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AUSTRIA'S PEACE OFFER

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G. DE MANTEYER

WITH AN INTRODUCTORY LETTER BY

PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON

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WITH THREE LETTERS IN FACSIMILE

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LETTER FROM PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON

M. Georges Clemenceau wished me last year to take up the cudgels in the quarrel which Count Czernin had so inconsiderately provoked. But I was bound by an oath of secrecy; besides, I feared lest France, hard pressed as she was between the two final German offensives of March and May, might recoil from a full and true account—which M. Clemenceau himself had not had—of the offers made to her by Austria in 1917. These offers of a separate Peace, had it been possible for us to accept them, would have narrowed our vast battle front to its essential limits.

Whereupon Germany, whose Generals, from the Marne of Joffre to the Marne of Foch, were blinded by their own arrogance, would herself have wished to end the war, even in spite of her rulers, before the second of those two great assaults which the military genius of France inflicted upon her; or, at any rate, had her suicidal madness continued, she must, alone and unsupported, have come more quickly to her final defeat.

But to-day this tragic conflict, world-wide and protracted, has ended in the victory of our arms: peace is restored to the weary nations of Western Europe. The narrative of Austria's offer of a separate Peace, which I have till now refrained from telling, can now, I think, be told without offence. It is already a page of History, which every one is entitled to read. If Truth be more than an idle word, then it is important, for Truth's sake, that this page be compiled accurately, from the notes which were made from day to day, at the time. Otherwise, much that is merely gossip or conjecture must creep in, to corrupt the substance of the story. Man's memory is an unstable thing. His circumstances change, his opinions vary; but facts once established are everlasting.

And I turn, for a recorder of this page of History, to a historian, M. Manteyer, who was more intimately connected than any other of my friends with my life during the whole of the War.

SIXTE DE BOURBON.

PARIS, *November* 1919.

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INTRODUCTION

(August 29, 1914–November 23, 1916)

At the outbreak of War, Prince Sixte de Bourbon had been settled for some ten years in Paris, in compliance with the will of his father, the Duke of Parma, and of his own accord also. He had recently, on May 26, 1914, received the Degree of Doctor of Laws, maintaining and convincing the Judges of his Thesis that a Bourbon is always a Frenchman. A month later, on June 28, his brother-in-law, the Archduke Charles, who had married his sister, Princess Zita, suddenly became heir-presumptive to the Dual Monarchy. On July 23 the Prince left Paris with his younger brother, Prince Xavier: their idea was to travel in the Caucasus, returning in November to Paris, and with this programme they arrived at Schwarzau, in Lower Austria, where their mother, the Duchess of Parma, lived. And so it was at Schwarzau that the War found them.[1] At once they decided to return to France, and showed a

[1] Austria declared war on Serbia on July 28; to support Austria, Germany declared war successively on Russia (Aug. 1), and on France and Belgium (Aug. 3). Whereupon England replied by declaring war on Germany (Aug. 4). Austria did not declare war on Russia until Aug. 5. France, on Aug. 11, and England, on Aug. 13, replied by declaring war on Austria. Austria did not declare war on Belgium until Aug. 28.

determination which, naturally, was not to be gainsaid. The Crown Prince realised that the dictates of conscience must be obeyed, and appealed for them to the Emperor Francis Joseph, with such force that the Emperor readily, and in spite of the opposition of his Ministers, sanctioned their departure for Switzerland. The two Princes left Schwarzau on August 19, crossed the frontier in a motor next day, and came to Wartegg on Lake Constance, in the Canton of Saint-Gall, where their father had spent a great part of his life, from 1859 until his death. On the 26th they started for Geneva, and from there, on the 28th, went on to Paris, arriving on the morning of the 29th. "Here we are," they said to the old friend who at that sombre and yet luminous moment had the great pleasure of welcoming them, "come to throw in our lot with France." This was after Charleroi.

"The Germans are advancing daily," answered their friend. "If this goes on, Paris must shortly be threatened. We must count upon a great and decisive battle in the near future; for my part, I am quite hopeful."

"It will be less easy than you think," said Prince Sixte. "They are formidably equipped with heavy artillery: they have big guns of 42 cm., with a very long range. Not only have they Zeppelins, but hosts of aeroplanes will come and drop bombs on all our towns. And above all, they have what we have not, and that is unity of command. However, France cannot possibly be destroyed."

"If we stood alone," replied the Prince's friend,

"I realise that we should be in very great danger; but our Alliance with Russia, and England's support, must ultimately give us the victory. Then as for Italy, her proclamation of a friendly neutrality is exactly what we wanted; she could not have done us a greater service. We ought not to wish that the conflict should involve more of the nations of the earth; what we should rather endeavour to bring about is a disintegration of the Enemy Powers. We must once again adopt the policy which, when we were faced by a similar offensive Alliance, brought France in triumph, first to the Peace of Bâle,[1] and from there to

[1] List of the Treaties of Separate Peace, and of the Conferences previous to the Second Coalition.

PARIS, *February* 9, 1795 (21 Pluviôse, Year III). Treaty of Peace with the Grand Duke of Tuscany, ratified by the National Convention, February 13 (25 Pluviôse).

BÂLE, *April* 5, 1795 (16 Germinal, Year III). Treaty of Peace with the King of Prussia, ratified by the Convention, April 14 (25 Germinal).

THE HAGUE, *May* 16, 1795 (27 Floréal, Year III). Treaty of Peace with the Republic of the United Provinces, ratified by the Convention, May 27 (8 Prairial).

BÂLE, *July* 22, 1795 (4 Thermidor, Year III). Treaty of Peace with the King of Spain, ratified by the Convention, August 1 (14 Thermidor).

BÂLE, *August* 28, 1795 (11 Fructidor, Year III). Treaty of Peace with the Landgrave of Hesse-Cassel, ratified by the Convention, September 4 (18 Fructidor).

PARIS, *May* 15, 1796 (26 Floréal, Year IV). Treaty of Peace with the King of Sardinia, ceding Savoy, Nice, and Tende to France.

BERLIN, *August* 5, 1796 (18 Thermidor, Year IV). Treaty with the King of Prussia, guaranteeing the neutrality of Northern Germany.

SAINT ILDEFONSE, *August* 18, 1796 (1 Fructidor, Year IV). Treaty of Offensive and Defensive Alliance with the King of Spain, who supplied the French Republic with fifteen ships and a contingent of troops.

October 10, 1796 (19 Vendémiaire, Year V). Treaty of Peace with the King of the Two Sicilies.

PARIS, *October* 22 *to December* 20, 1796 (1 Brumaire to 30 Frimaire, Year V). Offer of Peace made by England, through Lord Malmesbury, to France, and rejected by the Directory.

TOLENTINO, *February* 19, 1797 (1 Ventôse, Year V). Treaty of

Marengo. Austria was then our principal Enemy, after England. To destroy her more thoroughly and with greater speed, we detached from her piecemeal Prussia, the Rhenish Provinces, Spain, and the Italian States. This time it is Prussia that is our principal Enemy, while England is on our side. We must therefore attempt to deprive Germany of Austria's support, which will enable us to bring the War to an end."

"Of course," said Prince Sixte, "but I am afraid there is no possibility of that so long as Francis Joseph is alive."

It was the intention of the two Princes, as soon as they reached Paris, to offer their services to France. They were warned that there might be difficulties in the way of their joining the French Army. On the day of their arrival, when they were waiting to see whether these difficulties could be obviated, they wrote to the Marquis de Vogüé, President of the Red Cross: "If we may not serve as combatants, we want at least to have our share of the danger, in going ourselves to the assistance of those whose glorious disabilities place them in immediate need of Christian charity."

As their domicile was Chambord, they left Paris on September 2, and went to Blois, where, the

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Peace with the Pope, who renounced his claim to Avignon and the Comtat.

LILLE, *July* 6 *to September* 18, 1797 (18 Messidor to 2nd complementary day, Year V). Conferences with England (Lord Malmesbury) broken off by the Directory.

CAMPO FORMIO, *October* 17, 1797 (26 Vendémiaire, Year VI). Treaty of Peace with Austria ceding Belgium to France.

RASTADT, *December* 9, 1797, *to April* 8, 1799. Congress for the discussion of a Peace Treaty with the Germanic Empire, which, on March 1, 1798, recognised the Left Bank of the Rhine as the Frontier of France.

following day, escorted by the Comte de Traversay, a former Governor of Chambord, they presented themselves at the local recruiting office, with the intention of enlisting.

"Commandant Destenay," says *La Croix*,[1] "received the Princes with all due deference, but told them that he could not accept them as recruits in the French Army, because they were Bourbons. They discussed the matter. The Staff of the District Headquarters at Orléans was consulted. A telegram was sent to the Minister for War. Unfortunately, the rule was explicit, and the Princes had to give way.

Since they could not serve France in her Armies, Prince Sixte sent word on September 15 to the Government at Bordeaux, that he, as a French citizen, was unreservedly at their disposal, should they decide to make use of his services. He and his brother returned to Paris, and, on September 30, began their work with the Red Cross, but this kind of service was not active enough for them. They made an effort to join the British Army as combatants; the answer that reached them from London on October 19 was in the negative. However, they were determined to do something, and so offered their services to invaded Belgium, hoping that they might thus be able to reach the battle front. They sent a pressing request to the Queen of the Belgians, who was their cousin, and whose gracious courage had won the respect and admiration of the whole world. They could not at first serve as soldiers, but she invited them to

[1] "A. B." in *La Croix*, 37th year, No. 10301, Thursday, October 5, 1916, p. 5, col. 3-4.

come provisionally as stretcher-bearers to a combatant unit on the Belgian front. Accompanied by Comte René de Chérisey, they had left le Havre by motor on November 7 in response to the Queen's invitation, and to report themselves to the King, when, at Marquise, near Calais, Prince Sixte met with a very serious accident. A violent blow on the neck rendered him unconscious for forty-eight hours; for several days he hovered between life and death, and it was many months before he recovered completely. Mgr. A. Travers, who had once been his tutor, and was still the most faithful and devoted of his friends, went to him at the Jeanne d'Arc Hospital at Calais, where Doctor Depage, the Queen's personal physician, was in charge. He passed the months of convalescence in Italy, at le Pianore, fretting at his forced inaction. In these depressing circumstances he spent the last days of 1914 and the first months of 1915. Burdened with what seemed to have become an immovable load of anxiety, the most courageous of men could do no more, at that time, than hope and sigh.[1]

When the Prince had regained sufficient strength he took the opportunity of visiting Rome. Italy was still a neutral in the great struggle. Even then it was apparent that all the hypotheses of a future Peace would be built up, by ourselves and our Allies, on an almost exclusive application of the principle of Nationality, an abstract principle which is inclined to ignore many practical

[1] "Gemens spero" were the words written by François Laurentie, one of the closest friends of the Prince, shortly before he was killed in the trenches by Rocquencourt, on January 12, 1915. The father of six children, he was serving in the 27th Territorial Regiment of Infantry.

requirements; a principle which, in the past, had governed the policy of Napoleon III., and, still earlier, had inspired the doctrines of the French Revolution. The latter had not taken into account, at first, the dangers to which it exposed France,[1] and the rash views prevalent under the Second Empire were still paramount in Europe, a religion with little room for heretics. The principle is excellent for the destruction of a great and neighbouring Empire which subjugates several heterogeneous peoples, but it becomes mischievous when it succeeds in grouping together small neighbouring States, isolated and harmless in themselves, in an offensive Alliance.[2]

Unquestionably the France of the Capets grew together quickly enough for her settled and well-assimilated unity to suffer no harm; but that France was conveniently surrounded, on the Continent, by small and far from harmonious States which she gradually swept away as she disclosed to them this principle of Nationality, until to-day, those States are represented by compact bodies,

[1] Napoleon did not hesitate to write, when in Elba: "At any rate, I have deserved the thanks of Europe and of Humanity for teaching Germany to realise her own existence" ("Considérations sur l'État de l'Europe par Napoléon," M. le Baron de Coston, *Biographie des premières années de Napoléon Bonaparte*, tome i. Paris, Marc Aurel, 1840, p. 525).

[2] "The system of nationalities has already given rise, and will continue to give rise to more wars than did differences of religion in the past, or the ambition of rulers to-day. A nation covets more unscrupulously, triumphs more arrogantly, humiliates more insolently than a prince: and so stirs up more bitter and more lasting hatreds. Men are no longer affected by the abstract principles of the State or the Monarchy; they are affected in their blood and in their race. Passions which in old days swayed the few now ravage the masses, and are rendered all the more devastating by the limited intelligence of those in whom they lodge" (Albert Sorel, *Histoire diplomatique de la guerre franco-allemande*, tome ii. Paris, Plon, 1875, pp. 368-69).

continually increasing in importance, whose very proximity, even when they prove friendly, brings home to her the dangers of their power. We are reminded of the rebuke addressed to Fénelon by Grégoire, in his speech to the Convention on the 4th of Floréal in the Year III (April 23, 1795), before making a declaration of the Rights of Man as applicable to France: "I love my family more than myself, I love my Country more than my family, I love the Universe more than my Country."[1] Grégoire went on to say: "Human

[1] *Gazette nationale ou le Moniteur universel*, No. 217, septidi, 7 Floréal, an III, p. 883, col. 3. Grégoire was mistaken in attributing this formula to Fénelon. For this is what the Duke of Burgundy's tutor, in his *Dialogues des morts* (No. 17, Socrates and Alcibiades) makes Socrates say: "Each of us owes infinitely more to the Human Race, which is the great fatherland of us all, than to the particular country in which he may have been born. . . . The farther a war extends, the more disastrous it becomes." The opinions of Fénelon which have most bearing on this subject are expressed in the first supplement to his *Examen de conscience sur les devoirs de la royauté*, compiled for the instruction of Louis of France, Duke of Burgundy: "Christianity constitutes a kind of general Republic. . . . Anything which disturbs its balance . . . cannot be right. . . . Every nation is bound to keep a continual watch, to prevent the growth of its neighbours' power from endangering its own safety. Prevention of excessive power in a neighbour is not a wrongful act: it protects the State itself and other neighbouring States from conquest and subjugation. . . . When any one Power attains to a point at which all its neighbours combined are no longer able to resist it, those neighbours are entitled to form a League for the defence of their common liberty."

What Grégoire actually had in his mind was the *Essay de politique, où l'on traite de la nécessité, de l'origine, des bornes et des différentes formes de la souveraineté selon les principes de l'auteur de Télémaque* (published at The Hague in 1719 by Henri Scheurleer, pp. vi + 208, 12mo). In the second edition of this treatise, *Essay philosophique sur le gouvernement civil, où l'on traite, etc.* (published in London in 1721, pp. viii + 230, 12mo), its anonymous author, André-Michel de Ramsay, states that he himself was for many years inspired by the enlightening doctrines of the famous Archbishop, and uses these words: "It would be a monstrous thing to put oneself before one's whole family, one's family before one's whole country, or one's country before the whole human race, for a rational affection must begin with the universal, and descend by degrees to the particular. On the other hand . . . it is the first

reason has properly condemned both those who speak extravagantly of the 'Universal Republic,' and those treacherous natures of whom it is said that they have professed a love of man—at a distance of two thousand years or two thousand leagues from themselves, so as to be excused from treating their neighbours with justice and humanity. Cosmopolitanism is, neither in theory nor in practice, any more than a physical or moral vagabondage: we are bound to place our chief affection in the political society of which we ourselves are members."

Nowadays, the Universe comes a long way before one's Country, which is the doctrine of the Internationalists, and very well in its way; but we must not overlook the essential condition, recognised by de Ramsay and, most assuredly, by Fénelon, that every French citizen must, for the safety and welfare of France, consider her interests

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duty of every man to protect himself, because we cannot consider everything at once, and we are more immediately responsible for ourselves than for the rest of humanity. . . . We are bound to consider our own preservation more than that of any other individual like ourselves. We owe more to our own family than to any other. We owe more to our country, in whose bosom we have been reared, educated, and protected during our childhood, than to any other group of men whom we have never even seen. Other things being equal, we owe more to the private responsibilities with which nature or Providence has charged us, than to any similar responsibilities with which we have no direct connection. When, however, a distinction has to be drawn between private and public interests, the latter must always take precedence. It is wrong for any one to protect himself by ruining his family, or to enrich his family by destroying his country, or to enhance the glory of his country by a violation of the rights of humanity. On this principle we base what are called the Rights of Man and the Law of Nations."

Such is the rational doctrine which should direct the European policy of France. It is certainly not the same as *Deutschland über alles.* Europe exists apart from and transcends Germany.

before those of any other country on the face of the earth.

By virtue of this dogmatic principle of Nationality in States alien to France, the Union of the Germanic group, which is entirely hostile to us, was likely to emerge from the War consolidated and strengthened ; by virtue of the same principle, the precarious Union of the Dual Monarchy, kept in existence solely by the personality of its Sovereign, was bound to disappear, to the keen satisfaction of all the neighbouring States, and of all the Pontiffs of the dogma of Napoleon III., albeit that Union, loose as it was, and far from hostile to ourselves, might be advantageous to the peoples who formed it : once driven apart, these unfriendly brothers, who depend on each other, none the less, for their livelihood, would quarrel far more openly than before, and would each lose in strength by isolation from the rest.

Be that as it may, a reasoned and obviously reasonable application of this principle of Nationality would lead a diplomat who found himself in Rome at the time the Prince went there, that is to say in March 1915, to ask himself whether it might not be possible to convey some sound advice to Austria. Would she not be wise to relinquish the Italian-speaking portions of her Empire, receiving in exchange Silesia, which she had held and lost in the past ? The difficulty would be for the diplomat to convey this advice. Meanwhile, on March 25, the Prince had an audience of Benedict XV., to whom he had not previously been able to do homage. The Sovereign Pontiff, in a long interview, gave a clear expression

of his desire to do all in his power to prevent the War from spreading through the world; he hoped to be able to reduce its dimensions by equitable concessions, so as to hasten its end. But—and the Prince was soon convinced of this—at Vienna it was still thought that France was going to be defeated. There was nothing left, therefore, but to go on fighting until the victory of the Entente Powers should be demonstrated to the whole world.

The two Princes returned from Italy and joined a group of Field Artillery in the Fifth Division of the Belgian Army on August 8, 1915, as stretcher-bearers. After repeated applications, and to their great satisfaction, they were appointed on August 25, Sub-Lieutenants of Artillery (as attached foreign subjects, and for the duration of the war only) in the 84th Battery of the 5th Artillery Regiment, which formed part of the same Division. On December 10, 1916, they were transferred to the 7th Regiment.[1]

From that time their life was that of all the troops in the field, a silent existence of which little comes to light. Christmas, however, brought

[1] This 7th Artillery Regiment, which later became the 13th, and was disbanded in May 1917, was commanded first by Colonel Baron Greindl, and later by Colonel Moraine. It formed part of the Second British Army under General Plumer, whose Artillery was under General Frank. It worked with the 41st and 47th British Divisions, under Generals Lawford and Gorringe. Its Batteries occupied the Kruisstraat—Dickebusch sector, and took part in the fighting at St. Eloi, and elsewhere on that front.

