

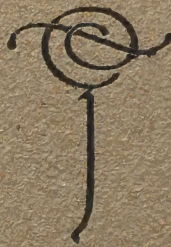


ARCHIWUM
LEGIONÓW
i N. K. N.

Nr 562

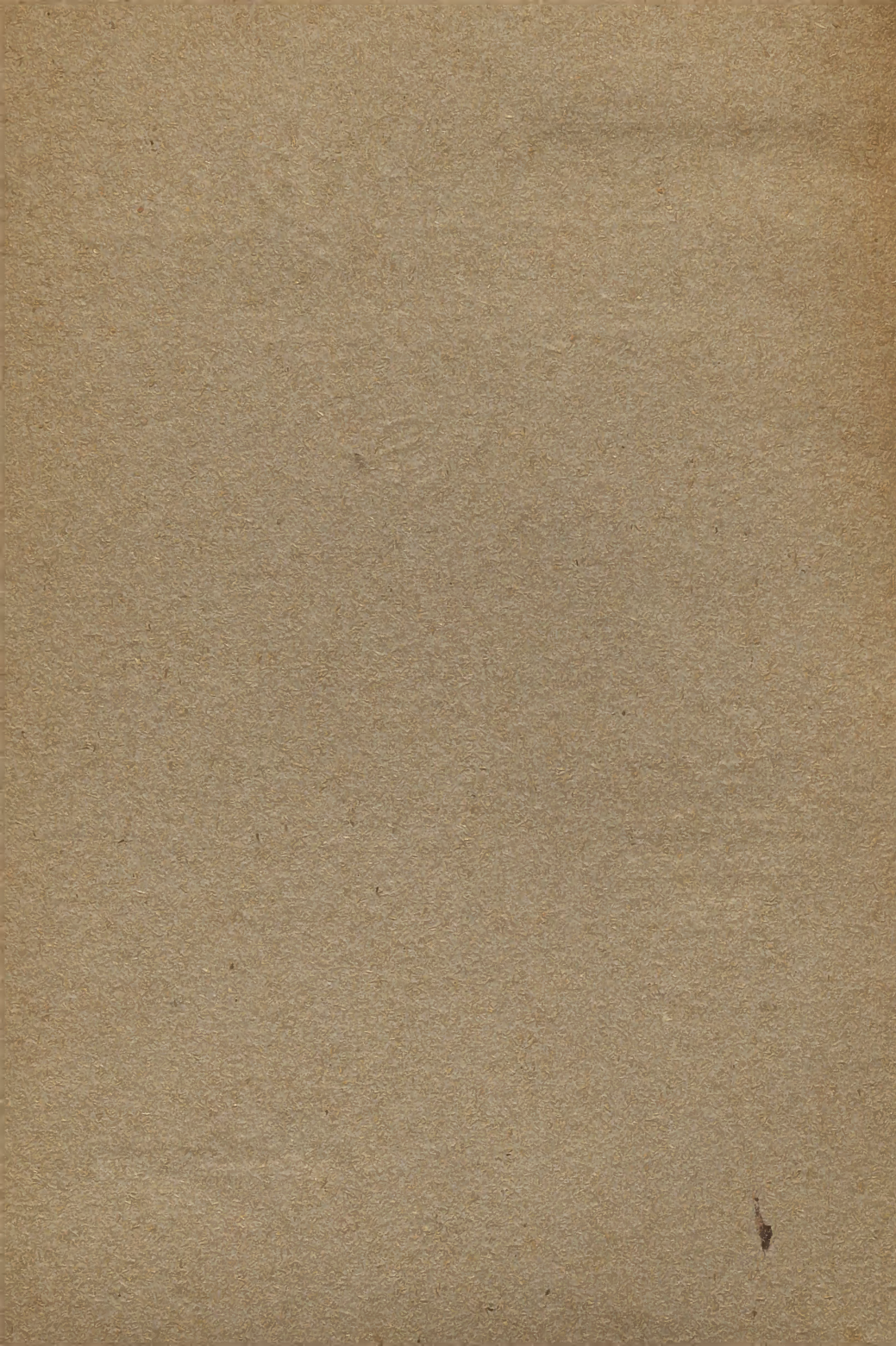
Russia and Poland

during the present war



By
Peregrinus
Distulensis
1915

Imprimerie Paul Delacombaz
1915 Lausanne 1915





Russia and Poland

during the present war



It is well known to every historian that it is impossible to write a scientific history of contemporary events. The full truth about those things which happen to-day will only be known a few generations afterwards, when the archives on both sides will throw open their heaps of secret documents to the impartial student. Till then, our knowledge will be both fragmentary and biased; and till then, the full truth not being accessible, we will be justified in cherishing plausible though somewhat arbitrary suppositions. Thus, for example, till that dreaded moment of the final unveiling of a merciless truth, any humane mind may be at liberty to believe, that among the causes which, by their joint action, brought about that unusually sanguinary and devastating European War of 1913, there was no conscious bad will in any quarter, but only a long series of misunderstandings.

