western Europe.¹⁹⁶ As a former officer and policeman, Durnovo believed in the need for stern and resolute political authority, especially in a backward country like Russia. Consequently, he believed that any attempt at democratisation would lead only to the disintegration of the Empire. In his opinion, only bureaucratic authoritarianism, Russian nationalism and monolithic discipline could save Russia.¹⁹⁷

P.N.Durnovo's famous February 1914 memorandum attacked the course of Russian foreign policy as leading ultimately to revolution. He

¹⁹⁵ D.C.P. Lieven, "Bureaucratic Authoritarianism in Late Imperial Russia: The Personality, Career and Opinions of P.N.Durnovo" Historical Journal xxvi (1983), p.391.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid., p.392.

¹⁹⁷ Ibid., pp.395-400.

presented his conservative memorandum to Nicholas II two weeks after the Emperor had removed Kokovtsov as Chairman of the Council of Ministers and replaced him with the aged and reactionary Goremykin. Presumably Durnovo hoped to persuade the Emperor to introduce a more conservative line in foreign policy as he had recently done in the domestic arena.¹⁹⁸ A loosely-knit cabal was formed in February and March 1914 to accomplish Durnovo's goals. It sought to remove Sazonov and replace him with P.S.Botkin, the envoy in Tangiers and an Anglophobe.¹⁹⁹ Sazonov, however, stayed at the Foreign Ministry and the Triple Entente remained the mainstay of Russian foreign policy.

Durnovo's memorandum is a prime example of the pro-German view that had always existed in official Russian circles even after 1905.²⁰⁰ Durnovo believed that the rivalry between Britain and Germany to be the central factor in this period, which would eventually lead to war which "in all probability would prove fatal to one of them."²⁰¹ Durnovo saw no value and only danger in the arrangement with Britain:

¹⁹⁸ D.M.McDonald, op.cit., p.558-562.

¹⁹⁹ Ibid., p.562.

²⁰⁰ The memo is reprinted in F.A.Golder, Documents of Russian History (Massachusetts, 1964), pp.3-23.

²⁰¹ Ibid., p.4.

To sum up, the Anglo-Russian accord has brought us nothing of practical value up to this time, while for the future, it threatens us with an inevitable armed clash with Germany.²⁰²

He predicted that in such a war the burden would fall on Russia, since Britain, he presumed, was incapable of playing a major role in a continental war and France would adopt a defensive strategy. Russia would thus be left to act as "a battering-ram, making a breach in the very thick of the German defense".²⁰³ But Russia was unprepared for a European conflict, given her insufficient war supplies, her dependence on foreign industry, and her inadequate network of strategic railways.

Most importantly, Durnovo saw no conflict between German and Russian national interests. He argued that Germany would sooner open the Straits to Russian warships than Britain would.²⁰⁴ Germany and Russia were both "representatives of the conservative principle in the civilized world, as opposed to the democratic principle incarnated in England, and to an infinitely lesser degree, in France." Durnovo's parting shot at Britain was that she would be "the real instigator" of a war, not Germany.²⁰⁵ Similar to Witte, Durnovo saw Russia's future in a combination with Germany, France and Japan.

²⁰² Ibid., p.8.

²⁰³ Ibid., pp.9-10.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., pp.12-13.

²⁰⁵ Ibid.,pp.19 and 22.

This memorandum was a hardhitting attack on the Triple Entente, penned at the same time Sazonov and Nicholas II were actively lobbying for a defensive alliance with Britain. When Durnovo wrote this piece, although he was a member of the State Council, he was not privy to the discussions of the inner circles of the Russian government and he no longer had the Tsar's ear as he once had had. No doubt the views he expressed were shared by many conservative Russians, who for ideological reasons desired closer relations with Germany, but the Emperor and his powerful ministers had set Russia on a different course and they would not be deterred. No matter how prophetic, Durnovo's memorandum was a cry in the wilderness.

From 1906 to the outbreak of war in 1914, the Russian government pursued a policy of continued alliance with France and deepening friendship with Britain. This alignment was designed to ensure that the all-important policy of domestic pacification and retrenchment could be accomplished without distractions. Some members of the Russian government and bureaucracy welcomed this course in Russian foreign policy out of ideological sympathy, while the majority accepted it as a necessity for a Russia severely weakened by war and revolution. Thus, paradoxically, those of the Russian bureaucratic elite who favoured Russia's diplomatic association with the western democracies saw it as a means of preserving the 'ancien regime' in Russia. The inherent conflict between means and ends in this policy did not escape the notice of the

Entente's harsher critics, who found it to be ideologically abhorrent and dangerous for Russia. Their influence, however, was limited and the Triple Entente remained government policy and never came under serious attack. In general, Russian bureaucratic attitudes toward Britain and France were a mingling of admiration, dependence and resentment, in almost equal amounts. Such a mixture of emotions indicated a government weak and unsure of itself, desperately trying to maintain an old order through a diplomatic arrangement, that ironically, as Durnovo predicted, led to the system's demise.

CHAPTER SIX

The Tsarist Regime and its Image Abroad

From 1906 to 1914 the Imperial government mounted a full-scale propaganda offensive to win public approval from its Entente partners. In a consistent effort, the regime employed subsidies, censorship and personal contacts to manipulate public opinion in France and Britain. Russian motives in this affair were a combination of financial considerations, concerns about prestige, and the belief that people in Britain and France were ignorant about real conditions in Russia and should be educated. Actions taken by government officials from 1906 to 1914 reflect a realization that a favourable public image abroad was an important factor in the maintenance of good relations with the Entente partners and the drive to reestablish political control at home, unhampered by foreign policy complications.

The Russian defeat at Mukden, the revolution of 1905 and its repression produced an unflattering portrait of Tsarist Russia. Prior to 1904, the Russian government had subsidized the French press but not for any long period. The sporadic character of this interference now changed and from 1904 to 1906 "the tsarist government appropriated over two and one half million

francs for the French press."¹ According to James Long, the French government demanded that the Russian government subsidize the French press every time alarming news reached Paris. The main reason for the subsidies was the need to protect Russia's credit rating which had been badly shaken by recent events.² The new policy was apparently successful and Russia managed to maintain the gold standard and meet its financial obligations by securing two billion francs in French loans by 1906.³

Direct subsidization of the French press continued in the first part of 1906. At the end of December 1905 the Russian Ministry of Finance allocated 200,000 francs for the current month and "for the two following months a little more than usual."⁴ In February 1906 Arthur Rafalovich, the Russian financial agent in Paris, estimated the costs of publicity to be 115,000 francs per month. The bulk of the money, 57,000 francs, went directly to journals and newspapers, with the Le Petit Journal, Le Petit Parisien, Le Temps and Le Journal receiving the lion's share at 5,000 francs apiece. Several other

¹ James W. Long, "Russian Manipulation of the French Press", Slavic Review, 31 (1972), p.343. See also E.M.Caroll, French Public Opinion and Foreign Affairs (New York, 1931) pp.261-262.

²Long, loc.cit., p.345.

³Long, loc.cit., p.354.

⁴Arthur Rafalovich, L'Abominable vénalité de la presse (Paris, 1931), p.116, Vichnegradsky to Rafalovich, 29 December 1905.

prominent French organs benefitted, including forty-four socialist papers. Provincial and financial papers, and individual journalists were also singled out for payment. 9,200 francs were allocated as payment for individual journalists.⁵

By October of 1906 Kokovtsov had ordered Rafalovich "to cease all relation of a subsidized order with the press".⁶ Once the 1906 loan had been successfully concluded the need for a favourable press declined. Kokovtsov had always resented the extortionary nature of the subsidy policy and had doubted its efficacy, although he did approve its implementation.⁷ From 1906 to 1912 the Russian government did not employ subsidies on a large scale, but did continue to exert influence on the press by means of its advertising power. In 1906 249,314 francs were spent on the press directly and a further 121,670 were paid to different journalists and newspapers for announcements and advertisements of Russian government securities. In 1907 the amount spent directly on the French press dropped to 26,504 francs, while the amount spent on advertising remained almost constant at 121,443 francs.⁸ From 1907 to 1912 the amount spent on press announcements fluctuated very little. Normally,

⁵Ibid., Davidov to Kokovtsov, 23 January 1906, pp.122-123.

⁶Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 3 October 1906, p.146.

⁷Long, loc.cit., p.354.

⁸Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Vichnegradsky, no date, pp.175-176.

approximately twenty newspapers were recipients. In 1907 188,922 francs were paid, 157,854 in 1909, 155,901 in 1910 and 165,297 in 1912.⁹

Whether a French journal or newspaper was to receive Russian government advertising business was directly linked to its coverage of Russia. Competition for Imperial business was stiff and Rafalovich used this as an important bargaining tool. In March 1908 Le Matin won a contract for 20,000 francs, making it the best paid client of the Russian government.¹⁰ In June the paper, alone among French papers, published Tolstoy's famous manifesto, "I cannot be silent", against executions in Russia, incurring Rafalovich's wrath. Rafalovich asked Kokovtsov whether in the circumstances they should cancel their order. Recognising that such an act might provoke the paper's animosity, Rafalovich suggested that the Minister take the next opportunity to speak to the offending newspaper's correspondent and "to wash his head."¹¹ Rafalovich regarded Le Matin's publication of the Tolstoy manifesto as "a breach of contract".¹² In the end no punitive action was taken against the Le Matin, probably because, as Rafalovich explained in another context, "Le Matin is well read: each insertion provides us requests for registration on the list of subscribers."¹³

⁹Ibid., pp.184-186, pp.229- 231, pp.272-273, and pp.392-393.

¹⁰Ibid., Davidov to Rafalovich, 15 March 1908, p.196.

¹¹Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, July 1908, p.202.

¹²Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, no date, p.203.

¹³Ibid., Rafalovich to Davidov, 24 December 1908, p.211.