When the 13th Regiment was disbanded the Princes were attached first to the 2nd Regiment of Heavy Artillery, under Colonel Moraine; when this officer became general in command of the Artillery of the 4th Belgian Division, they went with him to Divisional Headquarters, where they remained for the rest of the War.

a brief respite, in which Prince Sixte found time to write a few pages pointing out the necessity of the Entente's preventing the absorption of Austria by Germany; this had been threatened earlier in 1915, when it was proposed to form a Tariff Union of the two Empires.[1]

While the Princes were away from Paris the ideas which they had heard mentioned when they first arrived there, in August 1914, began to bear fruit. Unknown to them, two of their friends were making plans for such an eventuality as they had then contemplated. On January 29, 1916, they called upon M. William Martin, Minister Plenipotentiary and Director of the Protocol, whose duties kept him permanently in touch with the President of the Republic. They drew his attention to "the eventual possibility of forming relations, should the interests of France require them, with the Court of Austria, by the mediation of Prince Sixte de Bourbon. There are, in the Imperial House, divergent elements which should be recognised and kept distinct. On the one hand, the Prussian influence is represented there by the Archduke Frederick, whom Francis Joseph appointed Commander-in-Chief of his Armies after the assassination of the Crown Prince Francis Ferdinand. But the Archduke Charles has no love for the Hohenzollern, whose paternal influence he feels to be oppressive to his country; his marriage makes him subject to the personal influence of his brother-in-law, Prince Sixte de Bourbon, whose pro-French views are well known,

[1] "Le Vrai Danger autrichien," in *Le Correspondant*, Jan. 10, 1916, pp. 163-72.

and in marked contrast to those of his eldest brother Élie, Frederick's son-in-law. It would therefore be feasible to consider now, and on this basis, the possibilities of eventual action in Austria by Prince Sixte, should the French Government think that of value. A course of action, so thought out and prepared, could then come into play so soon as the present Emperor died and his successor ascended the throne." M. William Martin made a note of these suggestions, which he promised to communicate to the President of the Republic.

On May 17, the Prince wrote from his Battery :

> We have had a most amusing bombardment of 107 German 105 mm. shells, one of which burst five yards away. No one was touched and we were able to get some ripping snapshots of the bursts.

A few days later, on May 21, on the recommendation of M. Aristide Briand, President of the Council, the President of the Republic awarded the French Croix de Guerre to the Queen of the Belgians and the two Princes. Prince Sixte was delighted at winning this distinction, and wrote to Paris that evening :

> We received the Croix de Guerre this afternoon, about 2.30. There was not time for the ceremony, which was quite informal, to be carried out in our battery position, but we were decorated beside an infantry post, close to the line of trenches which the King and the President were going to visit. We waited for them there with our Divisional General. The President saluted the General, then came up to us and pinned on my Cross, first, and then Xavier's, saying to me—but I could hardly catch what he said, as he spoke very low—" Here is " or " I give you the Cross of France." After which he shook

me by the hand, and I replied that I was most deeply moved, and thanked him cordially. Then the King came and shook my hand, followed by the French and Belgian officers in attendance, and they went on to visit the troops. . . . Since we are not permitted to serve France directly, it is particularly gratifying to feel that it is still France whom we are serving when we devote ourselves to the cause of the noble land of Belgium. . . . The first duty of a Bourbon, the greatest glory he can dream of winning, is the service, always and before all things, of France. . . . The Croix de Guerre comes to confirm us in our opinions, for it proves to us that France feels as we do. . . . This, in brief, is the chronicle of a day without parallel in the annals of our House. The weather was perfect ; on our front the guns were booming ; there were aeroplanes in the sky ; a splendid setting for the picture. We are very happy and proud.

M. William Martin, who had been told of the Princes' feelings and their gratitude, informed the President in turn, who was keenly appreciative, and stated that he would be most pleased to see the Princes when they came to Paris on leave. On May 24 he instructed M. William Martin to send them this message. It was thought that they might be able to ask the King for a short leave in which they could come and express to the President in their own words all that they felt. But, from the depths of his "gloomy sort of hut" Prince Sixte hastened to reply, on June 8, that it would be impossible for them to leave the front, even for a few days :

The guns are firing pretty briskly on either side, and this morning the Boches paid me the compliment of a few rounds of shrapnel while I was perched on a tree observing their line. We are quite enchanted. . . . One

never leaves off one's helmet, which reminds me of how Louis XIV., during his war in Flanders, ordered his officers to wear helmets instead of their felt hats with plumes, and set them an example when he visited the trenches in front of, I've forgotten which little town, with a tin pot on his head. In a word, we are quite enchanted.

Two months went by: the Prince's two friends who, on January 24, had taken the initiative in speaking to M. William Martin, were anxious to see him again. On July 26 they had an interview with him to elucidate their respective points of view. One of them then set forth their ideas about the Monarchy to M. Martin as follows:

"It is to our interest that the Monarchy continue, and that the amputations necessary to liberate the peoples who wish to become independent of her be kept down to a minimum. But for some time back the Press has shown a tendency towards the view that the Monarchy must be destroyed. What are the Government's views on this question? If it is the Government that is urging on the French Press to the destruction of the Monarchy, then it would be quite useless to bring the Prince (especially as he refuses to come) to Paris, to discuss with him and discover the bases of an eventual and rational agreement between France and Austria."

M. William Martin answered the question: "I hardly think that the tendencies which are apparent in the Press are inspired by the Government. In any case, I may tell you that the President of the Republic entirely agrees with you. It is necessary to our interests that Austria be kept in existence."

"In that case," was the answer, "we cannot do better than bring the Prince to Paris, so that, when the time comes, we can adopt the line of action which will be open to him."

And so that friend of the Princes felt bound to insist to them that they should come. On August 6, he wrote to them :

On May 29, I sent you the immediate report of certain clear expressions of good-will, to which I think you should have made an immediate response. On June 8, you informed me that it was unfortunately impossible for you to do so, owing to the circumstances in which you were then placed. I regretted this at the time, and still regret it. These adverse circumstances cannot continue indefinitely. The Yser is, I admit, the greatest and most glorious river in the world, now and for all time ; still, your horizon is not bounded by the Yser. You have been given a clear token of good-will, to which you are bound to make some response. No one can detain you if you make a plain statement of this obligation.

Austria goes on towards her doom, to the advantage of Germany, Italy, Russia, Rumania, Serbia, and, I dare say, of the Principality of Liechtenstein. It is true that, for the present, no one can do anything, so long as Austria goes in happy blindness towards this annihilation. But it is in the interest of France that her annihilation should not be complete. Our object, here, should be to keep down to a minimum the curtailments of territory which this long course of folly has rendered inevitable. I admit that the point I have just emphasised is not commonly accepted here ; especially as Italian influences are very active. You can detect them in the *Petit Parisien*, the *Temps* and elsewhere. This is, none the less, the line of action which France ought to adopt, despite the violent campaign which the Press has recently conducted against Austria ; and I think I can give you a positive assurance that, above and beyond all that ignorance of

European affairs and indifference to the future which are always so sadly prevalent here, at least one man, and that is not myself, but a Personage infinitely more important, is still quite convinced of its expediency. His opinions you must of necessity share : it is advisable, therefore, that you come into contact with him now, so that you may act in concert with him, as only you can act, when the moment arrives. Far too many on the other side are working—unconsciously, I hope—throughout Europe in the interests of the King of Prussia ; in Vienna especially, but here also.

We need have no misgivings over our ultimate military triumph. But I am afraid that unless we take every precaution we shall have an Italian or a Russian or a British rather than a French Peace. In this you have a personal rôle which no one can prevent you from filling, or, at any rate, from undertaking to fill.

Under this pressure the Princes obtained leave to come to Paris to thank the President of the Republic for the honour which they had received at his hands. At six o'clock on August 24, " with the grace characteristic of these French Princes," they performed this initial duty.

The President of the Republic complied with their wishes by arranging for them to visit the French Front. On September 14 they were received at General Headquarters by Generals Joffre and de Castelnau ; on the 15th they went on to Verdun, accompanied by Lieutenant Maurice Pernot, Head of the Information Section at General Headquarters, who was in charge of their party ; and there, in the Poivre sector, just as they left their car in the Belleville quarries to speak to General Eon, commanding the Thirty-third Division, it was hit by a shell, and in a moment was blazing like a haystack.

The Commander-in-Chief, in consideration of their decoration on May 21, mentioned them in the Order of the Armies of France, on September 6, in the following words :

> Belgian Army . . . Prince Sixte de Bourbon, sub-lieutenant of artillery in the 5th Belgian Division, has freely offered his services in the cause of justice : attached to a unit in the front line, he has at all times shown his devotion to duty and his absolute contempt for danger.
>
> Prince Xavier de Bourbon, sub-lieutenant of artillery in the 5th Belgian Division, has freely offered his services in the cause of justice : attached to a unit in the front line, he has at all times shown his devotion to duty and his absolute contempt for danger.[1]

While spending a few days in Paris with his brother, Prince Sixte was led to express a wish to visit M. de Freycinet, Minister of State, a man whose privilege it had been to consecrate the whole of his life to the service of France, who had been largely responsible for the reform and recovery of the Army, while his clear and vigorous mind, which had borne the disaster of 1870, was now working for the consummation of a glorious revenge. On October 15, before going to see him, the Prince made a point of stating in detail his views on the present state of the War and on the steps which he himself might be able to take to bring it to an end.

"After so many sacrifices it is important that we achieve a Peace in keeping with the dignity of

[1] *Journal Officiel de la République Française*, No. 13, Sunday, January 14, 1917, p. 477, col. 1. This order, No. 3612D of September 6, was amended by G.Q.G. (Personnel) No. 21172 of December 25, 1916, which substituted the words "Sub-Lieutenant of Artillery in the 5th Division" for the original description "Volunteer Stretcher-Bearer in the Artillery of the 5th Division."

France and the interests of her Allies, and above all else a Peace that shall be marked by stability and permanence. The War to-day threatens to involve all Europe in self-destruction : in bringing this War to an end every care must be taken to obviate the risk of wars renewed by every fresh generation, at intervals of thirty or forty years.

"The Germano-Turkish Coalition is composed of five elements which, for all they are distinct in themselves, are beyond question moved by one common impulse. The Allies who are opposing this Coalition will never be able to effect such a cohesion among themselves, although the present Government has been fortunate enough to secure a predominant partnership for France in the Council of the Allies, which, one can only hope, will develop and continue. What we must be quite clear about in our minds, if we are to secure the Peace we need, is what particular part of the Enemy's strength we ought to weaken or obliterate. It is not our business to annihilate Germany, nor Austria-Hungary, nor even Turkey. Not annihilation, but decapitation. In Germany we are faced by the Prussia of the Hohenzollern, whose hostility to the rest of Europe is irreducible. The other forces we must simply reduce. In Austria-Hungary we have the Austrian Pan-Germanists, and the Hungarian satellites of Prussia. In Turkey we have the Levantine Jews, for they have proved traitors to our cause.

"We are obliged, then, to eradicate these three elements.

"In Germany, how are we to cope with Prussia ? First of all it is understood that France must

recover Alsace and Lorraine so as to obliterate all traces of her defeat in 1870. She may even demand the restoration of those parts of Alsace which she lost by the Treaties of 1815, namely Landau, Sarrelouis (Ney's native province), and the Sarre Basin. It is perhaps a delicate question whether the France of the present day, founded upon the traditions of the Revolution, could actually take in hand, after a century of Prussian tyranny, the Moselle Valley or the Bavarian Palatinate. It may similarly be questioned whether Belgium would be able to enlarge her territory by including the Rhenish Province west of the Rhine and north of the parts claimed by France; but, if the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg is able to survive, as it ought, and if its Sovereign will guarantee the protection of French interests, this little Neutral State, which has suffered by the War, might perhaps be able to extend down the valley of the Moselle more easily and effectively than France herself. French garrisons would be adequate to secure our footing there. But what is essential is to destroy entirely Prussia's Sovereignty, which is, anyhow, of quite recent growth—on the Rhine. The Grand Duchy of Hesse, whose ruler is connected by marriage with the Imperial House of Russia, might extend to the north, down the Rhine Valley. The Kingdom of Hanover, at one time under British influence, might perhaps be revived in one way or another. Anyhow, in the north, the restoration of Holstein to Denmark, which is essential, would cut off the Kiel Canal from its Prussian constructors. We need not consider for the moment the reconstruc-

tion of Poland, which depends on Russia's putting into practice the principles which now prevail. In the south, the Allies might restore to the Kingdom of Saxony those territories of which the Holy Alliance deprived her in 1815 to punish her for her fidelity to France. The hegemony of the Prussian Crown is built upon the rights of all the neighbouring States, of which Prussia has successively robbed them; so that these suggested modifications of the existing state of Germany would be no more than restitutions. The mere reduction of Prussia within her own borders would be enough to destroy that power which is a continual menace to the world.

"To come now to Austria-Hungary, her destruction would seem no more to the advantage of France than her absorption in a Prussianised Germany which, once she secured possession of the Danube, would become mistress of Europe irremediably, until all Europe became German. At present, we are face to face with Germany: in the future, the development of Italy along the shores of the Adriatic must prove to our disadvantage: and so, with either the present or the future in view, France is bound to preserve the Habsburg Monarchy from destruction, provided it can escape from Prussian custody. We should have an interest in depriving the Hohenzollern of the Imperial Crown of Germany; but we should have as great an interest in guarding their own Crown and Empire for the Habsburg Dynasty.

"In this Empire of Austria-Hungary, what has to be overcome is the Hungarian predominance, especially as that is at present bolstered up by

Prussia. It would be as well to carry out, at the expense of this Prussianised Hungary, the union of Transylvania with Rumania, and, similarly, of Bosnia-Herzegovina with Serbia. So much for Tisza's Hungary, but we must not forget that we have friends there also. Hungary once reduced to her proper limits, it might be dangerous to set up an independent Slav Monarchy in Bohemia and Moravia ; for, in spite of their Slavonic character, Russia takes but little interest in these countries, in consequence of which, and of its own weakness, such a kingdom would readily, if unwillingly, fall a victim to the influence of its Prussian neighbour : there are already elements of Pan-German propaganda at work there. In the same way, it would be rash to extend the frontiers of so intensely Germanic a kingdom as Bavaria, by adding the Tyrol to it, or the Salzburg district. The racial diversities of these districts were remarked long ago, under the First Empire. To put it briefly, our business and our own interest is to limit the mutilations of the Monarchy to a minimum rather than to increase them to a maximum. France could rest in peace once 'Germany' was reduced to the state in which she existed prior to 1815, when Prussia had no outlet from her original frontiers to the Rhine. The loss of the Hohenzollern Crown and the retention of the Habsburg would mean a personal union of a diminished Hungary with Bohemia and the hereditary domains of Austria.

"That Italy should desire the Trentino and the Istrian coast, and should base her claim upon the principle of Nationalities, is all very well. That

she should exceed this demand, and take Trieste, the sole port of Austria, Fiume, the sole outlet of Hungary to the sea, and Ragusa, on which the normal development of the Serbo-Croats depends, that is more than enough! We cannot let all the harbours on the Adriatic become Italian. If she contrives to secure Pola and Valona, as she wishes to do—and Valona even without Pola would make her easily mistress of the Adriatic—she must leave the Austrians, Hungarians, and Slavs on the eastern shore those windows through which alone they can breathe freely, and allow them the right of trading upon the seas which is indispensable to their prosperity.

"If the Monarchy is maintained upon this footing, it will be the duty of the present Crown Prince to eliminate that branch of his House which has constructively betrayed his Crown, by working solely in the interests of Prussia.

"I am familiar with my brother-in-law's opinions. He has been exposed to the hostility of the Prussianised factions. His own sympathies were demonstrated by his marriage and by his tour through Istria. German slander has pretended that his wife was anxious for a separation, at a time when, as a matter of fact, she was on her way to join him in the distant garrison town of Colomea, where he was in exile with his regiment. A plot to prevent his succession to the Throne has been avowed by the adepts of Pan-Germanism, and their intentions are a sure indication of what Prussia means ultimately to do with Austria. In this neither France nor Russia must have any share. Since I left Vienna, prudence as well as

necessity has obliged me to refrain from any private correspondence with him, as that must have provoked the anger of those Germanic influences which hem him in. He is to-day held a prisoner by our Enemies, and it is for us to set him at liberty. When we do so, we must leave him with so much power that, when, in the future, he forms relations with Russia on one side and France on the other, his power may mean an appreciable access of strength to ourselves. All these impressions I am ready to confide in a man like M. de Freycinet, but it is essential that nothing should get abroad. Prussia would not hesitate to put the Archduke Charles out of the way, if she had any suspicion of the strength of his feelings, or of the sympathy which those feelings might induce the Allies to show him. The Kaiser is operating in Russia through Reactionaries and Revolutionaries at once: in France, through a few Socialists, the advance-guard of their Party, who little know what they are really doing: in England, through the Irish: in Greece, through the King: in America, through the hyphenated Germans: in Italy, through creatures of whom we, in France, know all too little. Against every one of these activities we have to be on our guard."

It was on October 16 that the Prince met M. de Freycinet. The conversation turning upon the matters just referred to, the host expressed his own views in these words: "Our chief enemy is Prussia, the House of Hohenzollern. The policy of France is to keep in existence an Austrian Empire of adequate strength. Then, as for Italy, she has vast ambitions, Trieste, for in-

stance, and Fiume; but, if she secures the Trentino and the Istrian coast, we might perhaps neutralise Trieste so as to leave Austria, from the economic aspect at least, with an avenue to the sea."

M. de Freycinet expressed surprise on learning that the French Army was barred to the Princes, and gave it as his opinion that the Law of Exclusion, which had been enforced against them, was inoperative in time of war. He asked whether they were acquainted with any members of the Government. When they replied that they were not, he showed what was in his mind by saying: "There is one of our Ministers who has great capacity, great intelligence, great breadth of outlook. Do you really not know M. Aristide Briand? M. Briand is a most open-minded man. You ought to meet M. Briand."

Prince Sixte agreed with this, and, on October 27, went with M. Rossy, Principal Secretary to M. de Freycinet, to call upon M. Briand, and thanked him, as the Head of the Government, for the Croix de Guerre which had been awarded him. The President of the Council assured him that he regarded him and his brother, though in the Belgian Army, as soldiers of France. If there was anything that either of them wanted, he would have great pleasure in meeting their requests. The Prince replied that, for his part, his "greatest happiness would ever be found in opportunities of serving France in any capacity: that was the paramount duty of the Bourbons."