One such misunderstanding certainly exists. It is to be found everrecurrent throughout the British literature on the present war. I mean the erroneous opinion, that this war is fought, on the part of England and her allies, in favour



of the emancipation of oppressed nationalities, one of the foremost among them being Poland.

To read, for example, the Oxford Pamphlets issued since the outbreak of the war, such as « The Eastern Question » by F. F. Urguhart, or « The National Principle and the War » by Ramsay Muir, one might receive the impression that the chief oppressor and enemy of the Polish nation is Germany, Austria being an enemy too, whilst Russia, after having recovered from some shortlived fit of intolerance and cruelty, has now for ever become a most benevolent and entirely reliable protector of all Slav nations, and of the Poles in particular. Therefore, by helping Russia to unite all Polish provinces under her sovereignty, Great Britain, thus it is argued, is striving for the deliverance of the oppressed Polish nation.

Let us now confront this view with the facts. Who does and who does not oppress Poland ?

Nearly four millions of Poles are German subjects. Another four millions are Austrian citizens. Twelve millions of Poles are subjects of the Tsar.

Now, in Austria, wherever the population is Polish, the public schools, supported by public tax-money, are Polish too. The teachers are Poles, the language they are speaking to the children is Polish ; and Polish language and literature, as well as the history and geography of Poland, form in themselves important subjects of teaching and examination. And this holds good not only for the elementary schools both in town and country, but for the High Schools as well ; whilst at Cracow is flourishing the only Polish University still existing in this world, as well as the only Polish Academy of Science. As to the official capital of Galicia, Lwów (*pron.* Lvoov), a Polish city surrounded by a predominantly Ukrainian country region, the University there was also Polish, with the exception of a dozen of professors and lecturers teaching in Ukrainian. I say it *was* so, for Lwów is now conquered by the Russians.

On the contrary, nowhere inside the boundaries of the vast Russian empire there is a single public Polish school. The many thousand of Polish schools which once existed both in Poland proper and throughout its former eastern dependencies have since long been either closed or russified; in the village schools of Russian Poland, the wholly inadequate teaching delivered by imported Russians has caused analphabetism spread to a horrible degree. If there is still in Russian Poland a strong minority of peasants who know to read and write, this is entirely due to clandestine teaching, the gratuitous work of patriotic Polish ladies and gentlemen, who for this beneficent activity are constantly liable to be tracked and imprisoned like criminals. From the public High Schools, every word of Polish is banished, and a grossly sophisticated history is taught there, destined to undermine the political self-consciousness and self-respect of the Polish nation. The once famous Polish university at Wilno (*pron.* Veelno) has since long been abolished, whilst the Polish university at Warsaw has been turned into an exclusively Russian institution, breathing hatred and contempt against every thing Polish, and therefore boycotted by every honest Polish youth. Owing to these sad conditions, till the outbreak of the war several thousands of young men and young ladies from Russian Poland were studying either in Galicia or somewhere in the West of Europe. There is only one exception to this abominable system: the private Polish High Schools, maintained out of privately collected money, which the Government has begun to tolerate since the revolution of 1905. But even these private schools are suffering from most intolerable restrictions, such as a decree compelling them to engage imported Russians of Orthodox creed as teachers not only of Russian grammar and literature, but also of history and geography! Even now during the war, long after the much-vaunted manifesto of Grand-Duke Nicholas, these restrictions have been renewed and strengthened.

Throughout Western Galicia, the judges are Poles; in Eastern Galicia they were till now either Poles or Ukrainians; every body, whether witnesses or accused, speaks his own language in Court. On the other hand, in Russian Poland, though there is no Russian population whatsoever, except imported officials, the language of the tribunals is Russian. The judges, too, are imported Russians of Orthodox religion, strangers to the population both by their tongue and creed; and only a few years ago a Russian Minister of Justice has, before the Duma, disclaimed in the strongest expressions any intention to «contaminate» the tribunals by admitting Poles to the dignity of judges.