On occasion Russian officials would reduce the number of announcements placed, and consequently the sum paid, in an attempt to exercise control over newspaper coverage. In 1910 and 1911 the money paid to Le Temps was reduced because Rafalovich felt this newspaper had hurt Russia "by attacks and blunders". The paper's director, Hébard, protested, which caused Rafalovich to rethink his position: "the importance of Le Temps is incontestable."¹⁴ By 1912 Le Temps was the second best paid paper after Le Matin.¹⁵ In 1913 Le Temps informed Davidov, an official in the Ministry of Finance, that it was creating "trimonthly 'Russian Numbers', exclusively devoted to the economic and financial life of the Empire."¹⁶ Presumably the connection between the two events was not entirely fortuitous.

The Russian Ministry of Finance also established a mutually beneficial working relationship with the 'Havas' telegraphic agency. In 1907 Kokovtsov agreed to pay the agency monthly five thousand francs for half a year.¹⁷ Rafalovich had strongly endorsed the proposal because "there are moments where one is very pressed to transmit something. 'Havas' is the great omnibus vehicle."¹⁸

¹⁴Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 16 February 1912, p.289.

¹⁵Ibid., Dépenses effectuées en 1912 pour la publication des tirages, p.392.

¹⁶Ibid., Rivet to Davidov, 23 December 1913, p.398.

¹⁷Ibid., Rapport du Ministère des Finances, 21 June 1907, pp.167-168.

¹⁸Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 20 June 1907, p.166.

In 1912 the Russian government, on the suggestion of its ambassador in Paris, Izvolsky, decided to resume direct subsidies to the French press. Izvolsky cited as reasons the threatening situation in the Balkans and the unwelcome change he detected in the French press's attitude toward Russia. Equally pernicious from Izvolsky's point of view was the "undeniable role" played by Austrian, German and Turkish subsidies. Izvolsky requested 300,000 francs, which would be dispensed over six months with the assistance of the French government, as "French men of state have in affairs of this type a great practice."¹⁹

The Council of Ministers approved Izvolsky's proposal, but not without expressing "the fear that once one engages in this way in the future one has to spend in this end greater and greater sums without sufficient profit." The Council therefore indicated that it considered the allocation of 300,000 francs as a "unique credit, not susceptible to renewal once it had been spent."²⁰ Despite the initial agreement, however, controversy soon erupted between various officials over the best way to administer the money and the most opportune moment to distribute it. This disagreement was typical of bureaucratic infighting in late Imperial Russia. Nonetheless, despite Kokovtsov's strong reservations

¹⁹Ibid., Izvolsky to Sazonov, 10/23 October 1912, pp.325-329.

²⁰Ibid., Sazonov to Izvolsky, marked 'très confidentiel', 17/30 October 1912, pp.331-332.

and veiled criticisms of Izvolsky, the money was distributed through Alphonse Lenoir²¹, an agent of the French Treasury, in conjunction with the French government. This shift in control from Russian to French hands disturbed Rafalovich.²²

The second 100,000 franc installment was also contentious as the French Minister of Finance, Klotz, wanted to use the money to help see the French law on three years military service passed. The Russian government, although worried about French interference, nonetheless authorized the second installment. Everyone involved, Sazonov, Izvolsky and Kokovtsov, however, felt it necessary to stipulate that the money must be used to defend Russian interests. If not, the Minister of Finance would suspend completely future subsidies of this nature.²³ At the end of November 1913 Rafalovich reported on the manner in which Lenoir had spent the Russian funds, noting that the French government determined who received the money. The beneficiaries were exclusively organs of the radical-socialist party.²⁴ The French government had used Russian government money to promote its own domestic

²¹Long op.cit., p.348, Lenoir acted in this same capacity from 1904 to 1906.

²² Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Davidov, 11 December 1912, pp.345-347.

²³Ibid., Izvolsky to Sazonov, Sazonov to Kokovtsov, and Davidov to Rafalovich, pp.386-388.

²⁴Ibid., 6 November 1913, pp.393-394.

agenda, much to the chagrin of Russian officials who felt cheated. Moreover, the Russian government, despite being the provider of funds, seemed completely incapable of keeping its ally in check.

Despite grave disappointment about the way in which the subsidies had been dispersed in 1913, the Russian government did not completely cease this manner of influencing the press, although it took the matter of control to heart. In April 1914 Saint Petersburg approved a 10,000 ruble subsidy to Monde Illustré in return for special issues of the journal devoted completely to Russia. Davidov attributed

a great importance to editions of this type which permit the broad public to learn about Russian life in its most characteristic manifestations.²⁵

Older and wiser, Davidov told the editor, Dupuy-Mazuel, that he would receive the money when the first issue on Russia appeared. The sum approved was "equal to that which The Times and the Daily Telegraph and some other papers receive."²⁶

At the same time that the Russian government resumed direct subsidies to the French press, Russian banks also reached an accord with representatives of the French press. In the fall of 1912 the two parties agreed

²⁵Ibid., Davidov to Bark, 19 April 1914, pp.406-407.

²⁶Ibid., p.406. Davidov's remark is indirect evidence that The Times and The Daily Telegraph received Russian government money.

that the banks would have the right to insert in the French press information on the situation of different branches of Russian industry so as to "augment in the French public its interest for Russian securities." A French intermediary, Laffron, was used to transmit the information and the necessary sums of money. Because of the accord's success, it was renewed in 1913. Laffron communicated to the Russian Minister of Finance all the articles which appeared in the French press as a result of this agreement.²⁷

The effectiveness of direct press subsidies was debatable and some senior members of the Russian government doubted their utility, although an alternative and successful policy was not found. The conflict over subsidies was a fine example of the inefficiency and rivalries which plagued Nicholas II's government, rendering it ineffective at best, destructive at worst. In the fall of 1906, when the first major subsidy campaign was halted, Kokovtsov indicated his dissatisfaction with the procedure. He admitted that Russia received satisfactory coverage while he was in Paris negotiating the loan but

as soon as the money was received, the old attacks accompanied by all sorts of new fantasies, the most incredible noises and tendencious and hostile commentaries of the natural and even completely favourable acts, for example the commentary of Le Temps on the subject of my letter to the President of the Council, began again.²⁸

²⁷ibid., Note, 13 February 1914, pp.402-403.

²⁸ibid., Kokovtsov to de Verneuil, 29 September/ 12 October 1906, pp.149-150.

Since Russia was not about to negotiate a new loan, Kokovtsov reasoned, subsidies should not be continued.

When Nicholas II visited France in 1909, Rafalovich admitted his inability to control the press by financial means.²⁹ The Finance Minister was similarly pessimistic about the chances of the new 1912 subsidies achieving the desired result. He used the problem as an opportunity to cast doubt on his rival, Izvolsky. Kokovtsov told Sazonov that he had drawn Izvolsky's attention to what he regarded as the "sterility ... of financial pressure and the insignificance of the results attained by us in this order of ideas in 1905 and 1904."³⁰ Nevertheless, the project went ahead but, as described above, fell far short of expectations. In July 1914, just prior to the outbreak of war, Rafalovich expressed his deep-felt scepticism about press subsidies to the new Finance Minister, P.A. Bark: "I finished by being very skeptical about this type of relation with the press. The public finished also by guessing that it had been paid."³¹ Rafalovich had no moral objections to subsidies, merely a lack of faith in their utility.

As Russian ambassador to France, Izvolsky made a concerted effort using various means to influence the French press. He often complained to

²⁹Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 28 June 1909, pp.223-224.

³⁰Ibid., Kokovtsov to Sazonov, 3 December 1912, marked 'tout à fait confidentiel', pp.350-354.

³¹Ibid., Rafalovich to Bark, 4 July 1914, p.407.

Saint Petersburg that he had insufficient funds to pursue this objective properly. During the summer of 1911 when the Second Moroccan Crisis occupied centre stage, Izvolsky wrote A.A.Neratov, acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, requesting "sufficient means to act on the press here."³² To press the point Izvolsky referred to the considerable role played by "skilfull distribution" of Austrian money to the French press by Count Khevenhuller, the Austrian Ambassador, during the Bosnian annexation crisis.³³ By the end of 1912, when he had received substantial sums, Izvolsky felt he had achieved no small measure of success. To Sazonov he wrote:

For my part, I strive every day to influence personally the most important papers of Paris, such as le Temps, le Journal des Débats, l'Echo de Paris, etc. In sum the Paris press of today cannot be compared to that of 1908-1909.³⁴

Given Izvolsky's personal stake in these matters it is not surprising to find him soliciting funds during the First Balkan War, to keep the French press on the Russian, not the Austrian, side. In a secret telegram he described how, initially, French sympathies, including the Paris Market, had favoured Turkey. But the old adage that "nothing succeeds like success" had proven true and

³²LN, Vol.1, Izvolsky to Neratov, 6/19 August 1911, p.130.

³³ibid., p.130.

³⁴LN Vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 5/18 December 1912, p.371.

opinion had swung behind the Balkan states in the light of their victories. Izvolsky was keen to capitalize on the advantage, but he needed more "material resources."³⁵ He requested a personal fund of 30,000 francs "for direct distribution and which no one would know the names except himself."³⁶ Saint Petersburg allocated 25,000 francs to the ambassador for this purpose.³⁷ In addition to a personal media fund which he directly controlled, Izvolsky also dictated dispatchs which Le Temps printed in its "Dernières Nouvelles" column.³⁸ When Rafalovich congratulated Izvolsky on this achievement, Izvolsky indicated that he exercised "in effect a certain control on four daily papers, including L'Eclair."³⁹

In addition to its attempts to influence the newspapers directly by various monetary means, the Russian government monitored the French and British press and often protested directly to the British and French ambassadors. In June 1906 the newly arrived British Ambassador, Sir Arthur Nicolson, had an interview with Goremykin. According to Nicolson, Goremykin said that

³⁵LN, Vol.1, secret telegram from Izvolsky, 15/28 October 1912, p.564.