On November 1, M. William Martin asked the Prince to be so good as to come to him on the 9th,

adding that, if it suited the Prince, he would like to present to him M. Jules Cambon.

This meeting took place, and consisted, like the meeting with M. Briand, in an interchange of courtesies only. But, as he left, the old Ambassador (who shortly after, on December 18, was appointed General Secretary of the Foreign Ministry) took one of the Prince's friends aside and said with deliberation: "The Prince is most reserved. I know that you are in his confidence. Please tell him that we have made certain promises. These are what they are, but we might find some compensation in the region of Silesia."

This message led to a further meeting, which was arranged for November 15, but postponed to the 23rd, when it took place at the Quai de Béthune. In the meantime, on November 21, the death of Francis Joseph brought to an end a reign as lamentable as it had been long. The horizon so keenly looked for was now in sight, beneath what seemed a clearing sky. The conversation on November 23 ran as follows.[1]

Conversation between Prince Sixte and M. Jules Cambon after the Death of Francis-Joseph (Paris, November 23, 1916, 2–3.30 p.m.)

M. Cambon. Well, this is a great event! And you (*pointing towards Prince Sixte*) will have more influence

[1] This document and such others as are included here are now printed from the hurried notes of conversations made at the time. A few abridgments have seemed desirable, and here and there the expressions used by some of the men who came in contact with the Prince in London and elsewhere during those critical years, have been condensed. But such condensation has been most sparingly employed, and the substance has in no case been altered or attenuated.

than any one, not now so much as when Peace comes, upon your brother-in-law.

Prince Sixte. We will always be happy to serve France.

M. Cambon then spoke of the attitude of the Press, which had been accommodating in France and moderate in England, but violent in Italy. The Vesnitch interview was moderate, so far as the past was concerned, and augured perfectly for the future. While they were at luncheon M. Cambon enlarged upon the theme of the German Emperor's personal responsibility for the War, into which he was driven by the military party, the Prussian nobility and the industrial magnates (Ballin excepted) who coveted the mines of France. William was a mediocre character, constantly changing, and the least faithful of friends. He varied with circumstances. Story of the Turkish Ambassador at Berlin, when the Bulgars were at Chataldja : " There is no room for you now in Europe ; you must retire across the Bosphorus."

After luncheon, M. Cambon spoke again of the Press. He regretted the mediocrity of the French Press. Herbette was too impassioned and Gauvain still more so ; Tardieu was impossible. The Prince returned to the Vesnitch interview : " We must do the young Emperor justice. He is bound to do certain things which we find distasteful, on account of his difficult relations with Germany ; but I know quite well what his own feelings are. What the *Temps* says is fair enough, though awkwardly put."

M. Cambon agreed, saying that not now, but when Peace came, the personal qualities of the Emperor Charles would have their influence on events. " And it is then that you two, your brother and yourself, can be of the greatest service to us. We have signed our name to promises which we must implement by securing, not only Trieste and the Trentino for Italy, but Transylvania for Rumania and Bosnia-Herzegovina for Serbia. Once this is done, we have no wish to weaken Austria further, or deliver her into the hands of Germany. But how are we

to strengthen her ? There is Silesia, the dowry of Maria Theresa. The Silesian nobility is very Prussian ; but, once we have won a decisive victory, we shall be free to act. For my part, I wish to see but one Imperial Crown, that of Austria, and to reduce Prussia to the limits of its kingdom. There are dynastic rivalries in Saxony and Bavaria which could be used against the Hohenzollern."

The Prince dwelt upon the Austrian Emperor's pride in his dynasty, which could not but be offended by the whole behaviour of Germany. What was necessary, when Peace came, was to treat each of the Germanic countries separately. (Reference to an article by Hanotaux, which set out the position well, but contained serious errors.)

M. Cambon was for opposing the Czechs to the Hungarians ; and, as for Hungary, to weaken her as far as possible, since she was our enemy.

The Prince. Generally speaking, we have to reverse the whole policy of Austria since 1864.

M. Cambon. That is what we should aim at.

Speaking of Italy, " There can be no doubt," he went on, " that in forty-eight hours after Peace is signed, Italy will be in the arms of Germany, but we cannot refuse her Trieste while securing ourselves and providing for the future. Certain people make ideal allocations of territory to all the nations : Constantinople to Russia, for instance ; there we were much too precipitate. That was a great mistake. . . . Then the entire Adriatic for Italy. As for ourselves, we shall be left as cold as charity. Yet there are territories for us too in the Turkish domains."

The Prince. Smyrna, Syria, the Holy Places.

M. Cambon. Exactly ; but, on the other hand, we must not let Germany profit by dissension among the Allies. As it is, she is hard at work, telling the Italians that France is playing them false and telling us that the Russians cannot be relied on.

The Prince. Yes, in the matter of the Dardanelles.

M. Cambon. Exactly. We have only one essential aim in the war, which is the destruction of Prussia by all the means in our power. You ought to see the President of the Republic and M. Briand, and put before them what we have been saying, but without mentioning my name: do not let them know that you have spoken to me. M. Poincaré is of the same way of thinking. It will be a good thing if you speak frankly to him. M. Briand is a capable man, but he does not know Europe.

The Prince. He knows his Chamber well, however.

M. Cambon. His fate is bound up in the Rumanian question, and, since we must hope that it will be satisfactorily settled, he will remain in power for some time. As for myself, I am not in the Government, I cannot do everything, I am not alone. The political atmosphere here in Paris is appalling; women who entertain politicians at tea, who dine and lunch with them and meddle in all these questions. In any case the men who have to arrange the terms of Peace will have none too happy a time. They will get more kicks than ha'pence. I trust that God will grant us the victory, not only that we may be victorious, but also for the internal state of the country. Without a definite victory we shall be involved in all manner of troubles and difficulties.

M. Cambon spoke at some length of the difficult position of Belgium; her Army, he thought, was good, but was being continually and quite unjustifiably blamed for not fighting. He was much concerned for the King, who would be most awkwardly placed after the War. The Prince explained how he had wished to serve in the French Army, spoke of his departure from Austria, and what M. de Freycinet had said.

M. Cambon. There they showed undue caution. They should have taken you. Still there may perhaps be a way out of the difficulty, for you could be attached to the French Army while still nominally a Belgian officer.

The Prince. I am delighted to hear it, but any such

proposal must originate with the French Government. We cannot ourselves suggest it to King Albert; we are already deeply indebted to him for the kindness he showed in taking us into his Army.

M. Cambon regretted that he must now go. In a few words he summed up the great value of the Princes' services when Peace came. The Prince repeated that he was, of course, personally devoted to his sister and his brother-in-law, but that it was solely as a French citizen that he intended to act. He asked no more than to be allowed to fight for France, but if there was any further service he could do her he would be most happy. M. Cambon remarked how interesting it would be for him to meet MM. Poincaré and Briand again. The Prince said that, on his return, he would ask to be allowed to see M. Cambon again and converse with him; his wide knowledge of affairs and of the state of Europe, during his past career, gave the Prince a confidence in him which he could not feel in all politicians. M. Cambon thanked him warmly.

The succession of Charles as Emperor had entirely altered the circumstances. M. Cambon's statement of his views referred to the future only, and he showed no signs of any desire for immediate action. So, on November 27 and 28, the Princes paid a visit to M. Schneider's factories at Le Creusot and Chalon. On the 29th they visited the factories at Saint Chamond.

On December 4 they were received at the Camp of Châlons by General Gouraud, and went with M. Iskavine, Russian Minister at the Court of Montenegro, to visit the Russian contingent under General Marouchewsky. On December 7 both Princes left Paris, to rejoin their battery in the 13th Regiment of Belgian Artillery.

All that has been said and written above, from

August 29, 1914, to November 23, 1916, sprang from the ideas of a group of men outside the immediate range of "practical politics." Founded upon the lessons of history, their policy viewed with alarm any extension of the theatres of war, looking rather to their limitation. The object principally in its view, as the primal interest of France, was the separation of the Central Powers from one another. The chief adversary could more easily be driven back by force of arms and finally defeated when diplomacy had cut off his Allies. So long as Francis Joseph lived, this policy could not, of course, take effect. But the point was to lay down the foundations while waiting for the moment to arrive.

The Prince himself thought first and foremost of his duty as a soldier: at the same time, he approved of these views. As soon as he was at liberty, he would unhesitatingly set out upon a course which might perhaps bring France sooner into safety.

Acquainted with this policy, the French Government grasped its importance, but did not yet wish to take action, and so, with open eyes, awaited the development of events.

But the Government of Austria-Hungary, knowing nothing of this, still followed blindly in the wake of Berlin.

CHAPTER I

THE EMPEROR'S OFFER

(November 22, 1916–February 20, 1917.)

IMMEDIATELY upon his accession the young Emperor addressed two rescripts to Herr von Koerber and Count Tisza, the Presidents of the Austrian and Hungarian Councils of the Monarchy, instructing them to publish a Proclamation to his peoples, in which, over and above the conventional phrases which such an occasion demands, there is evidence of a humane and pathetic anxiety to bring to an end this war of extermination, for which he himself was in no way responsible, as it was the last of the "blessings" [1] conferred upon his subjects during the previous reign.

TO MY PEOPLES

. . . . . .

I implore the Grace of God and His Blessing upon myself, my House, and my beloved Peoples, and I do solemnly swear before Almighty God that I will faithfully govern the inheritance which my Ancestors have bequeathed to me. I desire to do all in my power to end,

[1] Extract from a telegram sent by William II. to Charles: "The reign of the late Emperor, which, by the Grace of God, was prolonged to the unexampled period of sixty-eight years, will take its place in the History of the Monarchy as an Age of Blessings . . ." (*Le Temps*, No. 20230, Saturday, Nov. 25, 1916, p. 4. col. 3).

as soon as may be, the horrors and the sacrifices of the War, and to restore to my Peoples the vanished blessings of Peace, so soon as the honour of my Arms, the vital interests of my States and their faithful Allies, and the malignity of my Enemies will allow.

I am resolved to be to my Peoples a just and loving Prince; to maintain their constitutional Liberties and their other rights, and carefully to guard the principle of a legal equality for all. . . . Inspired by the deepest love for my Peoples, I am resolved to consecrate my life and to devote all my efforts to the performance of this exalted task.[1]

Three weeks later his Ally the Emperor William decided to assume an air of participation in these pacific ideals, and went so far as to assert that he had anticipated the Austrian Emperor's declaration at the end of October. But these offers by Germany were wholly inadmissible, both as being in themselves hypocritical and presumptuous, and as emanating from an invading force which refused to restore its stolen territories and to return to its own borders. These offers are well known,[2] and there is no occasion to discuss them

[1] *Le Temps*, No. 20230, Saturday, Nov. 25, 1916, p. 2, col. 3.

[2] December 12, 1916: Note by the German Chancellor to the Governments of Neutral States, in which Germany and her Allies make an apparent offer of Peace. Dec. 18: Note by President Wilson to the Belligerents, asking them to define their war-aims. Dec. 23: The Swiss Federal Council, in agreement with the United States of America, expresses a desire for an early Peace. Dec. 26: Note by Sweden, supporting those of Switzerland and the United States. Dec. 26: Note by the German Empire and her Allies in reply to the United States, calling for an immediate Conference in a Neutral Country between representatives of the Belligerents. Dec. 29: Note by the Scandinavian States to the Entente with regard to Peace. Dec. 30: Joint reply by the Entente Powers to the Note of Germany and her Allies, stating that Peace is impracticable until reparation for violated rights and liberties is assured. Jan. 10, 1917: Joint Note by the Entente Powers in reply to President Wilson, indicating their war-aims and the necessary conditions of Peace.

further here. What has never been well known, and needs therefore to be set forth and examined, is the effort made by the Emperor Charles to quell the storm in which his Empire was doomed to shipwreck. But History is there to remind us that, ever since the human race began, it has been fatally easy to bring men to a state of war, almost impossible to restore peace among them.

By the study of the following important documents the reader will be in a position to trace the course of the Austrian proposals from the first clear indication to Paris of their existence, on December 5, 1916, to their final suspension on October 12, 1917, when M. Alexandre Ribot, Minister for Foreign Affairs, refused to negotiate further.[1] I begin with the note which Prince Sixte de Bourbon drafted to read to M. Raymond Poincaré on March 5, 1917. This note summarises the opening stages of the course of mediation which the Prince, with the consent of the French Government, had undertaken.

MEMORANDUM BY PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON-PARMA, READ BY HIM TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC AT PARIS, MARCH 5, 1917.

On December 5 and 14 my mother wrote to say that she was particularly anxious to see me. She also sent [2]

[1] The majority of these documents have already appeared in London, in the *Daily Telegraph*, Nos. 20191-4, Jan. 2, 3, 5, 6, 1920. Their significance was pointed out in the last of these issues (p. 10, coll. 6-7) under the heading "A Tragedy of Diplomacy." In Paris they have appeared in the weekly journal, *L'Opinion*, on Saturdays, Jan. 3, 10, and 17, 1920, as "Une paix séparée avec l'Autriche était-elle possible ? La mission secrète du Prince Sixte de Bourbon (6 décembre 1916–23 mai 1917). Une page d'histoire inconnue, par Jean de Pierrefeu." See, also, *L'Illustration*, No. 4009, Jan. 3, 1920, pp. 5-11.

[2] Through diplomatic channels, *via* Luxembourg.

a letter to the Queen of the Belgians, which arrived on December 20, begging her and the King to insist that my brother and I should go to our mother. And, before this letter reached her, the Queen had received a subsequent telegram, sent through the Consulate of Luxembourg at Berne, in which the Grand Duchess Adelaide of Luxembourg asked her, on my mother's behalf, whether she had received the letter. While all this was happening, we left our Regiment to spend Christmas Eve (December 24, 1916) with the King and Queen. We had the idea of this journey in our minds, and discussed its difficulties with Their Majesties. In the end they gave their consent and we decided to go.

We left the front on January 23 and reached Paris the same evening. We there procured the necessary papers and started again on the evening of the 28th; about noon next day we arrived at the prearranged meeting-place in Switzerland. My mother had been there for two days, travelling strictly incognita with my sister Maria-Antonia. She explained to us how much the Emperor wished to see us and to discuss with us directly the possibilities of peace. All arrangements had been made for conveying us with the strictest secrecy to Vienna. The Colonel in charge of the police on the frontier had received instructions from the Emperor to take us by motor to his presence. Absolute secrecy had been observed; but, if we felt that the scheme was impracticable, the Emperor was ready to send a confidential envoy to us in Switzerland, who would communicate his views to us. We considered that the latter course alone was possible, and that only after we had sent word to Paris. Meanwhile, to avert suspicion, we should proceed on the journey into Italy, which we had planned three months earlier, to look after our estates there. The Italian Government knew of this intention.

My mother insisted, in the Emperor's name, that time was of vital importance. She handed us a letter from the Empress, endorsed with a few lines by the

Emperor, in which she implored us both most urgently to assist her in realising the ideal of peace which the Emperor had formulated on his accession. In answer to this, I told my mother of the conditions which I, personally, thought fundamental and pre-requisite, on the Entente side, to peace: namely, the restoration to France of the Alsace-Lorraine of 1814, without any colonial or other compensation; the restoration of Belgium, with the Congo; the similar restoration of Serbia, and her eventual extension so as to include Albania; and, lastly, the cession of Constantinople to the Russians. If Austria could manage to conclude a secret armistice with Russia upon these points, that would be a good base for the Peace we all desired.

We left Switzerland on February 1, reached le Pianore next day, and returned to Paris on the morning of Saturday February 10. On the evening of the 12th, at the express wish, as we were told, of the French Government, we both set out again for Switzerland, where at 1.30 on the 13th the Emperor's Envoy was presented to us, bringing with him a letter in which the Empress accredited him to us as the Emperor's representative.

He told us that the Emperor was keenly interested by the first impressions which he had gathered from my mother. He was most anxious for Peace and was prepared to consider it upon the following terms:

1. A secret armistice with Russia in which the question of Constantinople would not be made an issue.
2. Alsace-Lorraine and
3. Belgium to be restored.
4. The formation of a Southern-Slav Monarchy, embracing Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro. He urgently begged that I would spare no pains to secure Peace upon this footing.

I answered that the situation was enormously complicated by our growing difficulties with America; while I felt that there was no hope of succeeding through diplomatic channels, so long as both Italy and Germany

were directly interested in the failure of such a scheme. Austria need show no consideration for Germany, whose interests were quite different from her own, and who might very well abandon her at any moment. It would be preferable to protect the Monarchy by direct action, and only to inform Germany after the event. This direct action would be stimulated by an Imperial Rescript in which Austria, while keeping up an appearance of friendship and alliance with Germany, would offer Peace to her enemies on the terms cited above, except with regard to Serbia, which must be restored *in statu quo* and given a reasonable avenue to the sea by the addition of Albania.

Should the Emperor feel unable to act thus openly, and prefer to attempt to make peace by diplomatic methods, I requested the Envoy to let me have, at the earliest possible moment, the proposals from which the preliminary steps of diplomacy might start. I emphatically insisted that these points should be clearly defined in the document.

The Envoy made a careful note of my requirements, and returned to Vienna. No one else but the Emperor, the Empress and my mother knew of our interview. Count Czernin, the Foreign Minister of the Monarchy, was told no more than that the Emperor had found a means of negotiating with the Entente. On February 21 the Envoy rejoined me. In the interval the Emperor had, by a strongly worded rescript of the 12th, superseded the Archduke Frederick ; while on the 13th the Emperor William had come to Vienna ; but the Austrian Emperor, in spite of the toasts and other compliments exchanged between them, had declined to sever relations with America, so that the German Emperor went home again without much satisfaction.

The Envoy brought me : (1) a document written in French and signed by himself, but founded on a minute in German, either written or dictated by Count Czernin ; (2) a secret and personal message written in German by

the Emperor ; (3) a letter from my sister Maria-Antonia, written at her dictation to accredit the Envoy ; (4) two letters from the Empress ; and (5) a long letter from my mother containing many personal details which she had elicited from the Emperor. The Empress, in her two letters, implored me, not only from herself and the Emperor, but also from Count Czernin, to come to Vienna secretly and discuss matters with them there. In Count Czernin's words, " Half an hour's conversation is worth a dozen journeys." In addition to this, I was told again, from the Emperor, how anxious he was to make Peace, not only as an urgent and immediate obligation laid upon him by military conditions, but as his solemn duty, before God, towards the peoples of his Empire and all the belligerents. He repeated his expressions of sympathy for his " dear France," his admiration for the valour of her troops and for the spirit of self-sacrifice and devotion which seemed to prevail throughout the country. I was reminded that I must act with absolute secrecy, into which no one except Count Czernin had been admitted by Their Majesties.