Throughout Galicia, the civil servants nominated by the Austrian Crown are Poles and Ukrainians, as are the people of Galicia. Every political career is open to an Austrian citizen of Polish nationality. For thirty years there were habitually, with rare exceptions, two Poles in every Austrian ministry; for half a century, the Imperial Governor of Galicia was always a Pole. The predominant official language of the civil service is Polish, with due consideration of the Ukrainian popular speech in the eastern half of the province, and with a restricted use of German in the internal correspondence of the officials among themselves and with the central authorities. In Russian Poland, the only and exclusive official language of all branches of the Civil Service is Russian.

In Austria, as apart from Hungary, the Electoral Reform of 1907 has applied manhood suffrage to all provinces; therefore, though the Austrian Poles are only one thirteenth of the inhabitants of the Austro-Hungarian empire, yet the Polish deputies in the Austrian Parliament (where Hungary is not represented) are numerous enough to be reckoned with by every Cabinet. In Russia, where the Poles also form one thirteenth of the population of the empire, the application of an approximately equal clue had given to Russian Poland thirty-six seats at the first and second Duma.

But the Government found that such a large number of Poles endangered the Russian character of the Duma ; therefore, before the elections to the third Duma, the number of seats for Poland was rescinded to twelve ! And even out of these twelve seats, two were reserved for « the Orthodox population of Poland », namely, the one for a handful of Ukrainian border peasants of Orthodox creed, the other for the imported Russian officials of Warsaw.

When the war broke out, Galicia was almost on the eve of celebrating a fifty years jubilee of her enjoying Home Rule. During all that time Galicia, besides electing her deputies to the central Parliament, used to elect her own provincial legislative assembly, which in turn elected a provincial executive. The Assembly had a Polish majority and an Ukrainian minority ; the Executive, during the last years, was composed out of four Poles and one Ukrainian. The Executive employed hundreds of officials in its service. Another Home Rule institution was the Provincial School Board. These provincial authorities took care of the whole primary and a large part of the secondary and technical education ; they provided the country with hospitals, with high roads, sometimes also with local railway lines ; they spent considerable sums for the betterment of fields and meadows, lent money to expert manufacturers for establishing new factories, and in general strived to promote both agriculture and industry. It is to be added that all over Galicia both villages and Town Councils enjoyed a fair share of municipal self-government. Thus, for example, the Town Council of Cracow, which is an elective body, not only chooses from its own ranks the Mayor and his two substitutes, but maintains also hospitals, schools, museums, a good theatre ; provides the citizens with water, gas, electricity, and a growing network of electric tramway lines. And, till the Russian invasion in August 1914, the same system applied to all Galician municipalities right down to the eastern frontier. Everywhere elective, self-go-

verning local authorities were at work. Sometimes they did their work exceedingly well, sometimes less well ; but in any case they did it after their own pattern. On the contrary, in Russian Poland, almost the last vestiges of the former autonomy and self-government have been gradually stamped out. Even the rural parish assemblies are entirely overridden by Government nominated secretaries, mostly the vilest of creatures ; and, since 1864, no self-government whatever has been granted to any Polish town or city, not even to Warsaw. The only destiny of Polish cities under Russian rule appears to be to afford booty to greedy and fraudulent officials, imported from afar and being in a hurry to enrich themselves, in order to retire to Russia and spend there the stolen money.

Roman Catholicism being the predominant religion in Austria, whilst the bulk of the Poles is also of Roman Catholic creed, there is no possibility of a religions antagonism between Austria and Poland. Nor can the presence of a small number of Protestant Poles give rise to dissensions, for both Austrian authorities and Polish politicians are unanimous in granting and guaranteeing them full equality of rights. In Russia, matters are widely different. There, the followers of the Orthodox Russian Church form a highly privileged caste ; all others, Roman Catholics as well as Protestants among them, are distrustfully treated as « internal enemies » and kept down by countless disabilities, which blot almost every page of Russian legislation. This differential treating of orthodox and heterodox subjects is so very fundamental a law of « Holy Russia », that it is by far easier to believe that Russia will to-morrow become a Republic, than that this fundamental law can ever change. This one circumstance would be in itself sufficient to regard as untrustworthy any promise of autonomy or Home Rule, given to Poland by representative Russians of any party.