³⁶Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Davidov, 30 November/ 13 December 1912, pp.349-350.

³⁷Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 'confidentielle', 23 December 1912, p.355.

³⁸Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 13 December 1912, pp.348-349.

³⁹Ibid., pp.348-349.

he regretted to observe some of the leading English journals had adopted an unfortunate line in regard to what was vaguely termed the Jewish question in Russia. They had been misled by their correspondents, who had warmly advocated equal rights for all Russian subjects throughout the Empire.⁴⁰

Nicolson informed Goremykin that he did not have the means nor was it within his province to influence the British correspondents.⁴¹ Such a response did not deter the Russian officials. The June 1906 pogrom at Bielostok received widespread coverage abroad. Izvolsky felt obliged to comment to Nicolson upon what he considered "the one-sided reports which many of the correspondents, he especially mentioned The Times, sent to their several journals."⁴² Izvolsky denied that the Russian government had deliberately organized the pogrom. Apparently he regarded such action as foolish because it "would, apart from every other consideration, merely bring them [the Russian government] into discredit, and alienate public opinion in Europe." Izvolsky revealed plainly his concern about Russia's image in Great Britain to the British Ambassador.

M.Izvolsky said that he personally, and also his colleagues, attached importance to the British public being fairly and impartially informed, and he could not say that this was at present the case.⁴³

⁴⁰BD/CP, Vol.4, doc.54, Nicolson to Grey, 14 June 1906, p.95.

⁴¹Ibid., p.95.

⁴²BD/CP Vol.4, doc.70, Nicolson to Grey, 23 June 1906, p.110.

⁴³Ibid., p.111.

Even when the more progressive Stolypin replaced the old and reactionary Goremykin, the Russian protests to Nicolson continued, although the tone was softened somewhat. On 2 July 1906 Nicolson called on Stolypin. The two men discussed Russia's internal situation. Stolypin said his government was not reactionary and his own "ideal was the British Constitution, but it was impossible to cast Russia at once in that mould." Stolypin also

commented on the tone of the foreign press towards the Government, but he was not surprised at it in view of the nature of the information which reached foreign journals from their correspondents. He had established a press bureau here, and had asked the foreign correspondents to visit it occasionally, but none had taken advantage of the offer with the exception of two German correspondents.⁴⁴

With Stolypin, therefore, the government attempts to shape foreign news coverage of Russia became more aggressive; a press bureau was established and moderate remonstrances were made to the British Ambassador.

Stolypin continued his efforts to influence indirectly the British press in an interview he had with Sir Donald MacKenzie Wallace, the preeminent British expert on Russia and the confidant of the British ambassador.⁴⁵

Stolypin granted Wallace an hour-long interview at his private house in the

⁴⁴BD/CP, Vol.4, doc 73, Nicolson to Grey, 2 July 1906, p.116.

⁴⁵ Keith Neilson, "'My Beloved Russians': Sir Arthur Nicolson and Russia, 1906-1916" The International History Review vol.9, no.4, (1987) pp.530-531.

course of which Stolypin expressed his regret at the hostility of the British press. Stolypin drew Wallace's attention to a translation from a recent Times article. He told Wallace:

To discriminating criticism he did not at all object; on the contrary, it was most welcome, because it helped to guide him, but the old stereotyped phrases of fashionable Liberalism, poured out without any knowledge of local conditions, and spiced with vague expressions of hostility to the Government, could not be of any use to any one. Unfortunately the foreign press was very ignorant of the real state of things in Russia.⁴⁶

It appears that Stolypin impressed Wallace as an accommodating, reasonable and liberal man. The Premier's professed desire for helpful criticism was a particularly shrewd stroke. Stolypin understood better than his predecessor, Goremykin, how, psychologically, he might gain credibility with the British and sought to flatter and cajole rather than bluster and storm.

When the First Duma was dissolved, Stolypin took the unusual step of responding directly to a telegram from a French journal in order "to calm public opinion and financial circles insufficiently clarified and excited by the attitude of the press."⁴⁷ Stolypin's extraordinary action shows that the Russian

⁴⁶BD/CP, Vol.4, doc.108, "Report of Sir D.M. Wallace of a Conversation with M.Stolypine", 22 July/4 August 1906, p.166.

⁴⁷AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.108, ll.576-577, "Projet d'une lettre à Mr.Nekludow à Paris", 20 July 1906.

government regarded as crucial sympathetic French press coverage of the Duma dissolution. Izvolsky took the opportunity to draw Bompard's attention to what Izvolsky regarded as "the frankly malevolent attitude of the French press" toward the Russian government.⁴⁸ Izvolsky's protest to Bompard reveals his belief that the French government was accountable for the hostile coverage Russia received and that, if it wanted to, it could rectify the situation. In this context, Izvolsky defended Stolypin's direct correspondence with the French press as a necessary action taken to defend Russian interests and to remedy a situation which the Russian government regarded as out of control.

When a year later, Nicholas II dissolved the Second Duma, relations between Russia and Great Britain had improved to such an extent that the Foreign Office may have intervened on behalf of the Russian government to influence the press. The Russian financial agent in London, Rutkovskii, reported to Saint Petersburg: "The Press stopped commenting on dissolution. This unanimous action supposes amicable intervention of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs."⁴⁹ The Russian government must have been pleased. A free hand at home depended partly on a favourable portrayal of the government's actions by the foreign press, given the link between public opinion and foreign policy in Britain and France and Russia's dependence on her Entente partners.

⁴⁸*Ibid.*, II.576-577.

⁴⁹TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.275, l.135, Rutkovskii telegram, 6/19 June 1907.

In March 1908 Rafalovich complained to the French Minister of Finance, Caillaux, about an article in L'Action, a socialist journal, which made malevolent insinuations about Kokovtsov, and he implied that the newspaper had connections with Caillaux. The French Minister denied any link with L'Action but was unable to offer any satisfactory means of redress.⁵⁰

To obtain the desired result, the Russian authorities also resorted occasionally to censorship of the foreign press. In the summer of 1906 a British Embassy official reported to London that the foreign press was censored as strictly as the domestic press:

In spite of the fact that this Embassy was officially informed by the Post Office authorities at the beginning of the year that censorship over the foreign press had been abolished, articles in all the leading [foreign] newspapers on the situation are now carefully blocked out.⁵¹

In another report the British Embassy staff described the Moscow censor as "becoming very active in his supervision of foreign newspapers, and is very free in blacking out paragraphs". Among British newspapers, The Tribune received the most attention from the censor.⁵²

⁵⁰Rafalovich, op.cit., Raffalovitch to Kokovtsov, 5 March 1908, pp.190-191.

⁵¹BD/CP, Vol.4, doc.98, "Report on the Internal Condition of Russia for the fortnight ending July 31, 1906", p.150.

⁵²BD/CP, Vol.4, doc.87, "Report on the Internal Condition of Russia for the fortnight ending July 18, 1906", p.135.

Heavy-handed tactics such as protests and censorship were also accompanied by the arguably more effective strategy of cultivating foreign journalists by means of awarding decorations, official interviews and favours. In February 1906 Lamsdorf telegraphed the Ambassador in Paris to suggest that Manchez, the editor of Le Temps, be decorated with the order of Saint Anne, second class, and that Teinard Maroni, editor of the Journal des Débats, be awarded the Stanislas order, also second class.⁵³ Rafalovich also advised Kokovtsov not to forget "a beautiful decoration" for Bunau-Varilla of Le Matin.⁵⁴ The Ministry of Finance recognised Schelking of Le Temps because of the calming affect he had had on his paper.⁵⁵ The occasion of Nicholas II's 1909 visit to France prompted Rafalovich to recommend that some decorations would be "well placed among the journalists and editors of newspapers."⁵⁶ Similarly, the decoration of Alphonse Lenoir with the order of Saint Anne Second Class must have been for services rendered as the intermediary between the Russian government and the French press.⁵⁷

⁵³AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.108, l.431.

⁵⁴Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 11 January 1907, pp.159-160.

⁵⁵Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 24 April 1907, p.164.

⁵⁶Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 28 June 1909, pp.223-224.

⁵⁷Ibid., Sazonov to Kokovtsov, 19 January 1910, p.237.

Rutkovskii, the Russian financial agent in London, noted the pro-Russian sympathies of the Financier and Bullionist, whose articles had helped calm British financial circles during a time of panic. Rutkovskii granted the paper an interview and was quoted approvingly.⁵⁸ When the paper's editor, R.J.Barrett, visited Russia he came armed with a promise from Rutkovskii that Kokovtsov "would place all possible facilities" in his way for "the successful accomplishment" of his mission to write a book about Russia.⁵⁹ Kokovtsov granted Barrett an interview during his stay in Saint Petersburg. Emboldened by what must have been a successful encounter, Barrett wrote the Finance Minister and suggested that his Ministry subsidize the Financier and Bullionist with the sum of two thousand pounds a year. In return Barrett promised to

put forward impartially the news of this Government. If intimate relations of a confidential character were established it would be my pleasure to affect British public and financial opinion towards this country, to actively counter the erroneous views constantly being published in the United Kingdom, to use my utmost endeavours to improve Russian financial credit and to broaden the market for Russian securities and attract British capital for Russian railway and other approved Russian commercial undertakings; to distribute to the other newspapers any special information for publication in those papers; and to appoint

⁵⁸TsGIA, f.22, d.275, l.72, Rutkovskii to Kokovtsov, 26 July/8 August 1906.