It is clear from this memorandum of March 5, 1917, that the Emperor was solely responsible for the Austrian offer of December 5, 1916, and also for selecting Prince Sixte as mediator, without Baron Burian, his Foreign Minister's having even been informed. A fortnight later, on December 23, Baron Burian was succeeded as Minister of the Imperial House and for Foreign Affairs by Count Ottokar Czernin.

After due consideration the Princes felt that they could not remain indifferent to the appeal that had been made to them, provided the French Government agreed to their undertaking the task. In any event, their intention was merely to hear the terms of the offer which was to be made to

them. They came to Paris on January 23, and at once received French Diplomatic Passports, dated January 25, *visés* for Switzerland and Italy, for themselves and their friend M. Charles Salomon, whom they had invited to accompany them to Switzerland.[1] The same day M. William Martin, Director of the Protocol, sent word of their coming to Neuchâtel, to M. Maurice Boy de la Tour, a relative of their travelling companion.[2] On this recommendation from the highest authority, M. Boy de la Tour next day placed himself entirely at the travellers' disposal: like so many of his compatriots in Latin Switzerland, he was anxious to do all he could in the service of France. On the 27th M. William Martin recommended the Princes to the Frontier Authorities at Pontarlier,[3] and on the 28th he took steps to enable them to correspond with him through the French Embassy at Berne, or the Consulate General at Geneva.[4]

The two Princes left Paris on the evening of the 28th, and met their mother, the Duchess of Parma, at 7 Rue du Pommier, Neuchâtel, where she had been for two days, incognita, awaiting their arrival. In these first conversations at Neuchâtel, on January 29 and 30, when Prince Sixte understood the Emperor's definite expression of his desire for Peace, he made a provisional statement—in anticipation of the French Government's willingness to consider the offer—of the bases which he personally regarded as the fundamental and necessary conditions of Peace for

[1] See Appendices II., III. They also received at Paris two Belgian Diplomatic Passports for Italy, dated Jan. 21 and numbered 118 and 119.

[2] See Appendix I. [3] See Appendix IV. [4] See Appendix V.

France, Belgium, Russia, and Serbia, reserving until a more suitable time the conditions required by Italy and Rumania, whose adherence to the Entente cause, in 1915 and 1916 respectively, had lengthened the original front of the Allies.[1]

It may be as well to supplement the account of these conversations given by the Prince in his memorandum of March 5, by printing here the note taken direct from Neuchâtel to Paris by M. Charles Salomon on behalf of the Princes, while they were on the visit, planned more than three months earlier, to their property in Italy.

NOTE BY M. CHARLES SALOMON, WRITTEN AT THE PRINCE'S DICTATION, AND ADDRESSED TO THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT.

NEUCHÂTEL, *January* 30, 1917.

1. The Emperor, who is at present in supreme power, wishes to place himself in direct communication with the French Government through the agency of Prince Sixte. The Emperor is prepared to send to any place in Switzerland, and as soon as possible, a representative who enjoys his fullest confidence, and that without the knowledge of any one else.

2. The Prince ought now to return to Paris, to inform the Government of the Emperor's precise attitude. Prudence requires that he should first complete the visit to Italy which has been publicly announced.

3. The Prince has confined himself to listening to the overtures made to him, and has replied :

[1] Italy declared war on Austria on May 25, 1915. She had been anticipated as early as November 21, 1914, by the Republic of San Marino, whose gesture of defiance, though merely symbolic, should none the less be recorded. Italy did not declare war on Turkey until August 21, 1915, nor on Bulgaria until October 10, when that State had joined the Central Powers. Finally, on August 27, 1916, Italy and Rumania both declared war on Germany.

(*a*) That he could not in any circumstances communicate with the Emperor unless by the desire of the French Government.

(*b*) That he could only communicate to the parties concerned the overtures already made to him.

4. The Prince will return to 34 Quai de Béthune, Paris, on Saturday, February 10. He could conveniently leave Paris again on the evening of Monday, February 12, so as to be here on the morning of the 13th should the Government decide to follow up these overtures. He is willing to go either alone or with a companion.

A. C[HARLES] S[ALOMON].

January 30, 1917, 10 P.M.

This note was given to M. William Martin, at Paris, on February 6, by M. Salomon, who had brought from Switzerland the impression that "the Emperor was firmly resolved to come to terms at once, and for the future with France, and that Germany had no suspicion of this. The cornerstone of such an agreement must be an immediate arrangement for a separate Peace. The Prince felt that negotiations begun at once might succeed in neutralising Austria's campaign against Russia, which would leave Russia free to move all her Armies on to her German Front. If the French Government was prepared to continue on these lines, the Emperor would send an Envoy to 7 Rue du Pommier, Neuchâtel, at 1.30 P.M. on February 11."

The Prince reached Paris from Italy on February 10, and saw M. Jules Cambon the next day at M. William Martin's.

CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE PRINCE AND M. JULES CAMBON, IN WHICH THE BASES OF NEGOTIATION WERE FIXED, FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF THE FRENCH GOVERNMENT (PARIS, FEBRUARY 11, 1917).

(Feb. 11, 1917. Statement of M. Jules Cambon's views on Austria.)

After luncheon at M. William Martin's house, 2 Rue Léonce-Reynaud, on Saturday, February 11, 1917, M. Jules Cambon, General Secretary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and former Ambassador at Berlin, made the following statement :

A definite proposal of Peace, coming from the Emperor, is a new factor in our relations with Austria. Hitherto, only German proposals have reached the Allies. These included : the cession of Constantinople and the Bukovina to the Russians, and of Transylvania to the Rumanians ; Russian and Austrian Poland to form a separate Kingdom, while German Poland remained under Prussia ; Serbia to be restored to the Serbs, with the addition of Albania ; Trent and Trieste to Italy ; nothing formally promised to France ; vague promises to Belgium not incompatible with a kind of German suzerainty in that country. The object was quite evident. Germany wanted to make peace with Russia, Rumania, Italy, and Serbia at the expense of Austria, to divide the Allies first, and then to face France, England, and Belgium with a point-blank refusal. The same policy reappears in the official offer of Peace. We are well aware that these proposals originated in the Austrian Emperor's genuine desire for Peace ; at the same time Germany has been cunning enough to exploit his generous motives for her own ends.

She did this by publishing her proposals before those of Austria, and by giving them, by all the methods of propaganda at her disposal, an effect which is all the more enhanced by their systematic adoption and assimilation of the Austrian Emperor's declarations. For all these reasons, Austria must act quickly and boldly if she

intends not only to make an honourable Peace, but also to extricate herself from the clutches of Germany. The Emperor Charles ought to inform the Emperor William that he intends to lay down his arms on a definite date.

There are three essential points of which he should be told :

1. France must recover the whole of Alsace-Lorraine, without any Colonial compensation to Germany.
2. No one Ally of the Entente can make a separate Peace.
3. France must honour her own signature.

In obedience to the wish of the President of the Republic, which M. William Martin communicated to the Princes, they left for Neuchâtel on the evening of February 12.[1] This time they were unaccompanied, and they went prepared for either of two lines of action.

In the first place the Emperor might feel that he was in a position to offer Peace openly to the Entente, by making at once, in a public and decisive fashion, a distinction between the fundamental and conservative interests of the Monarchy, and the aggressive, unjust and illogical pretensions of Germany. In this case he might be ready to express his intentions more or less on the following lines :

DRAFT OF A PROCLAMATION BY THE EMPEROR, INTENDED TO BE SUBMITTED TO HIM BY HIS ENVOY

PARIS, *February* 12, 1917.

To My Peoples

Since I ascended the Throne of my Ancestors in the midst of the tempest which has been let loose upon us,

[1] See Appendix VI. for the letter addressed by M. William Martin to the Frontier Authorities at Pontarlier on February 12.

my dearest wish has been to be able to promise to all my Subjects an early restoration of such a Peace as is necessary to them and as they deserve. My sovereign duty, which I have sworn before God to fulfil, and which I state in no uncertain terms, is to assure the independence of my Dual Crown while preserving its honour.

After the occupation of Serbia, whose punishment was our sole object in this war, my gallant troops are now ending their magnificent campaign against Rumania, who so inconsiderately provoked myself and my august Allies. And now that we have reached this stage in the general conflict to which they and I have advanced, bound together by the closest ties, *I can no longer postpone a public announcement of the opinions which I regard as essential to the security and to the fundamental interests of the Monarchy,* IRRESPECTIVE OF SUCH OPINIONS AS MAY BE HELD BY MY AUGUST ALLIES.

The Emperor of Russia and his Ally, France, have stated that they took up arms for the defence of Serbia: the British Empire had the motive of saving Belgium. I am convinced that these Powers, united, as they boast, in defence of the right, are incapable of any such mad designs as to annihilate the German Empire or to destroy the historic union of my Dual Crown.

I announce my determination to restore the Kingdom of Serbia in its entirety, granting her, in addition, territorial advantages which will allow her an equitable approach to the Adriatic Sea.

I am compelled to recognise that it is impossible to make any further sacrifice of the blood of my Peoples, for whom I must account before God, in order to prevent Russia from securing that mastery of the Straits which she regards as indispensable to the life of her community.

I am prepared to admit that the situation of France and Belgium, in the West, is of necessity analogous to that of Russia and Serbia, so far as the restoration of a lasting and an adequate Peace, founded upon principles of Justice and Honour, may affect them.

And finally, I do not doubt that my august Allies will themselves at an early date proclaim the views which each of them may respectively hold, and that their views as well as my own will be made effective.

From now onwards, my troops shall remain on the alert in the positions they now occupy, until Peace is definitely restored.

I am resolved to accord an equal justice to each of the Peoples of the Monarchy, whom the War has revealed in their unalterable Union under my Sceptre, whom Peace must reward with the utmost measure of Liberty compatible with the ever indissoluble Unity of the Monarchy.

May God, to whom I lift up my heart, heal speedily with His Almighty Hand the cruel wounds from which Europe is now bleeding!

If, on the other hand, the Emperor preferred to make diplomatic arrangements in secret with the Entente, he could authorise his Envoy to sign a preliminary convention on the lines indicated by the Prince on January 30, and by M. Jules Cambon on February 11. This convention was drafted in the following terms: the essential conditions of Peace for France, Belgium, Russia, and Serbia were explicitly stated. If Austria should agree, then an Armistice on all her fronts, including the Italian and Rumanian, would give the diplomats time to come to an understanding with these two Powers which would make Peace practicable for the Entente as a whole; for France, England, and Russia could not agree to any Peace that excluded the rest of the Allies.

Draft of a Convention, intended to be submitted to the Emperor by his Envoy

Paris, *February* 12, 1917.

By command of His Majesty the Emperor of Austria, Apostolic King of Hungary, King of Bohemia, etc., my August Master, I, the undersigned, , his Aide-de-Camp, have the honour to transmit to H.R.H. the Prince Sixte de Bourbon the following proposals, with the request that he will be so good as to make them known, if he thinks fit, to the French Government, and so to the Allies of France.

His Imperial Majesty, wishing to bring to an end, as soon as may be, the prolonged horrors of the War, from which his Peoples and all the belligerent nations suffer, desires to see begun forthwith the discussion of the conditions of Peace, the principles of which, so far as they concern him, he for his part now sets forth.

(1) No opposition will be made by him, so far as the question concerns or may concern him, to the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to France, with the boundaries she held in former times, and until the year 1814.

(2) The same applies to the complete restoration of the Kingdom of Belgium in the fulness of its sovereign rights and of its frontiers, including the Congo Territory.

And if, further, the free access by water to Antwerp, in full sovereignty, can be secured from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, His Imperial Majesty will make no opposition.

(3) His Majesty the Emperor announces his readiness to enter into conversations with His Majesty the Emperor of Russia on the basis of his remaining unconcerned in the destiny of the city of Constantinople and of the Straits.

(4) The Kingdom of Serbia shall be restored by him in the fulness of its sovereign rights and of its frontiers. He will further concede such an increase of territory as will afford that kingdom a free and adequate approach to the Adriatic Sea.

(5) Until such time as the general military situation becomes definitely clear, His Imperial Majesty demands the immediate inauguration of an Armistice between his troops on the one hand, and those of Their Majesties the Emperor of Russia, the King of Serbia, the King of Italy, and the King of Rumania on the other; all the troops of these five Powers to remain on the alert in the positions they may now occupy and upon all their fronts.

(6) In the conviction that France and her Allies will recognise His Imperial Majesty's genuine desire to bring the War to an end by the measures indicated above, without prejudice to the conditions actually prevailing in Poland, Galicia, Rumania, and Serbia, and provisionally in Italy, His Majesty looks forward with confidence to an immediate agreement, preliminary to the realisation of a Peace based upon all the principles cited above.

On February 13, at M. Boy de la Tour's house at Neuchâtel, the Prince was joined by the Emperor's Envoy, Count Thomas Erdödy, Captain-Commandant of the Hungarian Police. He was a personal friend of the Emperor's and enjoyed his full confidence; and he brought with him a letter from the Empress, accrediting him to her brothers as the Emperor's Representative.

He began with the bases of Peace outlined by the Prince on January 30 to the Duchess of Parma, and informed him that the Emperor accepted without demur the first three points, concerning France, Belgium, and Russia, and was prepared to sign an Armistice with the last Power. This was an immediate and striking indication of his good intentions. The fourth point, however, which dealt with the restoration of Serbia and her extension to the Adriatic coast by the addition of Albania, could not be accepted without

discussion. The Emperor was reluctant to acknowledge the independence of Serbia and her Reigning House: his idea was rather to create a Jugo-Slav Kingdom, comprising Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Albania, and Montenegro, and to make it autonomous rather than actually independent, under the suzerainty of his Imperial Crown. One of the Archdukes could ascend this Jugo-Slav throne in place of the Karageorgevitch Dynasty. The Italian and Rumanian problems were not, so far, taken into consideration.

The Prince took note of the Emperor's acquiescence on the first three points, but insisted on securing what he considered necessary for Serbia, namely, the restoration of her independence, the maintenance of her Dynasty, and the addition of Albania to her territory, so as to give her reasonable access to the sea. When this fourth point was conceded, it would be time to consider the claims of Italy and Rumania.

The Emperor's desire for peace was quite evident, and so, feeling that the basis of negotiation was now fixed, the Prince requested Count Erdödy to get the Emperor to choose whichever of the two courses indicated he preferred to adopt. He urged him to face Germany boldly with a *fait accompli*, by publicly announcing the conclusion of Peace with the Entente on the bases which both sides held to be essential to a mutual understanding. The matter was urgent, as the situation was becoming rapidly complicated by the increasing friction between Germany and the United States. If the Emperor felt himself unable to make a public statement almost at once, then they must

lay the foundations of Peace on diplomatic lines. In that case he would ask the Emperor to consider the Convention drafted at Paris, and to adopt it in so many words.

Count Erdödy returned at once to Vienna, promising to deliver this twofold message. In France, no one but the President of the Republic, M. Jules Cambon, and M. William Martin knew anything of this or the previous conversations: in Austria, only the Emperor and Empress, and the Duchess of Parma. Count Czernin had become Foreign Minister on December 23, but at present knew no more than that the Emperor had found out some means of beginning negotiations: it was not long, however, before he was told everything.

On February 21, Count Erdödy returned to Neuchâtel, where the Prince was waiting for him. He told the Prince that the Emperor Charles had, on the 13th, declined to break off relations with America, although the German Emperor had come in person to solicit his support in this fresh quarrel.

He also told him that the Emperor had decided to let his Minister, Count Czernin, know of his choice of the Prince as the bearer of his demand for Peace to the Entente Powers. From this point Count Czernin was fully informed of the bases of negotiation, as well as of the part played by the Prince;[1] and he joined the Emperor in urging the

[1] *The Morning Post*, Wednesday, March 31, 1920, p. 5, col. 1, has an article headed "Czernin's Guile," which contains an interesting confirmation of Count Erdödy's report. Its Viennese Correspondent, in a despatch dated "Vienna, March 24," informed *The Morning Post* of a recent publication by Herr Schager which disclosed the existence of a

Prince to come to Vienna himself so as to carry on the discussion of this vital matter as quickly as possible.

Meanwhile, Count Erdödy brought the Prince a letter written by Princess Maria Antonia at the Emperor's dictation, accrediting himself, and two other documents.

The first, for circulation, as dictated by Count Czernin, was—to say nothing more—so badly expressed that, coming by itself, it would have effectively put an end to the whole discussion.

The other, a secret letter in the Emperor's own hand, corrected with great good sense the more flagrant improprieties of the incredible document which his Minister had laid before him.

First the text of the Minister's Note: [1]

FIRST NOTE BY COUNT CZERNIN, TRANSCRIBED BY THE AUSTRIAN ENVOY, IN REPLY TO THE CONVENTION DRAFTED IN PARIS ON FEBRUARY 12.

VIENNA, *February* 20 (?), } 1917.
NEUCHÂTEL, ,, 22, }

(1) The Alliance between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey, and Bulgaria is absolutely indissoluble, and the

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report by Count Czernin to the Empress, dated February 17, 1917. The terms of this document show that he was then already aware of and in sympathy with the steps taken by the Emperor: he hoped that some conclusion might be reached at an early date, and begged the Empress to insist on her brother's coming to visit her at Vienna, so that the discussion might be begun at once.

[1] The original Note was dictated by Count Czernin and written down in German by Count Erdödy at Vienna: this was destroyed at Neuchâtel, after it had been translated into French by Prince Xavier. The French text was written by Prince Xavier at Neuchâtel on February 22, 1917, and bears Count Erdödy's signature.

conclusion of a separate Peace by any one of these States is permanently barred.

(2) Austria-Hungary has never contemplated the destruction of Serbia. It is, however, necessary for her to guard in every possible way against the recurrence of such political activities as led to the outrage of Sarajevo. Otherwise Austria-Hungary intends to renew her friendly relations with Serbia and to cement them by liberal economic concessions.

(3) Should Germany consent to relinquish Alsace-Lorraine, Austria-Hungary would, naturally, make no opposition.

(4) Belgium should be restored and should receive compensation from all the belligerents.

(5) It is quite wrong to suppose that Austria-Hungary is politically subordinated to Germany: on the other hand, it is commonly believed in Austria-Hungary that France is completely under the influence of England.

(6) Similarly, Austria-Hungary has no idea of annihilating Rumania. She is, however, bound to retain that country as a pawn until she has obtained guarantees of the absolute integrity of the Monarchy.

(7) Austria-Hungary has publicly announced that she is at war in self-defence only, and that her object will have been achieved as soon as she is assured of the free development of the Monarchy.

(8) In Austria-Hungary there is no difference of privileges between the various subject-races. The Slavs will ever enjoy the same rights as the Germans. Foreign Nations have misinterpreted the feeling among the Slavs, who are actually most loyal to their Emperor and Empire.