As to the Jews, who form eight per cent of the population in Western Galicia, twelve per cent in Eastern Galicia,

and sixteen per cent in Russian Poland, their case is by no means the same as with the Jews of England. The English Jews are undoubted Englishmen ; most Polish Jews are no Poles at all. They are not a mere religious congregation, but a caste, differing strongly from their Christian neighbours by language, dress, customs, and ideas. Numbers of enlightened Jews are conscious of their having become members of the Polish nation, and honestly share her burdens and struggles. Yet the majority of the ordinary Jewish traders regard their Polish fellow-citizens as but so many vile heathens ; and they would rather starve than sit down to dinner with a Christian. They are inland strangers. Thus, their relations to the Poles cannot be an unmixed idyl. Austria, however, has tackled the problem in a civilised way, and so have the Polish administrators of Galicia. They have treated the Jews as men and as citizens. They have protected their safety and honour. In no wise have they blocked their way to wealth nor to learning. They have opened the best Polish schools to them without any limitation. And the result was that, in Western Galicia at least, a slow but certain process of amalgamation has set in.

Russia, on the other hand, is tackling the same problem in a savage way. She has invented quite a legislation to make any melting of the Jews with the Poles impossible. She has severely forbidden the teaching of the Polish language in Jewish schools, though the parents themselves desired it. She has persistently employed the most perfidious tricks to foster the bitterest hatred between Poles and Jews ; thus she has demoralized and artificially degraded a civilized country. And having succeeded in this, the Government of the progrom-makers sent forth the most hypocritical of its agents, to deprecate in the name of Liberalism any Home Rule for Poland, because the Poles would wrong the Jews.

Furthermore, since Austria possesses Galicia, she has never arbitrarily rescinded the boundaries of that province.

On the contrary, there has been during the last decades a growing recognition of the rights of Polish nationality outside the limits of Galicia, especially in the eastern part of Austrian Silesia, where a certain number of public Polish schools, both primary and secondary, has been founded. Even the Government of Hungary has, since 1910, taken the first steps towards a recognition of the Polish nationality of the mountaneers inhabiting some of the northernmost valleys of the kingdom. Quite to the contrary, Russia has since a century continually been cutting down the area where she deemed the Polish language and nationality worth of any consideration whatever. When Russia took over the White Ruthenian provinces, stretching to the north-east of Poland proper, both towns and villages there were very densely interspersed with Poles ; there were many purely Polish villages, and the White Ruthenes themselves, whose dialect is approaching Polish rather closely, were at that time mostly Catholics, accustomed to speak their prayers in Polish — a custom which, with these simple-minded peasants, came very near to using Polish as their literary language. But Russia corrected ethnography in an unheard way. Many hundreds thousands Catholics were turned into followers of the Orthodox Church by bare force. Dozens of Polish villages were erased from the map by wholesale deportation of their inhabitants to Siberia. To complete the effect of these measures, an elaborate code of disabilities was introduced, forbidding, for example, a Polish landed proprietor to sell his land to any person not of Orthodox creed ; this, of course, enabled the imported Russian officials to act as privileged buyers. Similar methods were applied to all the vast Lithuanian, White Ruthenian and Ukrainian provinces, which once formed the larger eastern half of the ancient Polish State. Everywhere both the Catholic religion and the Polish language were driven back towards the west, not by spiritual weapons, but by the sword of the soldier and the lead-weighted whip of the Cossack.

It also was by persistent Government pressure that the educated Jews of such cities as Wilno, whose grandfathers were partisans of the Polish cause, have been turned in to Russian Jews and professional haters of Poland. Having succeeded in all this, despotic Russia seemed at last satisfied with her achievements. But, alas ! constitutional Russia took a fresh start. As late as 1911 the Duma has voted a law depriving the Kingdom of Poland of its south eastern border, henceforth to be known as the Kholm province and to be governed by exceptional laws, with the avowed aim of stamping out there the Catholic creed and the Polish nationality ! Let us pray that Heaven may beware Poland of another twenty years of Russian constitutionalism, or else the Kingdom of Poland will dwindle down to the Kalisz province.

But, after all, there is no need for prophesies. The present tells a sufficient tale. It suffices to look at the Galician districts now occupied by the Russians. Throughout these unfortunate regions, the official use of the Ukrainian language has been entirely abolished, and that of the Polish much restricted. Government pression is exerted against the peasants to make them join the Orthodox Church. The intended destruction of a great number of « superfluous » Catholic sanctuaries is semi-officially announced. The Jews, who were citizens under Austrian rule, are now Pariahs, singled out by the officers as fit objects for the wanton cruelty of any soldier. Outrages against Jewesses daily occur, this monotonous story being from time to time diversified by an incredibly fiendish outrage against some Polish young lady. Public libraries have been plundered, precions art collections stolen and sent away to Russia. A methodical Government action for spoiling and degrading the Polish educational system has begun. At Lwów, hundreds of Polish officials and teachers have been dismissed and are dining at cheap kitchens for the poor. Their places have been taken by freshly imported believers of the Orthodox Russian

Church. Governor Count Bobrinsky has repeatedly announced his intention to make Galicia a true Russian country ; and indeed the country looks daily more Russian — half a hard labour prison and half a pigstye.