⁵⁹Ibid., ll.148-149, R.J.Barrett to Kokovtsov, 8 June 1907.

a special correspondent in Saint Petersburg of known sympathy with the Government.⁶⁰

The relationship, begun in 1907 between Barrett and Kokovtsov, survived and flourished to the point at which Barrett asked Kokovtsov "to write a few lines" under his "own signature for insertion" in his book on Russia.⁶¹

In his capacity as Minister of Finance, Kokovtsov recognised the value of a positive image abroad and took what action he felt necessary to achieve one. In October 1906 he explained to Izvolsky that he wanted an impartial and conscientious Times correspondent in Russia. Izvolsky shared Kokovtsov's views and instructed Benckendorf to act on this matter "in a completely private fashion."⁶² Poklevskii-Kozell, of the Russian Embassy in London, discovered that The Times was "ready" to cooperate.⁶³ In early December The Times announced that the Russian government had recalled the measures directed against its correspondent, D.D.Braham, and announced, in terms agreed on between V.Chirol, Foreign editor of The Times, and Poklevskii-

⁶⁰ Ibid., ll.180-181, Private and Confidential letter from R.J.Barrett to Kokovtsov, 15 June 1907. Unfortunately Kokovtsov's response is not in the delo.

⁶¹ Ibid., l.176, R.J.Barrett to Kokovtsov, 31 August 1909. Kokovtsov did not oblige Barrett in this matter. See R.J.Barrett, Russia's New Era (London, 1908).

⁶² AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, part 1, l.275, 20 October 1906.

⁶³ Ibid., ll.280, Poklevskii-Kozell to Izvolsky, 15/28 November 1906.

Kozell, that its correspondent in Saint Petersburg had been restored to a normal footing.⁶⁴

The new arrangement with The Times produced immediate results.

In a cordial letter Chirol informed Poklevskii-Kozell that the political question addressed in the lead article on 16 December 1906 was

only one out of many in which friendly agreement between our two countries should have beneficial effects far beyond the mere frontiers of the country immediately concerned.⁶⁵

On Monday 17 December a pro-Russian editorial appeared in The Times which must have warmed Kokovtsov's heart. The Times warmly welcomed the reinstatement of its correspondent in Saint Petersburg as an important step in the improvement of Anglo-Russian relations. Such an improvement reflected

the very widespread wish in both countries to see all past misunderstandings removed, and relations of mutual friendship and confidence established between two nations which inherit the burden of many common responsibilities and of many common duties.⁶⁶

⁶⁴AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, part 1, l.292, M.V.Chirol to Poklevskii-Kozell, 3/16 December 1906. See The Times, 15 December 1906, p.11, for the announcement.

⁶⁵ AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, part 1, l.292.

⁶⁶ The Times, 17 December 1906, p.9.

The editorial maintained that it was Russia's and Britain's duty to promote peace and progress in the Middle East. To that end trust between the two countries was necessary, and The Times hoped that the reestablishment of its correspondent in Saint Petersburg would "promote an intelligent knowledge of Russian affairs in England."⁶⁷ The editorial also praised Stolypin and his handling of Russia's internal affairs, and by implication condemned the Russian opposition.⁶⁸ The editorial concluded with a strong endorsement of Stolypin's policy:

It seems to have been boldly and wisely conceived, and it has unquestionably been followed with an honesty and a courage which must command the admiration of all honourable men.⁶⁹

Such an approving review from the preeminent English newspaper was precisely what the Russian government actively sought as it attempted to consolidate its position at home and abroad in 1906, as the revolutionary turmoil subsided. The 15 and 17 December 1906 issues of The Times also contained news items well-disposed to the Russian government.⁷⁰ Kokovtsov's

⁶⁷ Ibid.,

⁶⁸ Ibid.,

⁶⁹ Ibid.,

⁷⁰ The Times, 15 December 1906, p.8, and 17 December 1906, p.6.

desire to improve relations with the influential Times had been fully satisfied in less than two months.

Russian agents in Paris were also busy cultivating friendly journalists and newspapers to improve Russia's standing in the eyes of the French public. Rafalovich provided the Comte de Saint-Maurice, editor of Foreign Affairs at Gil Blas, with government documents for a popular brochure he was writing to make Russia known to the French people.⁷¹ This type of mass literature, aimed at the broad French public, appealed to Russian officials. Rafalovich often asked Kokovtsov to extend a special welcome to visiting French journalists, as, for example, when the favoured Schelking of Le Temps visited Saint Petersburg in 1907 and when R.G.Lévy of Revue des Deux Mondes and Journal des Débats came to the Russian capital.⁷²

The Russian financial agent in Paris, A.Effront, also actively courted the French press. In one instance Effront received Jules Meulemans, the director of the Revue Diplomatique, during the New Year's holiday of 1907. Effront reported to Kokovtsov that the Revue Diplomatique "has always showed towards Russia a sympathetic impartiality and published during the last two years perfectly judicious articles."⁷³ Clearly, as such, Meulemans was a man

⁷¹Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 8 October 1906, pp.148-149.

⁷²Ibid., pp.158-159 and p.175.

⁷³TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.150-151, A.Effront to Kokovtsov, 27 December/9 January 1907.

to be valued. From 1907 to 1910 his journal published free all the notes, dispatches and biographies of Russian Ministers of Finance and Foreign Affairs that Effront communicated to it.⁷⁴

The Ministry of Finance also helped Vicomte d'Avenel, editor of the Revue des deux Mondes and well-known historian and economist, with an article by providing copies of the Russian budget from 1895 to 1907. The Vicomte had an interview with Stolypin who promised to send him statistics.⁷⁵ In return, d'Avenel promised that his conclusions would be "completely to the advantage of Russia and her government."⁷⁶ D'Avenel joked to Rafalovich that should he not receive the order of Saint Stanislas, he would regard such an omission as the height of ingratitude.⁷⁷

The Finance Minister himself played an active role in trying to influence the French press. In his memoirs Kokovtsov explains how the dissolution of the Second Duma adversely affected Russia's standing on the international markets. The reports of Le Matin were unfavourable to the government. According to Kokovtsov, Heideman, the correspondent, had "fallen

⁷⁴Rafalovich, op.cit., Meulemans to Marquis ?, 12 April 1910, pp.246-247.

⁷⁵TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.318, ll.7-11, Vicomte d'Avenel to Kokovtsov, 27 January 1908.

⁷⁶Ibid., l.7.

⁷⁷Ibid., ll.14-15, letter from d'Avenel, 15 March 1908. Also l.22, letter from Rafalovich, 12 April 1908.

under the influence of the opposition circles of the dissolved Duma" and consequently he "pictured the financial condition of Russia in a very unfavorable light, prophesying a dark future and jumbling beyond all recognition the figures he was given." Kokovtsov granted Heideman an interview and was most pleased by the results.

And in justice to Heideman I must say that he used all this information conscientiously and cleverly, frankly announcing that he had been misinformed by political enemies of the government. This article made a great impression.⁷⁸

The turnaround in Le Matin, a paper "so widely circulated and so listened to in France," thrilled Effront.⁷⁹ He reported that there no longer appeared in Le Matin "columns of pessimistic and tendentious news."⁸⁰ Although the change in Le Matin was welcome, Effront had to report that other papers were not as obliging, especially L'Echo de Paris and Le Temps. Effront ascribed this attitude to the influence of personal enemies of Kokovtsov. Effront worried about the negative impact such reporting would have because

the French public imagines, without a doubt, incorrectly, that the dissolution

⁷⁸ V.N.Kokovtsov, Out of My Past (Stanford, 1935), p.188.

⁷⁹TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.30-32, Effront to Kokovtsov, 12/25 April 1907.

⁸⁰Ibid., l.31.

of the Duma would provoke in Russia a bloody revolution and would lead to a cataclysm on the stock market.⁸¹

Russian government efforts to cultivate friendly journalists did not end when the revolutionary turmoil of 1905-1907 subsided. In 1908 Stolypin received the British journalist W.T.Stead, who then returned to Britain "with good copy and praise for Stolypin's reforms and the Third Duma."⁸² In 1908 Kokovtsov scored a personal triumph with L'Echo de Paris. Through the newspaper representative in Saint Petersburg, Kurcz, Kokovtsov persuaded the editor to stop publishing the telegrams from the Daily Telegraph, which the Russian government had found so offensive.⁸³

As ambassador in Paris, Izvolsky also maintained frequent contact with leading members of the French press. After the famous Potsdam meeting between the Russian and German Emperors, Izvolsky attempted to mollify a French press which was disturbed by the monarchs' meeting. According to Izvolsky, the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs kept its 'sang-froid' about this affair, but "the French press has not missed manifesting on this occasion its

⁸¹TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, l.31, Effront to Kokovtsov, 12/25 April 1907. This delo contains clippings from the French press about Russia, indicating the degree to which the Russian government, especially the Ministries of Finance and Foreign Affairs monitored the foreign press.

⁸² Baylen, loc.cit., p.20.

⁸³Rafalovich, op.cit., letter from Kurcz, pp.179-180.

habitual excitability."⁸⁴ In an attempt to mitigate the damage, Izvolsky tried to influence the "serious" French press. He reported success, except for Le Temps.⁸⁵

On another occasion Izvolsky felt compelled to call in the editor of the Journal des Débats when that journal published an article "lacking extremely of tact [sic]".⁸⁶ Usually the Journal des Débats was friendly to Russia. The Russian Ambassador's action prompted the editor "to express his regrets and to correct the tone of his estimations."⁸⁷ Izvolsky's efforts with the Journal des Débats appear to have borne fruit. In August 1911 Izvolsky reported to Saint Petersburg that he had spoken to the press about the forthcoming Russian treaty with Germany about Persia. He persuaded Le Matin and Journal des Débats to publish favourable articles but he was not as successful with the Le Temps.⁸⁸

When Kokovtsov visited Paris in October 1913 he and Izvolsky used the opportunity to present official Russian views to the French press. In his report on his trip to the Tsar, Kokovtsov described the press as "the force which

⁸⁴LN, Vol.1, letter from Izvolsky, 16 February/1 March 1911, p.39.

⁸⁵Ibid.,p.39.