(Signed) THOMAS, GRAF ERDŐDY.

To this note the Emperor added the following most necessary corrections and amplifications:

SECRET AND PERSONAL NOTE BY HIS MAJESTY THE EMPEROR AND KING, ANNEXED BY HIM TO THE PRECEDING STATEMENT.[1]

VIENNA, *February* 20, 1917.

Geheim.—

Ad. 3. Wir werden Frankreich unterstützen und mit allen Mitteln auf Deutschland einen Druck ausüben.

Ad. 4. Wir haben die grössten Sympathien für Belgien und wissen, dass ihm Unrecht geschehen ist. Entente und wir werden die grossen Schäden vergüten.

Ad. 5. Wir stehen absolut nicht unter Deutschen Hand, so haben wir *gegen Deutschlands Willen* nicht mit Amerika abgebrochen. Bei uns die Meinung Frankreich stehe ganz unter englischem Einflusse.

Ad. 7. Auch Deutschland.

Ad. 8. Bei uns gibt es keine Privilegien für einzelne Völker, die Slaven vollständig gleichberechtigt Einheit aller Volker und Treue für Dynastie.

—— Unseres einziges Ziel ist die Monarchie in ihrer jetzigen Grösse zu erhalten.

That is to say :

Secret.—

Para. 3. We will support France and use all the means in our Power to bring pressure to bear upon Germany.

Para. 4. We have the greatest sympathy for Belgium, and are well aware that she has been unjustly treated. The Entente and ourselves will compensate her for the great damage she has suffered.

Para. 5. It is wholly untrue to say that we are in the hands of Germany ; on the contrary we have declined

[1] The original manuscript in the Emperor's hand, was torn up and burned by Prince Sixte at Neuchâtel, immediately he had read it, in Count Erdödy's presence and at his request. On February 23, in Paris, he reconstructed the note from memory, in German. He had been specially asked to do this, as the Czernin note, unless amplified in this way, would have effectively prevented any further discussion, which was not intended, even by Count Czernin himself.

—*in direct opposition to Germany's wishes*—to sever our relations with America. Our idea here is that France is very much under the influence of England.

Para. 7. So has Germany.

Para. 8. With us there are no special privileges for any one race. The Slavs enjoy full equality of rights with all the other peoples, and share their loyalty to the Dynasty.

Our sole aim is to maintain the Monarchy within its existing frontiers.

It will be seen that the Czernin Note excludes any question of a separate Peace, and grants none of the three points—France, Belgium, and Russia—which the Emperor himself had conceded through Count Erdödy on February 13. It continues the resistance to what the Prince regarded as the indispensable conditions for Serbia. It does introduce the subject of Rumania, but makes no mention of Italy, which is natural enough seeing that it aims at guaranteeing the *absolute* integrity of the Monarchy. Finally Count Czernin accords the Slavs of the Monarchy a theoretical equality with the Germans, which is a concession to the Czechs and Jugo-Slavs, who were supported by the Entente.

The Emperor's Note, on the other hand, restores the French and Belgian points, which he had previously conceded, but makes no mention of Russia. It leaves the fate of Serbia open to discussion, and asserts his determination not to break with America. It further states that he will support France against Germany with all the means in his power, and expresses his sympathy with Belgium, which had been cruelly victimised,

and was entitled to generous reparation. These expressions of his feelings, even in this initial stage, deserved the most careful and sympathetic attention.

The Princes returned to Paris on February 23. While they were away, the quarrel between Germany and America had come to a head. The American Memorandum of Monday, February 19, now compelled Austria to make a definite statement of her own policy with regard to the German blockade. The Austrian Government lacked the Emperor's decision, and seemed disinclined to take either side. The Emperor had carried out his own designs and taken steps throughout the Monarchy to safeguard his interests as against those of Germany. These steps included the dismissal of Count Forgach, of the financier Sieghardt, of the First Grand-Master Prince Montenuovo; the public and sensational disgrace of the Archduke and Field-Marshal Frederick, till lately Commander-in-Chief; the supersession of Körber by Clam Martinicz, and the appointment of several other Czechs to the Ministry; the nomination of Prince Conrad von Hohenlohe as First Grand-Master, and the restriction of Count Berchtold to the office of Grand Chamberlain. So much was beyond question; but it was still to be seen whether in international as well as in internal affairs the Emperor would be able to make his own will prevail against the Prussian hegemony.

This being the case, the Prince felt that he ought to wait before disclosing to the French Government the overtures with which he had been charged. If Austria should, at an early date,

succeed in disentangling her own American policy from that of Prussia, the Entente might well take these overtures at their face value. If Austria should fail, however, nothing would be gained by disclosing the overtures for the present, as the Entente might not admit Austria's ability to proceed with them. He therefore did no more, for the time being, than speak to M. William Martin, who called upon him at midday on February 24, at 34 Quai de Béthune.

Austria's reply to America was still delayed, but there was fairly good reason to believe that it might be so worded as to avoid a diplomatic rupture with the United States; and so M. William Martin, on the morning of March 2, said to some friends of the Prince:

"The Emperor of Austria has had no answer to his overture, which may lead him to believe that it has failed, and may throw him back into the arms of Germany. The Prince, by the attitude he is adopting, has held up everything for a week, and it is now rather late to get anything done." The friends who heard this offered to suggest to the Prince that he ought to see the President of the Republic without farther delay. That afternoon the Prince sent word to M. William Martin that he was quite ready to see M. Poincaré.

Next day, March 3, M. William Martin informed him that the interview would take place on Monday, March 5. On March 4 he paid a further call on the Prince, who explained to him the four points he had selected as provisional bases for discussion, and asked whether the Government had in mind any other essential points, apart from the

Rumanian and Italian problems. M. William Martin did not conceal the fact that the trouble was expected to come from Italy.

The following is an account of Prince Sixte's first interview with the President of the French Republic.

Interview with the President of the Republic (March 5, 1917, 3.30–5.30 p.m.)

The Prince was received at the foot of the staircase by a Colonel, who ushered him into the President's study.

M. Poincaré. I am delighted to see you. M. Martin has kept me informed of your movements, and I shall be glad to hear, from your own lips, the proposals made by Austria. But I must first warn you that, as the Head of a Constitutional Government, I must keep the President of the Council, who is Minister for Foreign Affairs also, informed of what passes between us. I can keep the details to some extent secret, but I can take no action without his consent.

The Prince. I think we shall do best to begin with a synopsis of what has already been done, in chronological order. In fact I have copied out some passages from a journal which I have written up from day to day. (*He then read the Memorandum, and went on.*) And now, before handing you the note which has been entrusted to me, I must warn you that it was written by Count Czernin, Foreign Minister of Austria-Hungary; as you may see from its phrasing, which is not exactly French, from the lack of precision and spirit and the excess of diplomatic formality in its style: for the Emperor's notes are lucid and expressive and show him to have a strong will of his own.

M. Poincaré read the note and then remarked: This note is wholly inadequate. It cannot even serve as a minimum; nor could I possibly show it to our Allies.

Prince Sixte. But you must now hear the Emperor's explanation.

The Prince read and commented on this paper.

M. Poincaré. Can you leave this explanation with me ?

The Prince regretted that he could scarcely do that, as the Emperor's remarks were only written in pencil. He would, however, make a copy of them, which M. William Martin should have next day.

M. Poincaré. This secret note does provide some basis for negotiation, which is entirely lacking from the open note. I shall communicate both of them to-morrow to the President of the Council, binding him to entire secrecy, and I shall also make use of them to inform our two principal Allies of the Emperor's proposals; in this way: I shall write a personal letter to the Czar — I cannot telegraph, as we have not a common code ; and also to the King of England, and to Mr. Lloyd George, who is a man of discretion. But there is another point which may very well prove the stumbling-block, and that is Italy. The President developed, in great detail, his views on the Italian question. Italy would insist on her share, and that no small share, in the spoils of war, and it would be impossible for France to negotiate a separate Peace with Austria without consulting her. The Prince here made an observation with which the President entirely agreed ; namely, that there could be no comparison between Trieste and Alsace-Lorraine. In a word, Italy had not declared war on Germany, as she had promised, on April 26, 1915 : she meant to indemnify herself, actually at France's expense—which, of course, neither he, Poincaré, nor any French Government could allow for an instant ; but she was afraid of England, who exercised some sort of patronage over her. Still, France must endeavour, when Peace came, to live on good terms with all her Allies. . . . Italy, in spite of her demand for annexation, was so little confident of her own ability to resist a fresh Austrian offensive, that she had just renewed her appeal for military support from

France and England. Cadorna was making the most urgent requests for French troops. To sum up the situation, France had promised to assist Italy in the conquest of Trieste; but had not undertaken to purchase, by her own sacrifices, the spoils which Italy had herself been unable to secure. France had made no guarantee of Trieste. She and her Allies were free, therefore, to negotiate with Austria; and the only promise binding on France was that she would not make a separate Peace. After all, Alliance was a mutual, not a unilateral contract.

I can put no trust in any one there, said the President, except the King and Sonnino. The people as a whole want peace. There is a risk of Italy's playing into Germany's hands, through want of discretion, which I do not fear from England, and even less from Russia, where the Tsar, besides being an autocrat, has the greatest confidence in myself.

The Prince made some further suggestions, whereupon the President added:

This, then, is the course we must adopt. First get from Austria the four essential points, next inform England and Russia, in the strictest secrecy, of the result, and then see whether we cannot come to some mutual arrangement for a secret Armistice. Russia wants nothing from the War but Constantinople; England asks for nothing from Austria, nor do we. It is in France's interest not merely to keep Austria as she is, but to enlarge her frontiers at Germany's expense by taking in Silesia or Bavaria. But we will never make terms with Germany. The Tsar said as much to Castelnau when he told him that he hoped to finish the War this year, but if that proved impossible, would go on fighting.

The Prince laid great emphasis upon one point: all these negotiations must be, he felt, mere preliminaries to the defeat of Germany after Austria had been detached from her side. The War against Germany must go on until she was beaten. As for himself, he could not remain

any longer in Paris, as he must now rejoin his regiment. The President said that nothing was easier than for him to write to the King of the Belgians and obtain an extension of the Prince's leave. After all, the King could make no objection, as these negotiations were for his benefit also. He thanked the Prince, and promised to give him an answer at the earliest possible moment.

In this first interview, M. Raymond Poincaré seems to have shown a very clear insight into the situation. He considered that the Note for Circulation, dictated by Count Czernin to the Imperial Envoy, was framed in terms which were wholly inadmissible. It seemed to be the work of a confused, tortuous, and self-contradictory intelligence. The Emperor's additions alone indicated firmness of will and honesty of character. The personality of this Sovereign afforded, therefore, a possible basis on which he might carry on with France the negotiations due to his initiative.

CHAPTER II

RECEPTION OF THE OFFER BY FRANCE AND ENGLAND

(March 6–April 18, 1917)

On March 6, the day after his interview with Prince Sixte, the President of the Republic told the President of the Council, M. Aristide Briand, who was also Foreign Minister, of the offer of Peace which had come from the Emperor of Austria. M. Briand was in entire agreement with M. Poincaré, and, in view of the Emperor's formal proposal, he decided to utilise the Prince's services for an interchange of opinions between M. Poincaré and himself in France and the Emperor and Count Czernin in Austria, on the lines laid down by the Prince and M. Jules Cambon. It was necessary first to obtain from Austria a formal ratification of the four essential points — France, Belgium, Russia, and Serbia—then to communicate in secret with England and Russia, to induce Austria to abandon the offensive she had planned against Italy, and, indeed, to make Austria conclude an Armistice on all the Fronts where she marched with the Entente; and afterwards to introduce the Italian and Rumanian problems, and, should they

prove soluble, conclude Peace with the Monarchy, finding for her in Silesia or Bavaria compensations for the sacrifices she would have to make to Italy and Rumania. Such a Peace must cut off Austria from Germany, who would persist in her insensate hostility, and must be fought to a finish.

This plan or series of plans of campaign was quite logical, but action must be taken at once and carried through in secret. The programme was determined at the second interview between Prince Sixte and the President of the Republic, which took place on March 8.

Prince Sixte's Second Interview with the President of the French Republic (March 8, 1917, 4.45–5.15 p.m.).

At 10.30 on the morning of the 8th, M. William Martin came to the Prince with a request that he would call at the Élysée at 4.45.

On his arrival there the President told him that he had seen M. Briand, who agreed that Count Czernin's Note was wholly inadequate, and might, in fact, be disregarded, but that the Emperor's addition to it, which contained the nucleus of a formal proposal, made an exchange of views necessary. The four points already indicated were a *sine qua non* in dealing with Austria, though not with Germany. And, in addition to these formal proposals, we must determine the conditions upon which an Armistice could be arranged. The Armistice must bind Austria upon all her fronts; for a safeguard was needed against the very real menace of a combined Austro-German attack upon Italy. Our latest intelligence showed that the Germans were withdrawing troops from the whole of our front, including Alsace; which seemed to point to a combined offensive by both Empires against Italy. Such an offensive, the political motive for which

was the growing tendency of Austria towards independent action, might easily mean disaster, both military and political, for Italy. France would find herself obliged to despatch troops to that front, where French soldiers would have to fight Austrians ; and this would not make future negotiations any easier. If, then, the Prince could bring back formal proposals embodying the four points, the President and M. Briand would convey them to the King of England and the Tsar. To the latter M. Poincaré would write a letter, possibly countersigned by M. Briand, and would send it to Petrograd by a special envoy. Would the Princes be prepared to go to Russia ? Their rank added so much weight to their words that they would be able to speak far more freely to the Tsar than any ordinary messenger. The Prince declared his willingness to go. The President then enlarged upon the internal conditions of Russia, upon the Tsar's freedom of action as an autocrat, and upon the assurances of hostility to Germany recently renewed by the Tsarina to M. Doumergue : " Russia is determined to punish Germany " ; but there were traitors at court ; and it was therefore important that the Princes themselves should go, that they might speak with the Tsar without intermediaries.

The Prince then asked if there was nothing to be looked for from Spain. True, King Alfonso was devoted to Austria, but so he was to France, and he meant to intervene at a later date. The President had no doubt about the King's real feelings, which he illustrated by several examples. Early in this conversation the President had shown displeasure at learning that the Emperor Charles had gone to visit the German Emperor at Charleville.

Should anything definite come of these *pourparlers*, the French Ambassador at Berne might ultimately take part in them. Italy, the President added, would doubtless put forward certain claims, but Austria would be fully indemnified by the Allies' exactions from Germany. He would write to the King of the Belgians and ask him to extend the Princes' leave ; and would instruct M.

Briand, who was shortly going to La Panne, to explain to the King the reasons for this extension.

Application was made on March 11 to Belgium for an extension of the Princes' leave, which was granted. On March 16, Prince Sixte wrote in Paris a letter to the Emperor which he proposed to hand to Count Erdödy in Switzerland. In this he laid great stress on the necessity for the Emperor's formal acceptance of the four essential points to which the Prince had drawn his attention as long ago as January 30, France now insisting upon these as a preliminary to the consideration of the Italian claims. He begged the Emperor to abandon his offensive in Italy if he had any intention of making terms with the Entente. This letter was in fact full of prophetic insight.

Letter from Prince Sixte de Bourbon to the Emperor

Paris, *March* 16, 1917.
(By favour of Count Erdödy.)

My dear Charles—First of all, I must tell you that things are taking a very favourable turn. I shall not dwell upon the tedious and difficult manœuvres I have had to make in Paris. The tenor of the Note nearly ruined everything by its reserve and lack of precision, and by the evasiveness of its phrasing. Your commentary was partly successful in removing this unfortunate impression ; but I had to expound and re-expound it with all the persuasive skill imaginable ; which was not easy.

However, this is the stage I have now reached. The four points which I indicated from the first as fundamental seem to be generally accepted, and, here at least, are accepted as the starting-point towards a possible agreement. This result is all the more valuable, as (in Paris,

at any rate) they have not insisted upon the cession of Trieste to Italy as a fifth point. If Italy succeeds in reaching Trieste, the Entente will recognise her claim; if she fails, it seems as though the Entente would not guarantee it. Whereas Germany has offered Trieste to Italy, to win her back to the Alliance.

It is absolutely necessary that you seize this opportunity. A change of Government in France would mean our beginning all over again. M. Briand, whom the President has told what is happening, is sworn to secrecy. It will be the same in England, where only the King and such Ministers as must know of the proposals will discuss them in absolute privacy. As for Russia, the Revolution in the last few days has upset the latest plan, which was to send me to the Tsar with a letter from the French President. Whatever be the outcome of this Revolution, which at the moment is a victory for the Liberal bourgeoisie of Moscow, and in favour of carrying the War on to a finish, the fact of their being in agreement with France and England, who, after all, dominate the Entente, should be your surest guarantee, and one whose importance I cannot sufficiently emphasise.

But there is only one course now for you to take, and that is absolutely necessary. You must send me immediately a statement in writing, giving your definite and unambiguous assent to the four points. I take the liberty of enclosing a draft of what is wanted. I earnestly request that you will adhere as closely as possible to my wording, and not allow the essential matter to be lost among the traditional reservations of the Chancelleries, which would only mean a lamentable waste of time; as it is, we must make haste in order to anticipate coming events. If I cannot show them a clear and precise acceptance by you of the four points, the people here will retain the impression they got from your first Note; which they entirely declined to accept. The result would then be, that you and I would seem to have begun a conversation which we could not make effective, and we

should look like persons full of good intentions, but unable to realise them. They might then come to suspect, quite unjustly, that you made this offer not to bring your own war to an end, but to procure information for Germany, and they would say here more than ever that you are incapable of separating your own from the German Empire.

It seems to me that they would be quite ready to make Peace with you on the basis of these four points, but that, at the same time, the whole of France is determined to carry on the War against Germany with the utmost energy, until they have secured a definite and decisive victory.

I am bound to bring to your notice this essential point, that no one here will consent to treat with Germany until she is beaten.

At this moment every one is most favourably disposed; and you will not find such an opportunity again of making an offer of Peace and making Peace itself at no cost to yourself. If Germany reserves the right to define the terms of Peace between the belligerents, she will choose (and I warned you before, by Count Erdödy, that we have definite knowledge of this) to compensate Russia, France, and Italy at the expense of Austria and Turkey. Germany did nothing to prevent the collapse of Turkey in Asia; God forbid that you should be victimised in the same way, and have to lose Galicia, Bukovina, Transylvania, and your southern provinces, simply to keep intact Prussian Poland, or the left bank of the Rhine.

It is to your interest, therefore, to take the initiative, and to bargain for Peace in the interest of your subjects, to whom, on your accession, you promised an early cessation of hostilities. And I repeat that you have a distinct advantage, as they are well-disposed towards you personally, while the feeling of the Entente is completely hostile to the Hohenzollerns.