All these things, however, are no surprise. They are but a continuation of what has constantly been going on in Russian Poland, especially since the old Russian despotism, mitigated by indolence, has been replaced by Russian Constitutionalism with its restless greed and its untiring passion for destroying everything which is not Russian. Only five years ago, the so called Warsaw Vienna railway, which belonged to a private Polish society, was compulsorily bought by the Government. This measure was at once followed by the dismissal of several hundreds of Polish employees, who were supplanted by fresh immigrants from Russia ; of course, the standard of honesty and accuracy was much lowered, and railway accidents increased correspondingly. Only three years ago, a girde of former fortification grounds around Warsaw was cut up into market gardens and leased, not to Polish peasants, but to expressly imported Russians ; to these newcomers, who mere encouraged to wear their national costume, was given the monopoly of selling vegetables, fruit and flowers in the streets of Warsaw. Poor Polishwomen who earned a scanty living by selling flovers were imprisoned for encroaching on that monopoly ; whilst the decent public rather renounced to fruit and flowers altogether than to buy them from these spiteful intruders.

Let us add that so far at least as the political administration of Poland is concerned, Russian Constitutionalism has removed almost none of the ugly features of the old despotic system ; it only has doubled their ugliness by adding hypocrisy. During the eight years of peace between 1906 and 1914, crossing the Russian frontier remained a costly, complicated and dangerous affair, not only for a Pole from Cracow, but for a Russian subject from Warsaw as well.

Passeports had to be shown, and every time the owner of a passport wanted to make use of it he had to pay afresh. The passengers luggage was searched, not only for smuggled goods, but also for Polish newspapers and books printed outside Russia, and therefore not having passed the Russian censorship. Finding a Cracow newspaper, for example, might be a sufficient reason to stop a man's journey if he was an Austrian citizen, or to throw him in prison if he was a Russian subject. Yet half the Polish literature was under a similar interdiction; even the works of some of our most famous novelists could not be printed in un mutilated edition within the Russian boundaries. Therefore, almost every honest traveller considered it his duty to smuggle some of these forbidden spiritual treasures; and thus, almost everybody was in danger to have his journey interrupted by police violence. Moreover, if even there was no forbidden print at all in his trunk, the returning traveller never could now whether, during his stay in Galicia, some spy had not denounced him as disloyal to Russia. In this case, there was no escape from prison except by a very costly act of bribery; and, alas! Russian Constitutionalism tended to make this last escape of freedom ever more costly.

Nor was the frontier the only dangerous place to live in. Warsaw itself was every bit as dangerous. There was no freedom of meeting nor of associating, not even at election times; therefore, no normal political life was possible. Moreover, the bad conscience of the Government uttered itself in frequent perquisitions at the homes of the most respectable citizens. These perquisitions, sudden and nightly, were still carried out in the traditional barbarous manner, with an utter disregard for female modesty and for human dignity in general. And the result of the perquisition only too often was, that the unhappy owner of the searched lodging left it in company of the policemen, to swell the ranks of those « political prisoners », who form

quite a perceptible percentage of Russia's population. And the fate of these hosts of political prisoners was and is a horrible one. However cruel the old despotic Russia used to be against men and women condemned for their political opinions, the new constitutional Russia has beaten the record. Under the old despotic system deportation to Siberia generally meant a lonely and dreary but quiet life often with the perspective of becoming in time a well-to-do settler ; but under Constitutionalism it has become usual to send « political criminals » to the most hopelessly miserable spots of most northern Siberia, where death from cold and starvation stares the deported man straight in the face. Under the old system, hard labour prisons for « political prisoners » were bad enough ; but the new system has made things worse. For it became a regular method with hard labour prison directors to aim at making the political prisoners slowly die, in order to get rid of these dangerous people without increasing the official list of executions, thus avoiding to make an unfavourable impression in Paris and London. As to the proceedings employed to obtain the desired result, they entirely depended on the prison director's personal inclination. Flogging to death was only one of the manifold picturesque events which were liable to happen whenever the prison director was a gentleman of vigorous temper. Thus it was until the eve of the war ; and there is no reason to believe that matters have grown better since.