⁸⁶LN, Vol.1, letter from Izvolsky, 24 May/6 June 1911, p.120.

⁸⁷Ibid.,pp.120-121.

⁸⁸LN, Vol.1, letter from Izvolsky, 4/17 August 1911, p.128-129.

occupies an important place in the social life of all Western Europe."⁸⁹ While in Paris, Kokovtsov received representatives from four newspapers: Le Temps, Le Matin, L'Echo de Paris, and Le Figaro. Izvolsky singled out these papers for special attention because they had rendered him

important services in supporting the Russian point of view in the diverse phases of the Balkan crisis and publishing in their columns a whole series of entirely benevolent articles.⁹⁰

Kokovtsov confessed that, although he was initially loath to grant the interviews, the way in which the papers reproduced "with a perfect exactitude the essence" of his explanations pleasantly surprised him.⁹¹ Kokovtsov reported to the Tsar that during his entire stay in Paris

there was not in the entire French press a single article, with the exception perhaps of the paper 'L'Humanité', of a known socialist, Jaurès, which did not express itself in the most favourable manner about my explanations.⁹²

The fact that Kokovtsov thought the press coverage his trip received significant enough to report to the Emperor, reveals the importance placed on this matter

⁸⁹ LN Vol.2, Report of V.N.Kokovtsov to Nicholas II, 19 November 1913, p.390.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p.390.

⁹¹ Ibid., p.391.

⁹² Ibid., p.392. For Kokovtsov's assessment of the press coverage he received see also; Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.381.

by the very highest levels of the Russian government. Kokovtsov's dismissive reference to L'Humanité is a prime example of high-ranking Russian officials' attitudes to French socialism, and, by extension, to Russian socialism.

Significantly, Kokovtsov remarked in his memoirs that his efforts to conclude a railway loan while in Paris were ably supported by Senator Pechot, editor of Le Radical.⁹³ This episode reveals the extent to which Russia had learned to manipulate the French press to its own advantage, by the use of personal favours and contacts.

In conjunction with the various means of shaping the press coverage Russia received, Russian officials occasionally would write for the French press anonymously or under a pseudonym. Rafalovich frequently used this tactic to present in a seemingly objective manner official Russian views. Between 1906 and 1912, he published material in L'Economiste Français, Le Journal des Débats, L'Opinion, L'Economiste Européen and Le Matin.⁹⁴ A public address he gave to the 'Société d'économie politique' was also reproduced in the Vie Financière.⁹⁵

⁹³ Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.381.

⁹⁴Rafalovich, op.cit., pp.117-118, pp.133-134, pp.174-175, p.194, p.215, pp.236-237, and p.288.

⁹⁵Ibid., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 6 November 1912, p.335.

In addition to the Imperial government's extensive efforts to cultivate the British and French press, prominent experts on Russia and politicians were also singled out in the quest for a sympathetic profile in Britain and France. Such people secured interviews with important officials, including, on occasion, the Tsar himself. Favours, information and even money were provided in a massive effort by the Imperial government to transmit its ideas through unofficial and therefore presumably unbiased sources.

Jules Hansen was an old advocate of the Dual Alliance. His two books, L'Alliance Franco-Russe (1897) and Ambassade à Paris du Baron de Mohrenheim 1884-1898 (1907), promoted the idea of Franco-Russian amity. Hansen also received Russian government money. For several years prior to 1906, he received twelve thousand francs a year from the Ministry of Finance, as "renumeration for services diplomatic and in the French press rendered during a long period."⁹⁶ In 1906 Hansen indicated that he would be willing to accept six thousand francs a year, presumably because he was no longer working actively for the Russian government. In Rafalovich's opinion, it "would be hardness not to leave him this pension and that it was necessary to pay him."⁹⁷ The Russian government, it seems, was not an ungrateful employer.

⁹⁶TsGIA, f.560, op.26, d.619, l.5, letter marked "personnelle secrète" from Rafalovich, 29 May 1906.

⁹⁷Ibid., l.5.

Hansen was also a "Conseiller d'Ambassade Honoraire" of the Russian Embassy in Paris. In this capacity he sent Nicholas II a copy of his new book L'Ambassade à Paris du Baron de Mohrenheim. Ten years earlier he had sent his first book to the Tsar, and General Hesse told him that the Emperor and Empress had received it with "pleasure and interest".⁹⁸ The pro-Russian sentiments Hansen professed in his new book must have convinced Finance officials that he was worth his six thousand franc pension. Hansen informed Nicholas II that his aim had been

especially to show that the author of the Alliance between Russia and France, the Great Emperor Pacifier Alexander III, had as an end to consolidate and maintain the peace.⁹⁹

Hansen's idealized portrait of a peace-loving Russian Emperor coincided neatly with the Russian government's new found belief in the preservation of peace and maintenance of the status quo as a basis for its foreign policy.

While Sir Donald MacKenzie Wallace, a prominent British expert on Russia, was in Russia in July 1906, and again in 1908, Nicholas II granted him audiences.¹⁰⁰ On the second occasion the Tsar had a long talk with Wallace

⁹⁸AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1907g., d.104, l.66, letter from Jules Hansen to Nicholas II, 20 February 1907.

⁹⁹Ibid., l.66.

¹⁰⁰Nicholas II, Dnevnik Imperatora Nikolaia II (Berlin, 1923), p.248.

and sent a letter through him to Edward VII.¹⁰¹ During the 1906 visit Stolypin also received Wallace at the Premier's private home where they conversed for an hour.¹⁰² Such marked attention from the highest levels shows the effort made by the Imperial government to propagate its point of view to educated Englishmen, especially after the dissolution of the First Duma which had been widely perceived as a reprehensible act in Great Britain.

Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu was the director of the Ecole des Sciences Politiques in Paris, a frequent visitor to Russia and the author of L'Empire des Tsars et des Russes and Un Homme d'Etat Russe. Leroy-Beaulieu and his journal, L'Economiste Français, had close connections with the Ministry of Finance, stretching back to 1878. He had permitted, for several years, the Russian financial agent to publish in his journal studies on Russia.¹⁰³ When Leroy-Beaulieu visited Russia in 1907, before the dissolution of the Second Duma, Stolypin met with him, as did several "of the Tsar's principal ministers".¹⁰⁴ Upon his return to France Leroy-Beaulieu gave a public lecture

¹⁰¹TsGAOR, f.601, op.1, d.1388, letter from Edward VII to Nicholas II, 11 December 1908.

¹⁰²BD/CP, Vol.4, doc.108, "Report by Sir D.M.Wallace of a conversation with M.Stolypine", 22 July/4 August 1906, p.166.

¹⁰³Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 10 February 1906, pp.128-127.

¹⁰⁴Anatole Leroy-Beaulieu, "La Crise Russe et L'Alliance Franco-Russe", La Revue Hebdomadaire, VI, 4, (1907) p.446 and p.452.

on his estimation of the situation in Russia. While not uncritical of the Russian regime, he was unconditional in his support for the Dual Alliance and professed sympathy and understanding for the difficult situation that confronted the Imperial government. Leroy-Beaulieu argued that "Russia, this great country composed in majority by peasants, is not ripe for a representative regime."¹⁰⁵ While admitting that he did not condone all Stolypin's actions, Leroy-Beaulieu praised his loyalty, intelligence and energy.¹⁰⁶ After a critical but balanced assessment of internal affairs in Russia, Leroy-Beaulieu argued strongly in favour of maintenance of the Dual Alliance.¹⁰⁷ Such sentiments, while not a complete endorsement of Stolypin's policy, must have been gratifying to the Russian government because of the lecturer's tone of moderation and recognition of specific Russian conditions. A main complaint of Russian officials during this period was the prevailing foreign ignorance of and lack of understanding for the Russian situation, which they saw as unique.

The publication of The Russian Yearbook, edited by H.R.Kennard, shows the close official Russian involvement in the publication of foreign works that could be beneficial to Russia. H.R.Kennard approached the Russian Minister of Trade, S.I.Timashev, in 1909 describing at length his proposed

¹⁰⁵Leroy-Beaulieu, loc.cit., p.443.

¹⁰⁶Leroy-Beaulieu, loc.cit., p.446.

¹⁰⁷Leroy-Beaulieu, loc.cit., p.455.

"Anglo-Russian Biennial", which was to be a comprehensive guide to Russia for the British Empire and the world.¹⁰⁸ Kennard stressed both the political and economic benefits of such a work for Russia.

A great aim will be the breeding of British confidence and the affording of opportunities for mutual trade between the Russian and British Empires, and so, politically, directly aiding in the consolidation of the Anglo-Russian entente.¹⁰⁹

In 1909 Kennard entered into a partnership with R.J.Barrett of The Financier and Bullionist, a journal which had established connections with the Ministry of Finance. Together the two men attracted the support of several prominent Russians, including Kokovtsov himself, for their venture. Kennard and Barrett agreed to set up a Russian advisory committee. Baron Heyking, the Russian Consul-General in London, agreed to act on this committee¹¹⁰ and Mr. Karategin, the editor of the Financial Messenger, agreed to be the President.¹¹¹ A letter from Barrett to Kokovtsov indicated that a previous agreement had been reached that the Finance Minister would contribute

¹⁰⁸TsGIA, f.23, op.8, d.28, l.8, H.R.Kennard's proposal for "The Anglo-Russian Biennial", 24 January/6 February 1909.

¹⁰⁹Ibid., l.10.

¹¹⁰Ibid., ll.59-62, R.J.Barrett to Kokovtsov, 28 May 1909.

¹¹¹Ibid., l.65, Synopsis of the Russo-British Annual, dated May 1909, signed by R.J.Barrett and H.R.Kennard.

financially to the costs of the work.¹¹² Barrett suggested that the Russian government pay twenty thousand rubles and take five thousand copies at fifty percent discount to distribute to all Zemstvos, Societies, and Municipal Institutions, Commercial schools and Universities in Russia.¹¹³ There is no record in the delo about Kokovtsov's decision on this request but it is reasonable to surmise that the government provided some financial support since Barrett's letter made it clear that without a substantial subsidy they would be unwilling and unable to continue with the project. As the Yearbooks did appear, it is plausible that some level of subsidy from the Ministry of Finance was forthcoming.