As for Italy, who will have to be informed as soon as her Allies come to an agreement, if she insists on the

inclusion of Trieste as a fifth point, you will still be free to accept or reject it ; in my opinion you should accept, if public opinion in Vienna allows, although the other Powers have not, so far, regarded it as essential. By the way, the German papers are speaking of a fresh offensive, shortly, against Italy. I can understand your wishing to attack her, but there is a risk of Russia's attacking you again, as she did last year, on your Northern front, to relieve Italy ; while if Italy were seriously defeated, France and England would be obliged to send troops to that front, and the last hope of peace would automatically vanish. I feel, therefore, that it would be extremely bad policy to open negotiations with an offensive, which it would be a thousand times better to hold in reserve, in case the negotiations should fail owing to Italy's attitude. Of course, if the Italians attack you first, that is their own affair. But for all these reasons you must act at once, and with decision.

Very soon the whole world will be in arms against Germany, and it will then be impossible to arrive at terms of Peace while you are bound in any way to her ; were it only because, the more Allies there are banded against you, the more difficult you will find it to satisfy their claims. Morally, it should not be unduly difficult for you to justify your withdrawal from the Alliance ; you might, for instance, bring up one of those insoluble questions which exist between Prussia and yourself, such as that of Poland. Materially, however, there is a difficulty which here they rate very highly : that is the fusion of your troops with the Germans. It is a serious danger, and how are you to obviate it ? We know well enough here that Prussia sticks at nothing : she would not hesitate to copy the Bulgarian stroke of 1913, and fall without warning upon her own Allies. I cannot, of course, judge from here what you can or what you intend to do ; I can only convey to you my own apprehension, which is shared by persons better qualified than I am to form an opinion.

Already Germany is betraying you where she can. In

Italy there is always Giolitti kept in reserve ready to treat with her, and there are other avowed friends of Prussia in the highest places: but they have nothing but hatred for Austria. And in that there lies another danger, which should impel you to conclude Peace immediately; namely, that Italy is working might and main to form a party in France, and is succeeding only too well in the French Parliament. It is only men like Poincaré and Briand who maintain the old traditions of French statesmanship; a new Ministry would probably include a certain number of ardent pro-Italians.

To this letter the Prince attached the draft of a Note which, he suggested, Austria might adopt: this covers the concession of the Four Points, appoints an Armistice, and promises immediate military support from the Entente should Germany compel Austria to abandon her pacific policy.

Draft Note

March 17, 1917.

(1) Austria-Hungary recognises, for her part, the right of France to possess Alsace and Lorraine, as she possessed them in times past; and will make every effort in support of the claims of France.

(2) Belgium must be completely re-established as a sovereign State, under the reigning dynasty; and shall retain the whole of her African possessions, without prejudice to such indemnities as may be awarded her for the material losses she has suffered.

(3) Austria-Hungary has never contemplated the destruction of Serbia. She declares her readiness to re-establish Serbia as a sovereign State, under the reigning dynasty. Moreover, Austria-Hungary, as a pledge of her good-will towards the Serbian Monarchy, and to ensure her a natural and proper avenue to the Adriatic, is prepared to hand over to her the Albanian territories which Austria-Hungary at present occupies. She is likewise

disposed to cement amicable relations with Serbia by liberal economic concessions.

(4) Austria-Hungary proposes to open negotiations with Russia on a basis of the Monarchy's neutrality with regard to Constantinople, in return for the evacuation of all Austrian territory at present occupied by Russian troops.

Should these points be accepted as bases of negotiation, His Majesty the Emperor of Austria announces that he is prepared to order his troops to remain on the defensive, and in the positions they hold at present, provided that the troops opposed to them observe the same conditions.

In the event of this agreement's being subscribed by France and her Allies, and of Austria-Hungary's being obliged by compulsion from the German Empire to withdraw therefrom, France and her Allies shall at once and with all their strength support Austria-Hungary in her resistance to any such compulsion or to a declaration of hostilities by the German Empire.

On the same day, March 17, M. William Martin, in the name of the President of the Council, commended the Princes to the Frontier Authorities at Bellegarde and Pontarlier.[1] He also gave them a letter of recommendation to the French Ambassador at Berne,[2] which they might use if they saw fit, and furnished M. Boy de la Tour with the means of communicating with the French Government through diplomatic channels.[3]

The two Princes left Paris that evening, and on the 18th reached Geneva: there they met Count Thomas Erdödy, who spoke at great length and with much force, finally persuading them to make a secret journey to Vienna so as to accelerate the interchange of views. An interesting account follows of this journey, which began on March 20, and ended on March 25.

[1] See Appendix VII. [2] See Appendix VIII. [3] See Appendix IX.

NARRATIVE OF THE JOURNEY TO VIENNA OF PRINCES SIXTE AND XAVIER DE BOURBON (MARCH 20–25, 1917)

On March 19, the Princes arrived at Geneva. The same evening, Count Erdödy called on them at their hotel and said to them point-blank: "This time, it is quite essential that you come to Vienna. The Emperor said to me himself: 'With all this going and coming between Vienna and Switzerland, you are simply losing time, you are bound to attract attention, and the whole affair will come to nothing. If we are to succeed we must act with all possible speed. I place entire confidence in the loyalty of my brother-in-law, and I am sure that he reciprocates my feelings. That being so, there is no reason why we should not meet: one hour of conversation between us will do more to bring about Peace than twenty letters spread over six months. I give my word as Emperor that the Prince may leave Austria as freely as he will have entered her. No one will know anything of his journey; apart from the Empress and myself he will see only Count Czernin; we shall consider nothing but the question of Peace already under discussion between us, and shall avoid all military and political topics. I can understand that the Prince did not expect to be called upon to make this journey, but it is the only way by which we can arrive at a substantial result in a short time; and that is essential. I promise, on my part, and I expect the Prince, on his, to maintain the most absolute secrecy with regard to this interview.'"

To the material objections raised by the Prince, Count Erdödy answered by recounting the preparations he had made for the journey. He laid stress upon the certain result that must ensue from the Prince's being able to speak with the Emperor in person. "You are," he urged, "an Officer like myself; you have seen enough of the horrors of this War, and have risked your life in engagements which, you knew, were useless. It is now

open to you to save innumerable human lives which must go on being vainly sacrificed until the War comes to an end, unless we can now lay the foundations of Peace. Come, therefore, to Vienna. I have made all the arrangements, and I can give you my word of honour that you will meet with no difficulties." As a conclusive argument he handed the Prince a letter from his sister the Empress, who was particularly urgent that he should come. Nothing, she said, was nearer to their hearts than an early conclusion of Peace. "Do not," she went on, "let yourself be deterred by considerations which might in the ordinary way justify you in refusing. Think of all the poor men who are in the living hell of the trenches, and are being killed by hundreds daily: and come."

The Prince asked for some detailed information on the attitude and outlook of Count Czernin. Count Erdödy replied that this was precisely one of the reasons why the Prince's personal intervention was necessary. No doubt the Minister was moved by a genuine desire for Peace; but, whether from a professional conventionality, or for some other reason, he lacked the power of realising his desires, and of making decisions.

Since he was the Emperor's Foreign Minister, and therefore responsible to the Government, he could not be entirely overlooked; especially as what might be called the technical element of the negotiations was in his province. But his hesitation might prove disastrous. "The truth of the matter is that only Their Majesties realise fully the need for a Peace whose full import they alone appreciate. It is they who give the necessary momentum; but the appalling amount of work which the Emperor has to get through daily, and the cares of all kinds which beset him, make the collaboration of his Foreign Minister indispensable." This conversation ended at 3 A.M. on March 20.

Later in the day the two Princes informed Count Erdödy that they had decided to take the risk and go. They left Geneva, escorted by him, the same evening.

No one saw them cross the Austrian frontier on March 21, except the Colonel in command of the frontier police, who had received orders in the Emperor's own hand to place himself at Count Erdödy's disposal. They went part of the way by motor, and, reaching Vienna on the evening of March 22, stayed that night at the Count's. He, meanwhile, went at once to the Emperor, who was in residence at the Castle of Laxenburg, a few miles south of Vienna, and gave him the letter which the Prince had written in Paris, before contemplating this journey.

Next day, March 23, the Princes stayed in Count Erdödy's house; leaving with him for Laxenburg at 6 A.M. It was very dark, and snow had been falling continuously for two days. The car stopped in an outer courtyard, and an elderly Captain of the Guard, who had been for many years at Court, and was wholly in the Emperor's confidence, led them through the outbuildings in the park towards the main front of the Castle. The sentries on duty, who stood with faces buried in their collars for protection against the icy wind, let them through on hearing the password. All four entered the Castle by a small door which gave on to the staircase leading to the private apartments of their Majesties. While the Captain and Count Erdödy remained on guard on the staircase and in the ante-room respectively, the Princes entered the drawing-room of the Empress, where she and the Emperor were sitting. The Princes had not seen their sister or their brother-in-law since August 1914, when he as Crown Prince had managed to obtain permission for them to leave Austria. In those far-off days he had understood, in his loyal regard for them, that their duty called them to fight on the other side. They took an affectionate farewell: and the same day the Archduke joined his Army on the North-Eastern front, and the Princes left for France.

They found him just as affectionate, just as fair and as loyal to them as in the old days, but grave, almost melancholy; with a few white hairs already on his temples.

After the first greetings, the Emperor broached the subject at once, saying: "It is absolutely essential that Peace be made: and I am willing to make it at any cost. This is a fit and propitious time, for all countries have experienced success and failure: and there is now almost a balance of the opposing forces. It is evident that, if the war continue indefinitely, one side may come to win a complete victory, and may succeed in crushing its adversary. But can any nation ever crush another completely, and, if so, what would not the price of victory be? It is terrible to imagine it. Nor is it always from the most crushing victories that the most advantageous peace comes; as is shown by the example of Bismarck, who had to make peace twice. His first peace, so moderate that the military party denounced it as a betrayal, made Austria a permanent, and often a too obsequious ally of Germany; whereas the second, the Peace of Frankfort, was the greatest mistake possible, and one for which Germany is now paying the penalty. It is far better therefore to come to an equitable arrangement, as I myself am quite ready to do. That is why I have insisted so strongly upon your coming here. One cannot say everything in a letter, while in conversation both parties can feel their way tactfully to a definite position where they are in agreement."

The Prince took up his letter and explained the various points it contained: the impossibility of making any terms whatever with the Germans, who at that very moment, as they withdrew to the Hindenburg line before the threatened offensive of Nivelle, were behaving like the most degraded of savages. The Emperor replied that he had tried every line of argument with them, but that the thought of peace simply did not exist in the High Places of Germany, where the dogma of a *Siegfriede*, or complete victory, was still accepted with unquestioning faith. The idea of peace was only to be found among those classes whose zeal for the war, in its first few months, had become chilled by contact with the

reality, and by the privations war exacted. However, he felt himself bound as an ally to attempt the impossible and induce the Germans to agree to peace on just and equitable terms. If he proved unsuccessful, rather than sacrifice the Dual Monarchy to the insane obstinacy of his neighbours, he would make a separate Peace. In any case, he would not utter a word to the Germans until he was satisfied that they accepted the idea of peace upon which Austria and the Entente were agreed. But they all seemed to be bewitched. What he had now to do was to arrive at a complete understanding, first of all, with France, and through France with England and Russia, so that, if the Germans were obstinate in their refusal to hear any talk of peace, Austria could say to them : " We cannot go on fighting to please the King of Prussia. We are ready to make the necessary sacrifices and to sign Peace without more ado."

The Emperor insisted, however, on his duty as an ally towards Germany, of which, he thought, he could only be relieved when Austria's plea, based on evident necessity, that they should treat reasonably with their enemies, had been met by a categorical refusal on Germany's part to do so.

The Prince suggested as an alternative the proposal involved in his letter. The Emperor answered :

" It will be the same in the end ; and, while I have no illusions about the Berlin Government, or about the manner in which it has treated, and means to go on treating Austria, I intend to behave with scrupulous correctness throughout, as I shall always behave towards you later on, when we are Allies."

The Prince then began to explain how absolutely necessary it was for France to recover the Provinces of Alsace and Lorraine, with the full extent of territory they enjoyed prior to 1814. He himself felt that this restoration would have to be further developed by neutralising all the left bank of the Rhine (outside Holland, Belgium, Luxembourg, and France) ; this tract was

obviously German and must remain German, but must be released from the Prussian tyranny imposed on it in 1815, while the Entente ought to see that no Army of any kind was maintained there. The Emperor said in reply that he was fully aware of the feeling in France with regard to Alsace and Lorraine, and how necessary it was for France to recover her lost Provinces. He was also familiar with popular feeling in the Provinces themselves, and the matter interested him particularly, as he was himself the head of the House of Lorraine and descended from the Counts of Alsace. The Prince noted that the Emperor and himself were in agreement on this question, which was of supreme importance. No one in France would accept terms of peace in which it was not settled.

Touching on the Polish question, the Emperor expressed his opinion that its solution would greatly help in removing the difficulties between himself and Russia, in economic matters, questions of boundaries and the like. He relied upon countless ties of sympathy between Austria and Poland, which would be in perfect accord with the traditional affection felt for Poland by France. Meanwhile, however, the disappearance of the Tsar had made Russia of less importance. He could not believe that the present Government there would last; and he was therefore obliged to withhold his answer on the question of Constantinople. For his own part, said the Prince, he was heartily glad of it. Before this Revolution, it had been incumbent upon France to insist upon the realisation of this, Russia's highest ambition, but it was obviously to her own advantage to maintain the Turks there, modifying their power by international guarantees. Generally speaking, Austria ought to support French interests in the Near East, and France would in return promote the commercial extension of Austria, as opposed to Germany.

The Emperor. As for Serbia, the only point which is really vital to the Monarchy is the suppression of the

secret societies which are fostering revolutionary propaganda amongst us. It is the miserable policy of the last few years which has landed us where we are. For it is not very long since the Serbians were our friends, and even our protégés, whom Austria had delivered from invasion by Bulgaria. By a series of misunderstandings, intensified by the stupidity of diplomatists, we have succeeded in establishing on our borders a small but most aggravating enemy. This cannot continue. We are prepared to allow her room to expand, with the whole coast of Albania as an outlet to the sea. In this way Serbia may recover her greatness, and we are only too ready to help her.

The Emperor went on to speak of the unquestionable bravery of the Serbian troops; and then, coming to the Rumanians, said that there, he thought, the *status quo ante bellum* would be the best solution. He suddenly added: "About the Balkans! One of the Entente Powers is holding secret conversations with Bulgaria, who thinks her secret policy is not known. It does not really matter very much, since all these dreams of an Eastern Empire must end more or less *in statu quo.*"

The Prince answered that, for his part, he would like nothing better than to see Turkey maintained in Constantinople, as he felt that the policy of Francis I. in the East was still the only possible policy for France. He went on to speak of Belgium and the Congo: a matter on which, as an officer in the Belgian Army, he was bound to lay emphasis. The Emperor entirely agreed with his views. Finally, he broached the most difficult of all the questions, that of Italy. There, he told the Emperor, was the reef on which their negotiations might yet be shipwrecked. Popular feeling in the two countries was not at all indisposed to Peace; but the ambition of politicians and the susceptibilities of their followers were in the way. Germany was keeping alive the Italian hatred and distrust of Austria: there again German treachery could be traced. His only advice to

the Emperor, unwelcome as it might seem, was to give the Italians everything that justice allowed. The Emperor answered that there was no question whatsoever of his flattering his own false pride; he would deal with this problem as dispassionately as with the others, but nothing would be gained by a direct discussion with Italy. It was first necessary that France, England, and Russia should form a common resolve to make peace with Austria: after which their representatives could meet to discuss the claims of Italy, and to find a way to satisfy them. He must also bear in mind the state of popular feeling in Austria, and the reasonable aspirations of his own subjects. With growing warmth he recalled the first days of the Italian campaign, the want of foresight in the Austrian Higher Command, the concentration of the whole Italian Army in Friuli, with no more than a few territorial battalions and his "gallant Tyrolese" to stop them, as stop them they did, for a whole year, on what had been planned as the extreme line of outposts. In speaking of the Tyrolese the Emperor became most eloquent.

But it was now growing late. The Emperor explained that he had sent for Count Czernin, not only because he was his Minister, but because Czernin had never for one instant relinquished the idea of Peace. It was for that reason he had made him his Foreign Minister, and in addition, Czernin knew better than any one the delicacy of Austria's relations with Germany, and had continually resisted the growth of Germany's predominance. So the Prince could speak quite openly before him.

A moment later Count Czernin joined them: a tall, thin, cold man in a frock-coat. He stayed about twenty minutes. Their conversation was coldly formal, despite the Emperor's evident wish to set it upon a more cordial footing. The Prince found Count Czernin so reticent, and, when he spoke, so vague and indeterminate, that he was unable to be certain what actually he had in his mind. Machiavelli would undoubtedly have condemned

his way of expressing himself, for, bluff as he might, his bluff was unsuccessful. So, awaiting his opportunity, the Prince said finally that there could never be Peace without some sacrifice: if the Central Powers were so certain that they could defeat us and win the War, let them do it without more delay. At this Czernin recoiled, saying that he had meant to refer only to the war-map as it stood at the moment; that, certainly, Peace must be concluded at all costs, and that the necessary sacrifices would be made, but that those were, for the time being, not easily defined. He could, however, categorically state this, that any sound Peace terms would be instantly accepted by Austria, while, as for the Germans, since he felt certain that they would never consent to relinquish Alsace and Lorraine, a separation would be, sooner or later, inevitable.

The Prince pointed out, once again, that it was impossible to make Peace with Germany so long as her troops remained on our soil; he himself was fresh from the trenches, and knew well what was felt by the French and Allied Armies in this respect. Peace with Germany would be possible, when it was possible, only on the conditions which had been repeatedly published, in cut-and-dried terms, in the French Press. When Germany had withdrawn her Armies across the Rhine, and had restored Alsace and Lorraine, it might become possible to make terms with her, but that was not what they had to discuss at the moment. He himself was a French Prince, and he was in the presence of the Emperor of Austria, not the German Emperor.

Count Czernin asked why France wanted Alsace as before 1815, and then seemed to regret having put the question. The Prince answered that what was wanted was the Alsace of Louis XIV., including Sarrelouis and Landau, and more complete than the mutilated Alsace which survived Waterloo. However, Count Czernin did not seem to take much interest in his explanation. The conversation became vaguer, until the Prince insisted

upon detailed information. This the Emperor, after taking Czernin aside, promised to let him have the following evening. Czernin then left them.

The Emperor went with him to the end of the room, while the Princes withdrew to another apartment with the Empress. Prince Sixte took the opportunity to ask the Empress directly, as he had already asked her through Count Erdödy, to use her influence to save what was left of the Cathedral and, as far as possible, the City of Rheims from further destruction. The Empress replied that she had already intervened, but that the Germans denied having received her letter; she would, however, write again. With evident distress she asked the Prince what the actual state of the Cathedral was.