But perhaps somebody might argue that whilst the Russian government kept down severely and even cruelly a discontented minority, it provided satisfactorily for the material welfare of the majority of peaceful citizens. As to Poland at least, such an argument would be erroneous. In fact, it is not easy to imagine a more nonsensical economical policy than that of the Russian authorities in Poland. It suffices to glance at a railway map of Russian Poland to remark that, through the country's frontier towards both

Germany and Austria is but an artificial line, drawn arbitrarily through mostly flat country, yet half the railway lines are stopping short of this frontier, as if it were a high mountain chain. The reason is that the Russian military authorities knew since long that, in case of war, the mobilisation of the Russian army would never be as quick as that of the German or even the Austrian one; therefore, the more railways, the greater the advantage of the enemy. Even apart from this, it suffices to look at the map to state the contrast between the density of railways in German Poland and their scarcity in Russian Poland. Also, whilst German Poland has got excellent roads, and Galicia on the whole tolerably good ones, Russian Poland is simply drowned in mud every spring and autumn. Furthermore, it is a heavy drawback for the Polish manufacturing cities that they have no influence whatever on the Russian customs policy, which in fact, is contrary to the interests of Poland. Every raw material which grows somewhere in any part of the huge Russian empire is protected by high custom duties, no matter whether it grows in Poland or not. Thus, although the spinning mills of Lodz consume very much cotton, and though, of course, not a fibre of cotton grows in Poland, yet a high custom duty blocks the frontier both against American and Egyptian cotton, because there is some cotton growing in Turkestan. Similarly the import of coal from the Upper Silesian mines, just over the frontier, is obstructed in favour of the Donetz mines in far-off South-eastern Russia. Moreover, Russia having put high duties on most foreign goods, in answer to this most foreign countries have shut their frontiers more or less against Russian manufactured ware. This does little harm to Russia proper, which in comparison with her gigantic surface and large population has got but few factories. But it does harm to Poland, which, being far more of a manufacturing country, could be considerably benefited by an extension of its export trade with foreign

countries. True, it has often been alleged that it is a boon for the Polish manufacturing industry to have open access to the Russian markets. But this is at the best only a half-truth, and during the last twenty years it has constantly tended to become less and less true. First, an independent manufacturing industry has grown up in several parts of Russia proper, forcibly favoured by the Government, and more and more competing with her elder Polish sister both on Russian and Polish markets. Secondly, this competition is not a fair one. The Russian goods indeed do not pay any custom duties on their way to Warsaw. But the Polish goods do, in fact, pay rather heavy custom duties on their way to Moscow or Odessa; only these custom duties bear another name. They are called differential railway tariffs. Incredible as it sounds, it is a fact that it costs much more to send, say hundred pounds of cotton cloth through the Government railway from Warsaw to Moscow, than to send the same quantity of the same ware through the same railway from Moscow to Warsaw! It is thus how the Government is protecting the « loyal » and « orthodox » Russian manufacturers against the competition of « heretic » and « disloyal » Polish producers. And this is by no means a queer and crazy exception; it is consistent with the fundamental principles of the Russian nation. For indeed, to any typical Russian mind the great idea of equality of all citizens before the law will for ever remain unintelligible.

Enough has been said to prove that the Russian domination was, and is, a pernicious calamity and a curse for Russian Poland, and that every honest Pole must strive, not to extend this curse over the remaining Polish provinces, but to get rid of it altogether. However, the average British reader will ask: have not all these grievances been redressed by that memorable and magnanimous Act, the Tsar's manifesto?

Well, I will tell the average British reader something he does not know: there has never been such a manifesto.