The Russian Yearbooks of 1912, 1913 and 1914 covered a broad range of topics, including commercial law, natural resources, agriculture, exports and imports, trade reports, customs and finance. In the preface one can discern something of the level of government help Kennard received from the effusive thanks he conveyed to various Russian officials.¹¹⁴ In the 1913 edition Kennard indicated that the 1912 edition had been a success.¹¹⁵ In this preface Kennard once again extended his thanks to the Russian government,

¹¹²Ibid., ll.59-62, Barrett to Kokovtsov, 28 May 1909.

¹¹³Ibid.,

¹¹⁴ H.R.Kennard, The Russian Yearbook for 1912 (London, 1912), p.v.

¹¹⁵ H.R.Kennard, The Russian Yearbook for 1913 (London, 1913), p.v.

mentioning specifically Louis Lagerquist and Davidov of the Ministry of Finance and Baron Heyking, Russian Consul General in London.¹¹⁶ The assistance the Russian government extended to Kennard and Barrett demonstrates its desire to appear as a country open and accessible to foreign capital, especially British money. Russian support of The Yearbook can be seen as one sign of the government's new commitment to friendship with Great Britain, a friendship, as we have seen in chapter four, it hoped to consolidate through expanded trade and commercial ties.

The Russian government did not concentrate solely on journalists and authors in its efforts to improve its reputation in Britain and France. Visiting parliamentarians also, on occasion, received official attention. In February 1910 a French deputation visited Russia. The Minister of Foreign Affairs attended a banquet in their honour and proposed a flattering toast to the visiting French politicians assuring them of their importance and of Russian loyalty to the Dual Alliance, which had become "an essential element in the European political system" and contributed "powerfully to assure world peace."¹¹⁷

A similar reception was accorded a British deputation which visited Russia in January 1912. The group included religious leaders, politicians, journalists and academics, including D.M.Wallace, Bernard Pares and Sir

¹¹⁶Ibid., p.v.

¹¹⁷AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1910g., d.175, ll.10-11, 7/20 February 1910.

Valentine Chiroll.¹¹⁸ Although the British visit was a private one in return for the visit of a Russian delegation to Britain in 1909, the Russian government paid it particular attention as an opportunity to influence British public opinion. Benckendorf provided Sazonov with a list of the visitors indicating their importance and their party affiliation.¹¹⁹ Nicholas II received the deputation as Edward VII had received the Russian delegation.¹²⁰ The Ober-Procurator of the Holy Synod also received the British visitors.¹²¹ At a dinner at the British Embassy Sazonov extended a warm welcome to the British guests on behalf of the Tsar's government. No doubt he was sincere when he said that such exchanges established sympathy and friendship between the British and the Russians which "serve better than diplomatic acts to cement the Entente."¹²² Sazonov knew that sympathy from the Foreign Office alone was not enough to ensure a friendly British policy toward Russia. Thus his welcome reflected a calculated awareness of the rewards to be reaped by winning public sympathy.

¹¹⁸AVPR, f.133, 1912g., op.470, d.170, l.5, Benckendorf to Sazonov, 4/17 January 1912.

¹¹⁹AVPR, f.133, 1912g., op.470, d.170, ll.1-5.

¹²⁰ibid., l.14, 10 January 1912.

¹²¹ibid., l.10, 8 January 1912.

¹²²ibid., l.22.

On occasion a member of the Russian Imperial family would visit France or Great Britain and this often produced a positive impression in these countries. During a 1912 visit to the French Riviera, the Grand Duke Mikhail Mikhailovich attended the inauguration of monuments to Queen Victoria and Edward VII at Nice and Cannes. Poincaré and the British Ambassador to France also attended the ceremony. Izvolsky reported to Saint Petersburg that Poincaré and the British ambassador had found the presence of the Grand Duke to have given the occasion the character of a manifestation of Triple Entente solidarity.¹²³ The simple attendance of a vacationing Grand Duke at an unveiling ceremony furthered the promotion of a friendly image in France, at no real material cost and little effort.

A final method Nicholas II's government used to enhance its standing in the eyes of the British and French publics was sponsorship of public lectures. In February 1914 Edmond Théry, a well known French journalist and recipient of Russian money in 1906¹²⁴, gave a public lecture at a conference held by the 'Musée Social' and presided over by Arthur Rafalovich, the Russian financial agent in Paris. Rafalovich addressed the audience and presented his government's viewpoint. Rafalovich praised Théry as "a decided advocate of the Russian cause", even during difficult times. Most importantly from

¹²³LN, Vol.1, depeche from Izvolsky, 12/25 April 1912, pp.240-241.

¹²⁴Rafalovich, op.cit., p.123

Rafalovich's perspective was the fact that Théry "had never doubted, and the facts had proven him correct."¹²⁵ Rafalovich used the public platform of the conference to discuss Russia's past problems and what he considered to be her successful reforms. He stressed his government's financial prudence and the transformation of the Russian peasant into an individual proprietor, a chord that must have resonated for a French audience. In a brief outline of the history of Russia's economic transformation, he also stressed the importance of French capital for Russian industrial development. Finally, he concluded with a firm denial of the widely-held view that the Franco-Russian Alliance was based on mercenary motives. His conclusion drew "repeated applause".¹²⁶

It is apparent that Russian efforts to acquire an attractive public profile in Britain and France during the years 1906 to 1914 were extensive and consistent. The reasons behind this policy were threefold: they involved financial considerations, Russian pride, and chagrin at what was perceived in Saint Petersburg to be a consistent misrepresentation of Russia as a result of ignorance. Whatever Russian officials might have said in public, the primary concern that prompted this course of action was financial. As we have seen, the Russian regime had become dependent for survival on foreign loans. In his

¹²⁵AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., d.323, ll.5-6, text of Rafalovich's address, 3 February 1914.

¹²⁶Ibid., l.6.

memoirs, Kokovtsov drew the obvious connection between the attitude of the French press and his negotiations for the 1906 loan.

During my conferences with the banks I attached great importance to and was greatly worried by the attitude of the Paris newspaper press toward the loan.¹²⁷

When a Kadet delegation went to Paris in April 1906 to protest the upcoming French loan, the Russian Embassy followed its movements carefully to assess what effect, if any, its actions would have on French public opinion and, consequently, on the success of the loan. Nelidov reported to Lamsdorf that Kadet actions did not pose a serious threat to the Russian government's interests. Clemenceau's welcome to the Kadets was "no longer encouraging" and "neither the press nor public opinion were occupied with them." From this Nelidov concluded that no reason to intervene existed, as this would give rise to "absurd protests from these imposters".¹²⁸

The loan was successfully concluded before the opening of the First Duma and was an important element in the Russian government's strategy of reassertion and recovery. Russian officials worried particularly about the reaction of foreign markets to news of the Duma's dissolution. Consequently, the markets were closely monitored and the government experienced a

¹²⁷Kokovtsov, Out of My Past, p.120.

¹²⁸ AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1906g., d.107, part 1, ll.199-200. Nelidov to Lamsdorf, 6/19 April 1906.

palpable feeling of relief when, despite an initial downturn in Russian securities, the dissolution did not have a long term adverse impact on Russia's financial standing. According to Kokovtsov, "after the first week following the dissolving of the Duma the foreign markets regained much of their confidence", and by mid-August the upturn had become more pronounced.¹²⁹

Even after the successful conclusion of the 1906 loan, Russian anxiety about British and French attitudes to her financial standing did not disappear. In 1907 Stolypin wanted to translate into French Kokovtsov's memorandum explaining the budget in order to acquaint the foreign press with Russia's financial position, which, according to Kokovtsov, showed great improvement.¹³⁰ In May 1907 Nicholas II's government greeted with consternation what it perceived to be a French and British press campaign against Russia, because of the damage it could cause to Russian securities on the Paris stock market. Effront believed the campaign, led by the Daily Telegraph and L'Echo de Paris, hurt Russian financial interests.¹³¹ Effront's report must have impressed Kokovtsov because on 7 June he sent a letter marked secret to Stolypin informing him that he regarded the recent writings of the Daily Telegraph and L'Echo de Paris as "unfavourable" and contributing "to

¹²⁹ Kokovtsov, op.cit., pp.158-159.

¹³⁰ Kokovtsov, Out of My Past, pp.191-192.

¹³¹ TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.56-57, Effront to Kokovtsov, 3/16 May 1907.

the decline of our stocks on foreign markets." The campaign had also influenced the government's credit.¹³² In view of the seriousness of the situation Kokovtsov asked Stolypin, who knew E.J.Dillon, the correspondent of the Daily Telegraph, to use his personal influence to produce "the correct interpretation" of Russian economic and political affairs.¹³³

When the Russian government dissolved the Second Duma it took preventive measures to protect its securities on foreign markets. Rutkovskii predicted a drop in government stocks and suggested that the

Council of Ministers [should] publish by telegraph agency in the name of the Government [the] accusation text of the revolutionary deputies[.] this text would clarify public opinion of the entire civilized world on the fact which obliged the Government to proclaim dissolution.¹³⁴

The French public calmly accepted the dissolution of the Second Duma. According to Effront the attitude of the Duma itself, especially its unwillingness to accept the law on punishment for political crimes, prepared the French for the government's action.¹³⁵ The Imperial Manifesto had been anticipated and,

¹³²TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.271, l.126, Kokovtsov to Stolypin, 7 June 1907, marked "secret".

¹³³ibid.,

¹³⁴TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.275, l.131, telegram from Rutkovskii, 3/16 June 1907.