The Emperor then joined them, and told Prince Sixte that Count Czernin would wait upon him next day at Count Erdödy's, and that he would like him to come again to Laxenburg at the same hour. He regretted that their conversation had not taken the turn he intended, but hoped that next day there would be less suspicion and more cordiality. A few minutes later the two Princes left Laxenburg by the same discreet process they had followed in coming there. The storm had now subsided, and the whole town of Vienna lay silent beneath the snow.

The following morning, March 24, Count Czernin called upon the two Princes at Count Erdödy's house. Although he was less reserved than at their first encounter, this conversation was little if any more successful, owing to his continual reticence. Even to show a willingness to make the first move seemed to him an unimaginable sacrifice. He would prefer to see all parties assume a simultaneous initiative; however, he was more definite on the subject of Germany. That Alliance would, he assured them, be broken on the day when Germany showed a desire to make it impossible for Austria to conclude a reasonable Peace. He laid great stress on the need for secrecy in the intricate play of the negotia-

tions still before them. He promised to preserve unbroken silence about the Prince's visit and the conversations that had taken place; and begged the Prince to do the same, and to remember the responsibility the Emperor and he shared with a Power like Germany at their side.

As he left them, he said to Count Erdödy, who went with him to the door: "You see the stage we've reached? Things are not going so badly." On which Erdödy begged him to lose no time, for, as Czernin knew better than he, Austria could not hold out indefinitely. He afterwards observed to the Prince that Czernin appeared convinced.

That evening the Princes went again to Laxenburg, with the same secrecy as before. The Emperor gave Prince Sixte the letter he had written, saying that here was the information promised. The Prince thanked him effusively, and promised to keep the whole affair absolutely secret. He was sure, too, that M. Poincaré would be the first to insist on a similar caution from the few persons who would have to be informed of it. The Emperor returned to this subject, explaining that any indiscretion would compel him to send troops to the French front, which would be at once most distasteful to him, and quite fatal to the success of the negotiations. He then spoke at some length of M. Poincaré, in whom he expressed the utmost confidence, but admitted that he had but little in the French Ministers.

They returned to the subject of Italy. The Emperor persisted in his assertion that the Italian question could only be discussed with the three great Powers of the Entente, and that Italy would have no reason to complain of this, as her destiny would merely be entrusted to her own Allies.

The Emperor. In the same spirit of moderation which pervades my letter, you will find us making offers to Italy which she can easily accept; at the same time you must remember the military situation on the Italian front,

where an Army of fresh troops, after month upon month of training on the quiet, took the field at the moment Italy thought propitious, and yet dared not attack my poor territorials on the Isonzo; remember too that, after a whole year of war, while we were facing Russians, Serbians, and Rumanians, they have only just succeeded in taking Gorizia, and have failed to make any further advance from there. They have even forgotten how to deliver the traditional stab in the back. All the same, I am willing to treat with them without the slightest ill-feeling; but I insist once again that I will treat only in concert with the other Powers of the Entente. In this way only can we obtain a result, for the present Italian Government will continue to ignore the national interests, and defeat any attempt at Peace on party grounds alone. They have rejected Giolitti's *parecchio*, and they have taken nothing by force of arms. Their fear of Giolitti still keeps them from counting their casualties. I fully appreciate the reasons you urge for my not attacking the Italians at present. I shall await the result of your negotiations, and shall hold in reserve, meanwhile, my carefully planned offensive. They will of course continue to attack upon the Isonzo front, and, after twenty successive victories, will be found in occupation of their original line.

With this the conversation ended. The Princes left Austria the same night, being escorted into Switzerland by Count Erdödy.

The Prince brought back with him from this expedition what he had asked for in his draft Note of March 17, an autograph letter, written at Laxenburg by the Emperor, with the approval of his responsible Minister, after the final conference between the Prince and Count Czernin at Vienna. This letter marks a great and successful stage in the negotiations, for it adopts without any

reservations, and in the most candid fashion, the bases proposed on January 30, so far as France, Belgium, and Serbia are concerned. In Russia alone, the recent Revolution and his uncertainty as to the future of that country led him to reserve his answer to the international questions of Constantinople and the Straits. So much admitted in the presence of Count Czernin, nothing now remained to be defined but the respective attitudes of Italy, Rumania, and Poland. The Prince had had no hesitation in taking up the Italian question on his own initiative; and the Emperor expressed his readiness to find a satisfactory solution, but declined to treat directly with Italy, having a well-marked preference for calling in France and England to arbitrate upon the points at issue between Italy and the Monarchy. He did not touch on the question of an immediate Armistice, but consented, as the Prince asked, to refrain from any offensive against Italy so long as Peace was within the bounds of possibility. The result of this conversation is not without its importance: it provided safeguards for the present, pending future developments. The Emperor's views on the benefit which must always accrue to Europe from a moderate Peace, as opposed to a decisive victory, show him to have been endowed with a political judgement, as well as common sense, to a degree unfortunately rare in this world. He was anxious to remain, as long as might be, faithful to his Ally; but, should Germany decline to adopt a reasonable course, he would be compelled in the primary interests of the Monarchy to leave the Alliance and sign a separate Peace

between Austria and the Entente. Count Czernin, moreover, had assented to all these expressions of his Sovereign's will.

The text of the Emperor's letter of March 24 is now fairly well known, M. Georges Clemenceau having seen fit to publish it on April 12, 1918.

The Emperor's Autograph Letter

(Laxenburg, *March* 24, 1917.)

My dear Sixte—The third anniversary of a war which has plunged the world in mourning is now drawing near. All the peoples of my Empire are united more firmly than ever in the determination to preserve the integrity of the Monarchy, even at the cost of the greatest sacrifices. By virtue of their unity, of the generous collaboration of all the races of my Empire, we have been able to hold out, for nearly three years, against the most fierce attacks. No one can deny the success of my troops in the field, especially in the Balkan Theatre.

France, too, has shown the greatest strength in resisting invasion, and a magnificent vitality. We must all admire without reservation the traditional valour of her gallant army and the willing spirit of sacrifice shown by the whole French people. And I am particularly pleased to note that, although for the time we are in opposite camps, my Empire is not divided from France by any real differences of outlook or of aspiration ; while I am justified in hoping that my own keen sympathy for France, supported by the affection which she inspires throughout the Monarchy, will prevent the recurrence at any future time of a state of war for which I myself must disclaim all responsibility. Therefore, and in order that I may express in words what I so strongly feel, I request that you will secretly and unofficially convey to M. Poincaré, the President of the French Republic, my assurance that I will use all my personal influence and every other means

in my power to exact from my Allies a settlement of her just claims in Alsace-Lorraine.

As for Belgium, she must be restored in her entirety as a Sovereign State, with the whole of her African possessions, and without prejudice to the compensations she may receive for the losses she has already suffered. Serbia, too, shall be restored as a Sovereign State, and, as a mark of our goodwill towards her, we are prepared to allow her a just and natural approach to the Adriatic, as well as economic concessions on a liberal scale. In return, Austria-Hungary will insist, as a primordial and absolute condition, that the Kingdom of Serbia abandon for the future all relations and suppress all groups or societies whose political object is the disintegration of the Monarchy, and especially the Society called "Narodna Obrana"; and that she take every means in her power loyally to prevent all forms of political agitation, whether within her borders or without, that may tend towards this object, giving us her assurance under a guarantee from the Entente Powers.

Recent events in Russia make it desirable that I should withhold my views with regard to her until such time as a reign of law and order is established there.

Now that I have shown you what I feel, I request that you in your turn, after consultation with France and England, will inform me of their views, so that we may prepare a common ground of mutual understanding on which official negotiations may be based, to the ultimate satisfaction of all parties.

Trusting that we may soon be able to put an end to the sufferings of all the millions of men and all their families, who are now oppressed by sorrow and anxiety, I beg you to be assured of my most warm and brotherly affection.

CHARLES.

Armed with this document the two Princes left Vienna on March 25, reached Neuchâtel on the 27th, and Paris in the morning of the 30th.

On March 14 General Lyautey had resigned; the Briand Cabinet had, in consequence, broken up, although the stability of the Government was of vital importance at the moment; and on March 19 the Ribot Cabinet had taken its place. M. Poincaré, who was at once informed of their return, sent word to Prince Sixte, asking him to call at the Élysée at 10 o'clock the next morning, adding that M. Alexandre Ribot, President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs, had been told of all that had happened so far, and was anxious to meet the Prince.

The Russian Revolution of March 14 had upset the Balance of Power in a manner calculated to have the most serious effect on France, where the real significance of the situation was hardly, so to speak, grasped. Germany began at once to make capital out of the disappearance of our faithful Ally and friend Nicholas II. A telegram dated Amsterdam, March 28, and printed in the *Morning Post*, quotes *Vorwärts* as having said, on the 28th, that next day, in all probability, the German Chancellor would renew—to Prince Lvov's Republican Government—the Peace proposals he had made to the Imperial Government in December. "Let us tell Russia," said *Vorwärts*, "that she can have Peace."

Now that Germany was endeavouring to detach a war-weary Russia from the rest of the Entente, France might very well, it seemed, forestall her by playing the same game, and swiftly detaching from Germany the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, which had begun to feel more and more strongly the necessity for Peace.

During March 30 the Prince occupied himself in drawing up a note which he intended to read next day to the President, together with the Emperor's letter.

NOTE, DRAFTED FOR THE INFORMATION OF M. POINCARÉ

PARIS, *March* 30, 1917.

When I had pointed out to the Emperor the necessity of his admitting formally and without delay the four points which at Paris are considered essential as a basis for an exchange of views between France and her Allies upon which terms of Peace with Austria may be arranged, I was commissioned by him to convey to you, in confidence, the text of an autograph letter, dated March 24, which contains his reply, expressed in the plainest terms, to the questions concerning Alsace and Lorraine, Belgium and the Congo, and Serbia.

Recent events in Russia, which are of a nature calculated to make the future of that country appear uncertain, have induced the Emperor to refrain for the time being from any expression of his views with regard to the future status of Constantinople. He was prepared to associate himself with the views previously expressed by France and England, namely, to recognise a preponderance of Russian influence in that Capital which should be compatible with an international control of the Straits.

Until the recent change of régime at Petrograd, Russian opinion seemed practically unanimous in demanding the possession of Constantinople as an essential condition of the development of the Muscovite Empire. But in the present Government a divergence of opinion is already apparent. Whereas the Foreign Minister, M. Miliukov, holds to the old view, that Russia should annex Constantinople, his colleague M. Kerenski is imbued with the new, that Russia ought to renounce all ideas of

aggrandisement: in this way, the Turks would retain their Capital, while submitting to some form of international administration by the rest of Europe. Until the time when Russia herself arrives at a definite policy on this important point, it appears to the Emperor that the views of the Monarchy, as also those of the Entente, might as well be held in suspense, on the understanding that both parties will be in full agreement with Russia when she expresses her own definite conclusions. It is thought besides, in Austrian circles, that one of the Entente Powers has got into direct or indirect communication with Turkey, and has guaranteed her retention of Constantinople, despite the declarations of policy previously made. This point should be cleared up.

In view of the present condition of Europe, the Emperor trusts that France will be prepared to consider, with the least possible delay and with the greatest secrecy, in common with her Ally England, the bases of negotiation offered in this letter. He trusts, also, that the President of the Republic will inform him, by the channel he has contrived to find, whether these essential points are admitted as preliminary conditions of a Treaty of Peace. France and England might then invite the rest of their Allies to join them in determining the details of such a Treaty, by the ordinary methods of Diplomacy.

Next day, March 31, the third interview between the Prince and the President took place. M. Alexandre Ribot, being prevented by unforeseen circumstances from joining them, was represented by M. Jules Cambon.

THIRD INTERVIEW OF PRINCE SIXTE WITH THE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC (10–10.45 A.M., MARCH 31, 1917)

The Princes arrived in Paris from Switzerland at 10 o'clock in the morning of March 30. M. Martin, who had been told of their arrival, wrote at 8 o'clock that

evening to say that M. Poincaré wished to see the Princes, and hoped they would find it convenient to call upon him at 10 o'clock next morning, and meet M. Ribot, who was now President of the Council and Foreign Minister. They accepted this invitation, and M. Martin came to the Quai de Béthune at 9.15 on the 31st to fetch the Prince, and told him that M. Ribot was prevented at the last moment from coming, but had instructed M. Jules Cambon to take his place at the interview. They reached the Élysée at 10 o'clock, just as M. Cambon arrived there. The President asked how the Princes were, and hoped they had had a comfortable journey. Prince Sixte, coming at once to the point, informed him that he had given the Emperor of Austria a summary of his two previous interviews with M. Poincaré, and that the Emperor had given him a letter, which he now handed to the President. He read this letter, first to himself, and then aloud to M. Cambon. The first point upon which both expressed a desire for fuller information was Constantinople. The Prince replied that Austria made no difficulties about its cession, but that the turn of events in Russia, for one thing, and the rumours of an understanding between Turkey and one of the Entente Powers, for another, had led the Emperor to refrain for the time being from any definite statement. At this, MM. Poincaré and Cambon exchanged glances, and M. Cambon went on to say: "I was speaking yesterday to the Italian Ambassador about the Turkish policy of the Entente, and, at the end of our discussion, the Marquis Salvago Raggi said, 'After all, what we have been saying is not of great importance, as things in the Near East may shape quite differently.'"

The Alsace-Lorraine question was next discussed, the Prince assuring them that he had made it quite clear that the frontier of 1814 must be restored.

M. Poincaré. That is our minimum. The losses we have recently suffered compel us to exact material compensations as well.

As for Belgium, both parties were in complete agree-

ment, the word compensation being clearly understood to cover rectifications of frontier, especially at Malmédy and in other Walloon districts. The Prince observed that, from a military point of view, the occupation of Malmédy by the Belgians was a vital necessity, as the Germans had made it their main base for an invading army.

The Italian question was then discussed at length. M. Cambon explained afresh his old idea about an exchange of Silesia for the Trentino. Finally, M. Poincaré summed up: "The question is, not of an Armistice, but of a separate Peace aiming at the disintegration of the Central Powers, a separate Peace with Austria, who will, thereupon, take her place, in diplomacy, by our side." The Prince spoke briefly of the importance of detaching Austria so as to weaken Germany, with whom no terms could be considered until she was actually defeated.

As for conveying the letter to England, M. Poincaré offered to write to King George, giving him the gist of what the Emperor had written to him. The Prince suggested that he himself should go to England, to see the King and the Ministers chiefly concerned. M. Cambon approved of this, and so, finally, did M. Poincaré, who added: "Public opinion in England is favourable on the whole towards Austria, as it is here, for Paul Deschanel, the President of the Chamber of Deputies, is always asking me when we are going to make peace with Austria." The Prince then pointed out that the reports coming from Charleville were false: the Emperor Charles had not visited the French Front since October 1914, and, out of regard for France, would not go there again. The reports of his movements were almost always false: it had been stated quite recently, for instance, that he had gone to Berlin, when he had actually gone to Prague. Moreover, the Emperor's views had never altered: he hoped to carry on, in future, the policy of a horizontal Alliance between Russia, France, England, and Austria: but it was more than ever necessary to make a secret of

this, as any indiscretion would compel the Emperor to give guarantees to Germany, which would probably mean his sending Austrian Regiments to the French Front.

M. Cambon observed that such a step would be disastrous from the diplomatic point of view. M. Poincaré said: "Hitherto we have only encountered the Austrians at sea, and neither side has a bad word for the other. That could not last, once we had met them on land, at the point of the bayonet. Therefore it is vitally important that this discussion be kept secret."

The conversation ended: the speakers agreeing to think out the best means to adopt, and to resume the discussion at an early date. As he rose to leave, the Prince begged M. Poincaré to save the Tsar, saying that the intervention of France, and that alone, was bound to be successful in the present condition of Russia. M. Poincaré assured him that he was most anxious to do so, and was glad that the question had been put to him in M. Cambon's presence. Some way of approaching Russia must be found. The King of Spain and the King of England had already made representations in Russia, and it was incumbent upon France to support her oldest Ally. He himself had thought of allowing the publication, by an apparent indiscretion, of the Tsar's letters to him, which were a convincing proof of his loyalty to his Allies: but something must be done at once. The Prince said he felt sure he was saying what was keenly felt by many of the French people in imploring their President to rescue the Tsar.

The Prince then left, by the same private staircase, where M. Martin was waiting.

All three were now in complete agreement. They could see their way to a possible solution of the Italian Problem, and M. Poincaré came to the conclusion that it was a question no longer of a mere Armistice between Austria and the Entente,

but of a separate Peace, whose effect would be a considerable diminution of the Central Block. The logical outcome of such a Peace would be an Alliance between Austria-Hungary and the Entente.

If England accepted the Austrian offer as France had done, these two Powers would summon their Allies (especially Italy and Rumania) at the first possible date, through diplomatic channels, and, without disclosing the part played by the Emperor of Austria, would invite them to join in determining the bases appropriate to each of the States concerned in the projected Treaty.

On the same day, March 31, it appears that M. Poincaré obviated the inconvenience caused by M. Ribot's absence from the interview, by sending him a letter in which he showed the stages reached in the conversations between the Prince and M. Jules Cambon.[1]

Next day, April 1, M. William Martin saw the Prince.

Conversation between the Prince and M. William Martin (Paris, April 1, 1917)

After luncheon M. Martin took the Prince aside and informed him that M. Ribot had called on the President of the Republic the previous day. M. Poincaré had read him the text of the Emperor's letter, with which M. Ribot was greatly impressed. He had expressed a desire to see the Prince. He clearly understood the importance of keeping the whole affair secret, and, with this in view,

[1] Socialist Congress, October 9, 1918: speech by M. Cachin, a Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber of Deputies, reported in the *Matin*, Thursday, Oct. 10, 3rd edition (*éd. des départements*), p. 2, col. 4.

he had at once invited Mr. Lloyd George to join him on Wednesday at Boulogne, where he would instruct him in the terms, without actually letting him see the text of the Emperor's letter. He would swear him to secrecy, at the same time warning him that the Prince would be going at once to visit King George V. in England, to convey to His Majesty a letter which M. Poincaré would entrust to him, and the proposals of the Emperor of Austria. The King would bring them before the British War Cabinet (Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, Lord Curzon, and Lord Milner), who would be similarly sworn to secrecy.

The President of the Republic had left Paris the previous day, with the Presidents of the Senate and Chamber, to visit the Front. He was to return on Tuesday, when he would hold a Council of Ministers. M. Ribot would see him alone after this Council to discuss this matter, of which he would say nothing before the War Committee. He would see the Prince the same day, before leaving for Boulogne.