The Tsar has never issued a word in favour of Poland. It was only his uncle, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolayevitch, who, after having been nominated Commander-in-Chief of the Russian Army, perpetrated the grim joke of issuing a grandiloquent though empty pro Polish manifesto to gratify French and British journalists. Of course, nobody who knows Grand Duke Nicholas takes his manifesto seriously, it is contrary to his well known character. For it was he, that hard-fisted, stubborn old reactionist, who, in January 1905, commanded the soldiers to shoot at the procession of unarmed, loyal working men led by Gapon the priest ; it was he who, in 1905 and 1906, most unscrupulously resorted to every kind of savagery to quench the revolutionary unrest ; it was he who crushed the Polish revolution, it was he who murdered Finland's freedom. It was he who entrusted the task of restoring legal order to hords of drunken Cossaks and to thieves and assassins let loose from the prison. The people of Warsaw, massacred by hundreds in the streets ; the Polish political prisoners, intentionally driven into madness by slow tortures in order that they may betray their comrades ; the Jews of Kiev, Odessa and numerous other towns, against whom such monstrous atrocities were committed as no morbid imagination could ever surpass ; the schoolgirls of Kostroma, stripped on the market place and publicly tortured to death by drunken rogues ; these, and many tens of thousands of others, are Grand Duke Nicholas' victims. For it was he, and not, his weak and timorous nephew, who was the soul of governmental cannibalism all over the Russian empire. He himself, whom his partisans already call Nicholas the Third, certainly has but contempt for these credulous people who believe him capable to grant autonomy to any conquered nation. It is, however, indifferent whether such people are to be found in Poland or not. The Manifesto was an export article destined for Paris and London ; if it has found credit there it has done its duty.

From all these facts a very simple but very firm conclusion is to be drawn for every Pole who sincerely wants to serve the cause of his country : we must fight Russia to the utmost, fight her with teeth and nails, fight her to our last breath, and in this struggle we must gladly welcome any ally available, even if he be Lucifer himself.

It is this certainty, that as long as any part of Poland remains under Russian sovereignty, an implacable war against Russia must be our supreme political maxim, that has inspired those admirable Polish heroes of today, the volunteer Polish Legionaries under Pilsudski and others fighting alongside the Austrian army, and since long acknowledged both by allies and enemies to be much superior in efficiency to any other troop of equal numbers. Most of these Legionaries are Russian subjects, born and bred in Russian Poland, if not in some White Ruthenian or Lithuanian district. They have prepared themselves for their task as methodically as any professional army officer ; and there have been scarcely ever in history regiments composed like theirs, where not only the officers, but half the privates are young men of the highest education, and among them the very choice of the finest talents and characters throughout young Poland, interspersed with some of the prides of the elder generation, Among these latter are men like our grey — haired friend Sieroszewski, the one — time journeyman locksmith, who after twenty years deportation to Eastern Siberia came back as a learned ethnographer and a famous novelist ; like Strug and Danilowki, the poets who have given artistic immortality to the unlucky Polish revolutionary movement of 1905 ; there are learned historians like Professor Tokarz, D^r Sokolnicki, D^r Kukiel ; there is Adwentowicz, Poland's greatest tragical actor. And, besides these prominent men of already established renown, there are many hundreds of youths possessing perhaps equally, if not still more, brilliant scientific and artistical gifts, though they have not yet had time to develop them fully and make them known to the world

at large, In allowing them to risk their lives on the battle-field, our nation consciously risks to squander the most invaluable treasure she owns. Yet, even at such a heart-rending risk, we believe it better to become a free nation than to remain a nation of learned slaves,

Still, there are some wellmeaning though ill-informed people, and some misled countrymen of ourselves amongst them, who object to our fighting Russia in connection with Austria, whose ally is Germany. For, as they argue, in doing so we are Germany's allies too, and this we should avoid at any price, Germany being, as they assert, the most dangerous enemy of Polish nationality.

Now, we must not forget our countrymen under German rule. We know that there are almost four millions of them, though the Prussian government statisticians recognise only a considerably lesser figure. We know that not only there is a compact Polish population in the province of Posen, as Mr. Ramsay Muir kindly acknowledges, but there is also over a million of Poles in the rich coal mining province of Upper Silesia, though Mr. Ramsay Muir does not know it. There is also a large band of Polish districts to the north of the Posen province, right through what is officially called West Prussia down to the Baltic shore west of Danzig ; for the Kashooles, whom the Prussian government statistician count as a small Slav nationality apart, are in reality Poles both by their language and ideas, and faith fully elect Polish deputies both to the German Parliament and Prussian Diet. And the Masurs too, the dwellers of that densely wooded hill and lake region which forms the southern part of East Prussia, though they are counted officially as another distinct nationality, are, in fact, but Poles of Lutheran creed ; thus, General von Hindenburg's most brilliant victories have been won on Polish soil. We know all this, and are by no means indifferent to the fate of our countrymen beyond the German frontier ; and we do remember, that, during the last forty years, the unjust and vexations policy inaugurated

by Bismarck has greatly embittered their lives. But we look with tranquillity into their future. For not only do we know that Bismarck inaugurated that policy because he was Russia's friend, and that now, any friendship for Russia being an exploded idea with German politicians, the anti-Polish inclinations of some of them are but an atavism and bound to disappear shortly ; but we know moreover that Germany is a civilised and enlightened nation, where the democratic forces making for progress and justice are strong and well organised, and certain to win.