¹³⁵TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.63-64, Effront to Kokovtsov, 14/27 June 1907.

when the country remained calm the day after the dissolution, "the market, which often reflects exactly the opinion of the masses, raised the annuity more than one point."¹³⁶ Apparently, the Russian government had learned a lot about media relations since the dissolution of the First Duma.

By the time of the elections to the Third Duma in 1907 the Russian government appeared to have won its struggle for British and French confidence.

Public opinion in Western Europe became convinced that the government had gained the upper hand in fighting the revolution and that popular representation would be preserved unattended by unnecessary disturbances. Under the influence of these conditions the markets also changed their attitude to our credits so that it was necessary to purchase only comparatively few securities to raise their value.¹³⁷

Kokovtsov saw a correlation between Russia's image in Britain and France and her financial standing on foreign markets. As he told Poincaré, he also recognized the importance of the Paris press on Russian finances and Franco-Russian relations.¹³⁸

¹³⁶ Ibid.,

¹³⁷ Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.189.

¹³⁸ Rafalovich, op.cit., Kokovtsov to Poincaré, 17/30 October 1912, pp.332-333.

Russian government attempts to project an image of strength in the West were not motivated solely by financial considerations. Russia's prestige and image as a great power belonging to the family of civilized nations was also of concern. The tsarist's régime's claim to legitimacy derived in major part from its rulers' ability to maintain Russia's status as a great power and to be regarded as such by the other Great Powers. When this standing came under attack as a result of Russian defeats at the hands of an Asiatic power and the revolution at home, the régime's very survival, in the sense of maintaining legitimacy and therefore a mandate to govern, depended in part on a restoration of Russian prestige internationally.

During the spring of 1906 the Council of Ministers discussed what to do with the Duma, which had proven to be more unruly and intransigent than anticipated. As we have seen, Izvolsky counselled caution against any hasty action because he was concerned about what Western Europe would think.

According to Kokovtsov, Izvolsky

expressed the fear that, if we did otherwise, the public opinion of Europe would be definitely set against us, thus injuring our foreign standing. He was not worried about the domestic danger of revolution.¹³⁹

¹³⁹ Kokovtsov, op.cit., p.141.

Izvol'sky made a similar point in a July 1906 audience with Nicholas II. He told the Tsar that it was necessary to form a government that could work with the Duma. He referred to

the impression produced by our interior crisis upon foreign cabinets and European public opinion. I explained that beyond the frontiers of Russia there was unanimous condemnation of the proceedings of M.Goremykin's Ministry, and that no one hoped for the reestablishment of normal conditions in Russia until other men came into power and other policies were inaugurated.¹⁴⁰

Further, and most significantly, Izvol'sky believed that until such a change was accomplished, any steps in foreign relations would be obstructed. He stated as well that the present government was destroying the "foundations" of Russia's "financial credit."¹⁴¹

Given his reservations about Goremykin, it is not surprising that the selection of Stolypin as Premier pleased Izvol'sky. French and British papers approved of Stolypin's efforts and "for the first time since the commencement of the revolutionary movement the situation in Russia appeared to inspire confidence all over Europe."¹⁴² Izvol'sky, well aware of the importance of such a swing in opinion, decided to profit from the circumstances and visited Paris.

¹⁴⁰ A.P.Izvol'sky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister; p.191.

¹⁴¹ Ibid., p.191.

¹⁴² Ibid., p.250.

Later, in a 1912 letter to the acting Minister of Foreign Affairs, A.A.Neratov, Izvolsky explicitly stated the connection he believed existed between foreign press coverage of Russian affairs and Russian foreign policy.¹⁴³

In 1914, a small incident occurred over the London opening of a Bernard Shaw play about the Empress Catherine the Great, which illustrates nicely the Russian government's preoccupation with its prestige abroad. The play in question, Great Catherine, which Shaw wrote in barely two weeks,¹⁴⁴ ridiculed the Empress. The play's poster, alone, would probably have sufficed to offend Russian sensibilities, as it displayed prominently an evil Asiatic-looking boyar.¹⁴⁵ The play depicted Potemkin as an uncouth drunkard; "a violent, brutal barbarian, an upstart despot of the most intolerable and dangerous type, ugly, lazy, and disgusting in his personal habits."¹⁴⁶ Shaw portrayed the Empress herself as a vain, capricious, amoral and cruel woman, stressing her German origins in an almost stereotypical fashion. In a particularly grotesque scene, Catherine torments an English captain, by tickling him with her big toe

¹⁴³Rafalovich, op.cit., Izvolsky to Neratov, 31 October/13 November 1912, p.337.

¹⁴⁴Michael Holroyd, Bernard Shaw. Volume II 1898-1918. The Pursuit of Power (London, 1989), p.273.

¹⁴⁵Ibid., illustration 22.

¹⁴⁶Bernard Shaw, "Great Catherine" in Bernard Shaw Complete Plays with Prefaces Vol.IV (New York, 1963), p.569.

after he has insulted her vanity. In a line, which is as unflattering to Catherine as it is typical of the play, Shaw's Catherine says to the Englishman, who of course is suitably unimpressed by Russian pretensions:

You are expected to go mad with love
when an Empress deigns to interest
herself in you. When an Empress allows
you to see her foot you should kiss
it. Captain Edmondson: you are a booby.¹⁴⁷

Great Catherine ran for only thirty performances at the "Vaudeville" because of bad reviews, but before it folded Benckendorf engaged in confidential conversations with the Lord Chamberlain's office.¹⁴⁸ Apparently the Lord Chamberlain's Comptroller recommended to Shaw that Potemkin be made a teetotaler and Catherine a monogamist.¹⁴⁹ The Imperial Embassy in London also suggested to Saint Petersburg that Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace be encouraged to write a letter to The Times indicating the historical falseness of Shaw's play.¹⁵⁰ It appears that the Russian government was so sensitive about how anything to do with Russia was portrayed that it felt it necessary to protest an unsuccessful bawdy satire, drawn from eighteenth-century Russian history.

¹⁴⁷Ibid., p.600.

¹⁴⁸AVPR, f.133, op.470, 1914g., d.191, l.8, secret telegram from Benckendorf, 4/17 February 1914.

¹⁴⁹Holroyd, op.cit., p.274.

¹⁵⁰AVPR, f.133, 1913g., op.470, d.22, l.22, telegram, London to Saint Petersburg, 5/18 November 1913.

The final reason the Russian government went to such extraordinary lengths to manipulate and shape its image abroad was the genuine belief, held by several prominent Ministers, that ignorance and misrepresentation prevailed abroad and, therefore, had to be combatted. Moreover, some Russian officials suspected a Jewish influence on the French and English press and thought such a "conspiracy" harmful to Russian interests. In May 1906 Rafalovich submitted to the Ministry of Finance a report on 'Potentia', an enterprise whose object was to create a Russian international telegraph agency.¹⁵¹ Rafalovich was clearly uneasy about the present system of transmitting news about Russia to the world. The financial agent believed that the Russian government was failing to convey abroad its version of events and was at the mercy of a German and a British telegraphic agency. The need to control the news and present the accurate story about Russia -- accurate from the government's point of view -- was the underlying theme of Rafalovich's report. Apparently, the 'Potentia' venture, despite Rafalovich's high hopes, became a losing proposition from the Russian perspective, costing two banks 25,000 francs.¹⁵²

In the fall of 1906 an unpleasant incident erupted over an article in the Jewish Chronicle concerning the unwillingness of Jewish banking houses to

¹⁵¹TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.298, ll.7-9, 6 May 1906.

¹⁵²Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 12 January 1914, pp.400-401.

lend money to Russia because of her anti-semitic policies. Benckendorf and Rutkovskii suspected that the House of Rothschild was behind the article. Benckendorf dictated to Rutkovskii a hostile letter to be sent to Lord Rothschild.¹⁵³ Benckendorf, through Rutkovskii, asked rudely whether the House of Rothschild had anything to do with the publication of the article in the Jewish Chronicle. Rutkovskii also informed Lord Rothschild that an official denial that the Russian government had conducted any negotiations with the Rothschilds had been issued. From Rothschild's dignified but terse reply it is clear that he had been insulted by the tone of the Benckendorf/Rutkovskii letter and allegations. He wrote:

Whilst expressing my surprise at the very peremptory terms in which you write, I can only suppose that a short residence in this country has not enabled you to appreciate free institutions nor that the Press cannot be dragooned by the representative of a foreign country.¹⁵⁴

In a personal letter to an unknown friend, Benckendorf made clear his hostility to Rothschild and his belief that Russia could not let her prestige and dignity be trampled on by a Jewish banking house.¹⁵⁵ Benckendorf

¹⁵³AVPR, f.133, 1906g., op.470, d.97, part 1, ll.243-245, letter from Benckendorf, 26 October/ 8 November 1906. In this letter Benckendorf acknowledges that he dictated the letter. See I.262 for letter from Rutkovskii to Lord Rothschild.

¹⁵⁴Ibid., I.263, Lord Rothschild to Rutkovskii, 23 October/ 5 November 1906.

¹⁵⁵Ibid., ll.243-245, Benckendorf letter, 26 October/8 November 1906. It is not clear to whom this letter was addressed.

maintained that the Rothschilds had acted in such a manner because they believed themselves to be indispensable. He doubted that they were and pointed out that Russian securities had risen a half point.¹⁵⁶ There is no indication that Benckendorf thought he had acted improperly or hastily. The affair had clearly annoyed him and he apparently would have liked to intervene personally, but was aware that such an act would be impossible for an ambassador. Benckendorf and Rutkovskii's actions did not please Kokovtsov, who as a pragmatic man was aware of Russia's dependence on foreign loans and consequently knew the value of the goodwill of the foreign banking community. Kokovtsov told Izvolsky that Rutkovskii's letter, written "even under the direction of Count Benckendorf", had placed him in a "difficult position".¹⁵⁷

Anti-semitism was not confined to Benckendorf and Rutkovskii in London. In a May 1908 letter to Kokovtsov, Effront denounced the anti-Russian tendencies of two French periodicals. Both the journals, La Revue and Cri de Paris, Effront took pains to point out, were run by "M.Finot who is in reality a Polish Jew named Finkelstein".¹⁵⁸ Effront obviously believed the man's background was sufficient to explain his anti-Russian tendencies. The last issue

¹⁵⁶ibid.,

¹⁵⁷ibid., l.267, secret letter from Kokovtsov to Izvolsky, 10 November 1906.