Nor can the fact, that a rather important part of our country is belonging to the Austrian empire, furnish an argument against our anti-Russian policy. For, as already told, the Austrian Poles are neither persecuted nor oppressed ; and, though it is widely believed to-day that politics ought to be carried on without any regard of human sentiment, yet we think that our gratitude is due to the venerable Emperor, on whose territory alone the higher forms of Polish intellectual activity have been left undisturbed, and even fostered. However, we do not deny that, once the present Russian Poland will be transformed into an independent kingdom, some measures may be desired to facilitate the intercourse, both commercial and social, of Galicia with the new Polish State. But we trust that the desirable arrangements will be easily arrived at by mutual consent and good will.

Let us now turn back to the starting point. Is this war, on the part of England and her allies, really a war for the emancipation of oppressed nationalities, as Mr. Asquith appears to suggest in his Dublin speech ? If so, what about the nationalities oppressed by Russia ? What about Finland ? What about the Lettes and Lithuanians ? What about the Ukrainians ? And, first of all, what about Poland ?

We know we will be answered, that England is working for the welfare of Poland, because she is striving to unite all Poland under Russian sovereignty would mean for us,

that the last Polish university still active would disappear, that with it would disappear the autonomous Polish political institutions of Galicia, that there would no longer remain any corner of our country where Poles would be free; that Polish books not approved by Russian censors could be printed nowhere; that, having no longer any Polish Piedmont to fear, Russia would close the last Polish school and suspend the last Polish news paper, thus to degrade our noble language to a mere vernacular, which Government-paid Russian scientists would then proclaim to have at all times been but a dialect of the Russian tongue. It would mean the disturbing and poisoning of the lives of twenty millions of Poles by a merciless religious persecution; for no doubt the Russian apostles of tolerance would declare the existence of Roman Catholicism amongst a Slav people an anomaly and a nuisance, to be put down by the sword of authority in favour of the Orthodox Church. It would mean that, there being no longer an autonomous Galicia to evoke dangerous comparisons, Russia would let loose her hosts of thievish officials and brutal Cossacks upon every Polish town and village without the slightest restraint, and there would be no inch of our land left unsoiled by their savagery. In short, unity under Russian rule would mean for us unity in a common prison, and a very dirty and musty prison too.

This is the truth. And it cannot be altered by any promise from wellmeaning Englishmen or Frenchmen, that their Governments will induce Russia to carry out the Home rule announcement. For a victorious Russia will not even dream of being influenced by such advices. If Russia is victorious, it will mean both for her rulers and her people a convincing proof, that the Orthodox Church is really the only true one, that the Tsar (be he Nicholas the Second or the Third) is really God's Viceroy on earth, and his people really the chosen one, destined to conquer all mankind by its Heaven blessed sword. And then Holy Russia, healed

from the scruples which worried her in her days of affliction, will rise in magnificent pride, to do away with those « heretic new doctrines », to which she has made some unwilling concessions in 1905, when an angry Deity had allowed her to be wounded and fell to the ground by the Japanese heathen. She then will throw off Constitution and Tolerance and Decentralisation and all that shoddy import ware from the « foul West ». -Once again she will be the Russia of Ivan the Terrible, from frontier to frontier all united in humble slavery beneath the feet of the only free man throughout the empire, and that one a murderous madman. And for western heretics desirous to meddle with Russia's internal affairs there will then be but a contemptuous smile.

Thus, it is not unity at any price which is to-day Poland's most urgent need, but independence from Russia. Let Warsaw become again the centre of an independent state, and we will have no fear for Cracow nor for Posen.

Let us sum up. We feel our hearts free from any bias against Great Britain. Until the present war we never had any quarrel with her. On the contrary, we always sincerely admired her brilliant achievements in every field of civilization. To many of us, London has been a sort of Northern Rome, where incomparable scientific treasures are accumulated and liberally thrown open to travellers and students from every quarter of the globe. But Russia is our foe. And, in endeavouring not only to maintain Russian sovereignty over part of Poland, but even to extend it over all Poland, England is preparing our destruction. And we know history too well to believe that even England could commit such a crime and remain unpunished. Therefore, let her conscience be awakened !