¹⁵⁸TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.312, ll.192-195, Effront to Kokovtsov, 1/14 May 1908.

of the Cri de Paris particularly offended Effront because the cover illustration was "defamatory in the highest degree, since it attacked the person even of His Majesty the Emperor."¹⁵⁹

In 1909 a belief gained currency among senior Russian statesmen that another English and French press campaign was being waged against Russia. Stolypin remarked to Kokovtsov on the "disgraceful character" of this campaign taking place just prior to the Tsar's visit to Britain and France.¹⁶⁰ The Interior Minister also sent Kokovtsov copies of some of the articles he found "disgraceful", from newspapers such as The Daily News, The Daily Mail, Reynold's Newspaper, and L'Humanité. One article in The Star described tsarist prisons based on evidence given to the Daily News by Prince Kropotkin, the famous Russian anarchist living in exile in Britain. This article concluded: "Let it be understood that he [Nicholas II] will not be welcome. Before English crowds will tolerate the Tsar, the Tsar must learn to tolerate liberty."¹⁶¹ The Daily News called Nicholas the "Hanging Tsar" and L'Humanité referred to the "shameful visit" of the Tsar to France.¹⁶² Stolypin asked Kokovtsov to take

¹⁵⁹Ibid., l.196.

¹⁶⁰TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.271, l.200, letter marked "very secret" from Stolypin to Kokovtsov, 7 June 1909. This delo contains English and French press clippings.

¹⁶¹Ibid., The Star, 3 June 1909, p.2.

¹⁶²Ibid., The Daily News, 26 June 1909, and L'Humanité, 11 June 1909.

what measures he could through his financial agents to halt the "hostile" press campaign against the Russian government. The Russian Prime Minister worried that the campaign had gone so far as to spill onto the "pages of the solid English papers."¹⁶³ Kokovtsov acted almost immediately, instructing Rutkovskii in London to influence the press, using necessary "caution and circumspection", to end the "hostile" campaign against the Russian government.¹⁶⁴ Clearly, the Russian government viewed such negative press coverage as a serious matter, worthy of the most senior Minister's attention.

In addition to malevolence the Russian government felt it had to combat general ignorance about Russia if her government and its policies were to be understood. As Ambassador to Paris, Izvolsky wrote to Sazonov that he was "daily struck by the stunning ignorance which political men manifested here with regards to Russia and her affairs." To counteract this tendency Izvolsky told Sazonov that it was "most desirable" that M.Reinach, a French deputy who was to visit Saint Petersburg for fifteen days, should receive "a favourable impression from his voyage to Russia."¹⁶⁵ In another letter to Sazonov, Izvolsky expressed similar concerns about the general ignorance of even informed Frenchmen. In the light of the recent Potsdam meeting between

¹⁶³Ibid., l.200, "very secret" letter from Stolypin to Kokovtsov, 7 June 1909.

¹⁶⁴TsGIA, f.560, op.22, d.271, l.203, Kokovtsov to Rutkovskii, 12 June 1909.

¹⁶⁵LN, Vol.2, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 26 January/8 February 1911, p.471.

Nicholas II and Wilhelm II, Izvolsky had found it difficult to combat the results of a press campaign organized by the Austrian ambassador, Kiderlen-Waechter, which had strongly influenced the French, especially parliamentary circles. Izvolsky told Sazonov: "You would not believe to what point the people even the most serious here are so little informed about Russia and Russian affairs."¹⁶⁶

The Russian government's extraordinary efforts to manipulate public opinion in France and Great Britain, and thereby redeem Russia in the eyes of her Entente partners, were partially successful. In October 1912 Rafalovich reported to Kokovtsov that "today, everyone, except the socialists, defends Russian credit."¹⁶⁷ Such was patently not the case in 1906. Nevertheless it is impossible to establish a clear correlation between the government's massive propaganda campaign and a positive change in perception in British and French public opinion. It is worth noting that in February 1917 even the British and French governments did not overly mourn Nicholas II's abdication, let alone the more radical elements of public opinion. If the Imperial government did manage to mold its image abroad before the Great War, the effect was not a lasting one.

¹⁶⁶LN, Vol.1, Izvolsky to Sazonov, 2/15 February 1911, p.35.

¹⁶⁷Rafalovich, op.cit., Rafalovich to Kokovtsov, 3 October 1910, p.267.

The Russian government from 1906 to 1914 clearly regarded the question of how Britain and France viewed Russia as a vitally important issue. The methods employed to shape an image pleasing to the Russian government were many and varied and received the sanction and involvement of the most senior Ministers, and even the Tsar. The reasons for this policy were directly linked to matters of finance, prestige and Russia's desire to be fully accepted as an equal member in the family of civilized European nations. The actions taken during these years to manipulate foreign public opinion reveal that Nicholas II's government, despite its reactionary nature, was not unaware of the power of the press and the role public opinion played in the formation of foreign policy. Moreover, this policy is a further confirmation of Russia's dependence on her Entente partners in matters of foreign policy and also indirectly in her conduct of domestic affairs. The Russian government from 1906 on could not act at home as it wished with impunity. The British and French public reaction to Russian events became a matter of serious, high-level consideration. In the final analysis, however, the Russian government sought to solve the problem in a superficial, not substantive way by systematic attempts to shape the image it wished to project rather than fundamentally altering the criticized policies. Such an approach was symptomatic of a sclerotic regime, cognizant of the problem but still incapable of effecting radical change to save itself.

CONCLUSION

Official Russian attitudes toward Britain and France from 1906 to 1914 covered the spectrum from wholehearted admiration to outright distrust and condemnation. Despite this wide range, considerations of realpolitik led to a surprising consensus within Russian governing circles about the necessity for and value of the Triple Entente. However, this broadly-based support of the Entente as an important diplomatic strategy was not paralleled by any widespread desire to emulate within Russia the practices of the western democracies. The country's rulers knew that Russia needed the economic, diplomatic and military benefits of harmonious relations with Britain and France but they emphatically did not want to adopt the liberal and, from some Russians' perspective, unruly customs of western political systems. There were loud and frequent complaints about 'perfidious Albion' and decadent Marianne.

In 1906 the rulers of Russia, weakened by a humiliating military defeat at the hands of Japan and a revolution, recognised their financial dependence on France and their need to improve relations with Britain. Nicholas II's government faced dire domestic circumstances, with an insurrection in the countryside and armed rebellion in the major cities. This volatile situation forced the autocracy to seek breathing space in the international arena. These

difficulties were the important factors influencing Saint Petersburg in the formation of the Entente.)

Throughout these years there existed among Russia's rulers a keen awareness of the very real constraints on Russian power. Most Russian statesmen, diplomats and bureaucrats realised that another disastrous military foray such as the Russo-Japanese war could well cause another, more successful revolution and consequently the end of the 'ancien regime' in Russia. (It was primarily this awareness that drove Russia's cautious foreign policy and shaped her dependent relationships with Britain and France.) Saint Petersburg's inability to pursue Russian interests independently, in particular the opening of the Straits to her warships, proved most frustrating. This lack of autonomy produced strong feelings of resentment toward Britain and France, which coloured the relationship but did not fundamentally alter the structure of the Entente.

In the beginning, official Russia regarded with wariness the new diplomatic alignment between Russia, Great Britain, and France, especially after it appeared to fail its first test during the Bosnian annexation crisis of 1908. As Russia slowly recovered, she began to make greater demands on her two partners, because she felt her prestige could not withstand further diplomatic setbacks. This new assertion of Russian interests was evident in the winter of 1913-1914 during the Liman von Sanders affair. By 1914 both the Emperor and

his Foreign Minister, S.D.Sazonov, were seeking a defensive alliance with Britain to transform the Entente into a more effective diplomatic instrument against the Triple Alliance.) This pronounced change in official Russian attitudes, from lukewarm acceptance to ardent endorsement, reflected the growing frustration felt by Russia's rulers with the perceived inefficiency of the Entente. (This evolution in attitudes also illustrated the increasing rigidification of the European alliance system after the 1911 Agadir crisis.)

The regime's goal in these final years was the maintenance of "a Great Russia" both at home and abroad. The Triple Entente was an integral element in the strategy for retrenchment and survival. The policies of Nicholas II and his government, however, did not perpetuate the glories of the Romanov dynasty: rather, they helped to produce a Russia devastated by world war, revolution and civil war. The Russian governing classes' inability to formulate a more imaginative and successful foreign policy was symptomatic of a decrepit autocratic system of government.

In the summer of 1914 Russia blundered into a major conflict, having spent the better part of a decade trying to avoid just such a catastrophe. Ultimately, the regime's foreign policy of alignment with the other two status quo powers -- in order to maintain its Great Power position and to contain Germany and Austria-Hungary -- was as unsuccessful as its domestic reform policy. Nicholas II had pursued the policy of the Triple Entente in good faith but, as so

often happened, his well-meaning intentions proved disastrous. Tsarist Russia's uneasy partnership with Britain and France ended with the Bolshevik government's complete rejection of both the Imperial system and bourgeois western Europe. As with any Faustian bargain, the Russian elites paid dearly in the end for the compact that they, in the hope of preserving their world, had made with Britain and France. In 1914 Imperial Russia, after a period of hesitation from 1908 to 1912, gambled on the Triple Entente. In 1917 she lost.

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