As soon as M. Ribot returned from Boulogne, the Prince was to see him again. The Prince would be accompanied to England by Prince Xavier. The French Embassy would undertake all the arrangements, especially those for an audience of the King, and an interview with Mr. Lloyd George. M. Jules Cambon had already written about this to his brother, M. Paul Cambon. After his return from England the Prince was to go to see the King of the Belgians, and then to Switzerland. Speaking for himself, M. Martin told the Prince that he felt the Emperor's letter to be inspired by the noblest and most humane ideals.

On April 4, Paris editors were warned by the Press Bureau on behalf of M. Ribot, that nothing must be said about a separate Peace with Austria. The same day M. William Martin asked the Prince to meet M. Jules Cambon again.

Interview with M. Jules Cambon (34 Quai de Béthune, Paris, April 6, 1917, 2.30 p.m.)

M. Jules Cambon informed the Prince that he had spoken to M. Ribot, and that they had come to the following conclusions. M. Ribot now enjoyed rather more leisure, owing to the Parliamentary recess, and was going to meet Mr. Lloyd George in the course of the next week. He would begin by making him promise, on his word of honour, to keep the whole affair secret. No action could be taken by France without some preliminary understanding with England, on which an understanding with Italy could afterwards be based. The Prince then remarked that on the whole nothing more seemed to have been decided than in their last conversation at the Élysée. M. Cambon admitted his own preference for a separate Peace with Austria, but said that in his conversation with M. Ribot other possibilities had been considered, such as an Armistice or a secret agreement by which they would make a formal pretence of carrying on the war. M. Cambon begged the Prince to have patience for a few days longer, as the two Premiers were bound to meet in the following week. The Prince then said he thought he should call upon M. Ribot, if only out of politeness ; to this suggestion M. Cambon excused himself from giving an immediate answer. He had mentioned that his brother, M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in England, was staying in Paris, and the Prince expressed a wish to make his acquaintance. This seemed to please M. Cambon, who promised to inform his brother ; the latter already knew something of their negotiations.

M. Cambon then spoke of Germany. The new form of the war, as a war against the Hohenzollern, could not but be pleasing to the Habsburgs. It was known in Paris that the German Emperor was suffering from albuminuria, and that he was greatly disturbed by the reports from Russia. M. Cambon agreed with the Prince that the

Revolution must weaken Russia, and that it constituted a grave danger to her Allies. He spoke for some time of the Tsar, the Grand Dukes, and the Russian Government; then, turning to America, observed that the reasons pleaded by Mr. Wilson existed already in 1914, namely, the invasion of Belgium and Luxembourg, and that America's attitude had now completely changed. "It amounts to this," said the Prince, "that we must have America on our side. Her millions will turn the scale." During his last visit to Switzerland he had spoken of this to the Emperor's Envoy, saying that the example of the United States would be followed by China, Brazil, and all the American Republics. However much we might like to see the Hohenzollern themselves discredited, any attempt to set up a Republic in Germany would be fraught with grave risk to the Entente. M. Cambon agreed, and told the Prince of the examination of a captured German N.C.O., a most intelligent man and a Socialist; he admitted that a movement against the Hohenzollern was possible, but refused to admit the possibility of a Republic in South Germany, especially in Bavaria, where the reigning dynasty seemed to be firmly established.

The Prince recalled what he had said to M. Poincaré, and insisted once again to M. Cambon on the need for a determined effort, which it behoved France to make, for safeguarding the Emperor of Russia. M. Cambon promised that something would be done, but pointed out that it would not be easy. Then, after going over the main points of the conversation, he took his leave.

The net result of this conversation, as the Prince observed, was that no change had been made in the decisions reached at the Élysée on March 31. It must also be remarked that M. Ribot, who was supposed to be so anxious to meet the Prince, was actually in no hurry to do so.

Meanwhile Germany had at last provoked the

Senate and House of Representatives of the United States, assembled in Congress, to pass a resolution on April 2 that a State of War existed between them and the German Empire. President Wilson gave his assent on April 6, and immediately made proclamation of a War in which the democracy of America, face to face with an autocratic Germany, saw the one and only chance of securing a certain and a righteous Peace for the world.[1]

At six o'clock on the morning of the 11th, M. Ribot left for Folkestone; where the conversation to which he had summoned Mr. Lloyd George lasted for three hours (2–5 P.M.); he reached Paris again at 1 A.M. on the 12th. The official report says no more than that:

> M. Ribot, President of the Council, and Mr. Lloyd George met yesterday at Folkestone, to discuss various matters of urgency.[2]

In England, meanwhile, great anxiety was beginning to be felt in official circles, and quite justifiably, in view of the news from Russia.

M. William Martin now came to warn the Prince that M. Ribot was sending M. Jules Cambon to see him.

The Prince's Notes of a Conversation with M. Jules Cambon (Paris, April 12, 1917)

At ten o'clock M. William Martin came and I saw him. He told me that M. Ribot had crossed during the

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[1] *International Conciliation. Documents regarding the European War*, series No. xv. "The Entry of the United States." May 1917, No. 114. American Association for International Conciliation, sub-station 84 (407 West 117th Street), New York City.

[2] *L'Écho de Paris*, Friday, April 13, 1917.

night from Folkestone where he had seen Mr. Lloyd George, and that he was sending M. Jules Cambon to me at once.

M. Jules Cambon then arrived. He told me that M. Ribot had instructed him to say that he had seen Mr. Lloyd George the previous day, and had read the Emperor's letter to him. Mr. Lloyd George had promised to keep the secret, and considered we ought to proceed with the negotiations, but that Signor Sonnino must first be informed; so they decided that the three Premiers, MM. Ribot, Lloyd George, and Sonnino, should meet in secret at an early date. I pointed out the danger of telling the Italians everything; M. Cambon agreed, and urged me strongly to lay my reasons before M. Ribot. It was possible, as M. Paul Cambon observed, for the Premiers to meet and talk without divulging everything. I suggested attributing the Austrian proposals to Count Mensdorff, whose presence in Switzerland was disturbing the Chancelleries at the moment. M. Cambon shared my apprehension of some intentional indiscretion by the Giolitti and Tittoni parties giving the secret away to Germany. I must say so, he told me, to M. Ribot, who wanted to meet me at the Élysée in the course of the next day or two. The four points would form a base, more or less, for discussion; we could then consider the rectifications of frontiers for Serbia, Italy, and Rumania, but those were mere details. M. Cambon was pleased to see things take so promising a shape: "I did not expect," he told me, "that we should get on so well." An Armistice must come first, and then Peace. Speaking of compensations for Austria, he still had in mind Prussian Silesia. "On our side, we are burdened with Allies whose wants we must satisfy. Signor Sonnino is splendid, though somewhat intractable by nature, but his position is by no means secure. We shall see in due course which of the Italian demands we can, and which the Allies cannot, accept." He again made me promise to speak like this to M. Ribot, and said that he would let me know as soon as possible, by M. Martin, the

day and hour fixed for my interview at the Élysée. I insisted on the necessity of my going to London before the Sonnino interview, or, at any rate, of my being allowed to talk to Mr. Lloyd George.

The same afternoon the Prince had an interview with the President of the Republic, at which M. Ribot was present for the first time.

Fourth Interview with the President of the Republic (April 12, 1917)

M. William Martin came to see the Prince, with the request that he would call at the Élysée at 3.15, when he would find M. Poincaré and M. Ribot there. At 3 o'clock he came to fetch the Prince, and at 3.15 they reached the Élysée. The Prince was immediately shown in to M. Poincaré, who, while they waited for M. Ribot, told him what had transpired at the meeting of the two Premiers. When M. Ribot arrived, the President introduced him to the Prince and continued his narrative.

"M. Ribot, President of the Council and Minister of Foreign Affairs, went yesterday, April 11, to Folkestone, where he met Mr. Lloyd George. He showed him the Emperor's letter; and they agreed that negotiations with Austria should continue, but that absolute secrecy was essential. This secrecy Mr. Lloyd George promised M. Ribot, on his word of honour, to observe. He would say nothing to any of his colleagues in the British Government, and would only mention the matter, without details, to the King. He would ask him, too, to keep it secret, adding that, as soon as France and England were in agreement, they would have to find out what were the intentions of Italy."

M. Ribot then spoke: he said that, before communicating with Italy, he had intended to refer to the Prince, and obtain his consent. The Prince dwelt on the grave consequences of an indiscretion on Italy's part; there was nothing Germany might not do if she came to hear

of the negotiations, and, in the event of any indiscretion, he could not count on the Emperor's having even a week to live: the fate of the heir to the Turkish throne, Youssouf Yzzedin, was a significant object-lesson. He himself was, first and foremost, a loyal son and servant of France, but in this business the Emperor had confided in him, as in M. Poincaré, and he had a very real sense of his responsibility. M. Poincaré spoke in the same way: for his part, he said, he was bound to take every care to preserve the Emperor from dangers to his person, since the Emperor, by an act of international courtesy, had addressed a communication to him. It was his obvious duty, however, as the Constitutional Head of the State, to keep the President of his Council informed. M. Ribot remarked, "We are all honour bound!"

They then decided upon the best way of putting the case before Signor Sonnino. M. Ribot had drafted a telegram, asking him to meet Mr. Lloyd George and himself at Saint Jean de Maurienne, to discuss in secret matters of the highest importance. Mr. Lloyd George could be summoned to Paris by telephone at a moment's notice, to accompany M. Ribot to Saint Jean de Maurienne. An excuse for this meeting could be found in the necessity for settling some military question or other. Then M. Ribot might say to Signor Sonnino that the British and French Governments had reason to believe that overtures would shortly be made to them, and that, so as not to be taken by surprise and with no answer ready, they had come to discuss the matter with Signor Sonnino, that secrecy was the essential condition of success, and that any premature indiscretion would prevent the overtures being made. The Prince still insisted, and M. Ribot gave a solemn promise, that no mention should be made of the Emperor's personal intervention.

M. Poincaré repeated once again that there was no question whatever of a Peace with Germany; quite the reverse. He assured M. Ribot that the Prince was as

anxious as themselves to see Germany utterly defeated. France must recover not only the Alsace-Lorraine of 1814, but material compensations besides.

The Prince said that he himself went even further than the President, and held that we ought to neutralise all the left bank of the Rhine. The President smiled as he answered that one could not always say everything one felt, but that his views and the Prince's were practically the same.

The Prince said that, if he had not misunderstood the Emperor's Envoy, it was conceivable that Germany, should she get wind of the negotiations, might wish to join Austria in taking part in them; that would, he thought, be the moment for the Allies to split the Germanic block by refusing to have any dealings with Germany, while continuing to treat with Austria.

They then discussed the expediency of the Prince's going to London. M. Poincaré agreed with the Prince that he ought to go, whereas M. Ribot was inclined to take the opposite view. The Prince would see Mr. Lloyd George, anyhow, in Paris, in a few days' time, while the King of England took no part in political discussions. The Prince did not press the matter.

Returning to Italy, neither M. Poincaré nor M. Ribot concealed their distrust of the Italian statesmen. As for the King of the Belgians, M. Poincaré said that he had had an answer to his letter, in which the King said that there was no military reason against the Prince's remaining in Paris.

On leaving the Élysée, the Prince gave a brief impression of the interview to M. William Martin.

Conversation between the Prince and M. William Martin after leaving the Élysée (Paris, April 12, 1917)

The Prince briefly informed M. William Martin of the result of the conversation, and dwelt on the special

importance, to his mind, of his going to London. M. William Martin entirely agreed with him : the visit was, he thought, necessary, if only as an act of courtesy to the King. He would mention it again that evening to the President of the Republic. The Prince told him how much he wanted to see M. Paul Cambon again, especially to talk to him about Italy. M. William Martin promised to do what he could to effect this. He thought it most important that M. Paul Cambon should be kept fully informed of everything that happened, and should be in a position to give his advice, which would in any case be listened to with attention. The Prince insisted on having M. de Manteyer with him in Switzerland, to which M. William Martin agreed.

What the Prince gathered from this interview at the Élysée was that at Folkestone, the day before, England had decided to join France in accepting the Emperor's offer of Peace, and to carry on negotiations with Austria in secret, so as not to arouse the suspicions of Germany. So far, all parties were in agreement ; as, also, in admitting the necessity of dealing with the Italian problem. Where there was difference of opinion was as to the best way of discovering Italy's designs, and of inducing her to make Peace. The Prince considered that M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George should meet Baron Sonnino for this purpose at an early date, but since he had made France and England promise to keep the Emperor's activities secret, he felt reluctant to let Italy be told everything. The President of the Republic and MM. Jules and Paul Cambon supported him : M. Ribot also, though not without hesitations and difficulties. Still, M. Ribot did support him ; but was unwilling to consent to the Prince's going to London

to carry on the work he had been doing in Paris. M. Poincaré, however, could see no objection to his going.

The situation was summed up most clearly by M. Jules Cambon. Henceforward an understanding existed between France, England, and Austria that negotiations should begin for a separate Peace between them. That was the fundamental point: he rejoiced that it had been won, and more easily than he could have expected. It was true that France and England were hampered by Allies, whose claims would have to be met. The rectifications of frontier necessary for the development of Serbia, Italy, and Rumania had still to be discussed, but, after all, "those were mere details." In Italy's case, especially, they would see in good time which of her claims could and which could not be supported.

M. Cambon's own view was, that France and England, as represented by M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George, if they were agreed on the policy to be adopted towards their Allies, had sufficient authority in themselves to convince the rest of their common obligation to conclude the Peace offered to them, by limiting all territorial claims to the areas constituted by the option of those subjects of the Monarchy who wished to leave it. Italy, for instance, could expect those districts only whose inhabitants wished to become Italians; she could make no logical claim to annex Slav districts, without their consent.

CHAPTER III

BARON SONNINO'S VETO AND THE ENTENTE'S REPLY

(April 19–22, 1917)

When the Prince learned that the interview between M. Ribot and Baron Sonnino was fixed for April 19, at Saint Jean de Maurienne, and that Mr. Lloyd George would pass through Paris on his way there, he decided to wait to see him until he came, and so gave up the idea of going to London.

On the 14th, so as to lose no time, he asked M. William Martin to telegraph to Switzerland, and to make an appointment there with Count Erdödy for Tuesday, April 24: this message M. William Martin sent, with M. Ribot's approval.[1] The same evening the Prince discussed the situation with M. Paul Cambon, the French Ambassador in London, who happened to be passing through Paris.

Conversation between Prince Sixte de Bourbon and M. Paul Cambon, French Ambassador in London (146 Boulevard Haussmann, Saturday, April 14, 1917, 7.30–8.15 p.m.)

M. Paul Cambon said that M. Ribot had informed him of the decisions reached by himself and Mr. Lloyd George.

[1] See Appendix X.

Admitting that the disproportionate ambitions of Italy introduced a serious difficulty into the negotiations, M. Cambon still thought that Italy should be approached without delay, though not, of course, told anything at all about the secret documents. In any case, he went on, "M. Poincaré alone knows of the Emperor's letter; M. Ribot, Mr. Lloyd George, and myself are supposed not to know anything, which is all the more reason that Signor Sonnino should know nothing either. We can trust Signor Sonnino (whose mother, by the way, came from Scotland); but he is in a most insecure position: they are trying to get rid of him, and any such change would be to our disadvantage. We shall have to proceed with the utmost caution; for Italy's ambition inspires her to all kinds of mischief; but at present I think we can only risk the interview and see what comes of it. M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George will do all they can to modify Italy's claims."

To this long speech the Prince replied that he had several causes for alarm. First and foremost was the fact that the Emperor of Austria had given him his quite unsolicited confidence, and had entrusted a document to him which, if it came to be known, must involve the Emperor in the most serious consequences. He himself was therefore in honour bound not to betray the Emperor's confidence, and must therefore do all he could to keep the existence of the letter a secret. M. Ribot had given him a formal promise. Signor Sonnino certainly seemed above suspicion, but not so his subordinates. Should Signor Sonnino insist on referring the matter to the President of the Council and the King, that meant a further danger of leakage. Once Germany got to know of the part played by the Emperor Charles, the risk of his assassination would be very grave. Even if Germany saw no more than that Austria was anxious for Peace, there was no saying what might not happen.

"I should not dream," he went on, "of offering advice to a man like M. Ribot, but I think it is important that he

should be warned that once Signor Sonnino sees that France and England are interested in continuing these conversations, as you have just said they are, he will take advantage of that interest to extort from them fresh concessions for Italy.

"We should do well, I think, to start with the point that the support we were getting from Russia has now practically ceased. There is even a fear lest the extreme elements in Russia may attempt to make Peace with Germany, which would set free some 80 or 90 German Divisions now on the Russian Front for a concentration on ours. Similarly Austria may move her troops to the Italian Front. The situation is thus quite simple. Faced by the whole strength of Germany, we could promise no help to Italy, and what could Italy by herself do against the whole strength of Austria? Surely, it would be better for her to take advantage of the offers of Peace which have actually been made? It must be fully understood that there is no question of ourselves, France and England, making Peace with Germany: the sole object of these negotiations is to isolate Germany, so that we can inflict a crushing defeat upon her later."

M. Cambon had several times interrupted, to express his approval of what the Prince was saying. He now went on to say that, in his opinion, Count Mensdorff's conversations in Switzerland provided the best pretext for broaching the subject to the Italians. Count Mensdorff had said a great deal about Peace. M. Cambon went on to speak of the Italian danger.

The Prince. We know that at the Congress of Rome Signor Sonnino made a very skilful attempt to divide the Allies, so as to get more out of each of them. Besides, there is no doubt he had a considerable influence over the mind of Mr. Lloyd George, and that must not be allowed to revive at Saint Jean de Maurienne.

M. Cambon. That danger is lessened by the fact that M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George will be together at the conversations with Signor Sonnino. M. Cambon then

spoke with enthusiasm of M. Ribot, whom he had known for fifty years, for they had been in the School of Law together. He was a man of the utmost rectitude, prudent, circumspect, and extremely adroit.

The Austrian Offensive at the end of May, 1916, very nearly succeeded; and it was then that we all implored the Russians to antedate their Offensive, so as to save Italy. They put it forward three weeks, and, whatever the Italian people may say, this did actually save them. The Italian Government and Ambassadors know what they have to rely on: they are under no illusion as to the danger they are in from Russia's present weakness: I daresay that consideration will serve to moderate their claims.

The Prince. There is still another danger, however; at least, I think so. Some one in Italy might let Russia know that France and England are hoping to conclude a separate Peace with Austria, and so might suggest to the Russians that they should do the same with Germany. The Italian Socialist Deputy Morgari's visit to Petrograd or Stockholm makes this appear possible. Morgari is at heart a Pacifist and Germanophile.

M. Cambon. Alas, the Russians need no encouragement in that direction.

M. Cambon then spoke of Russia, the origins of the Revolution, the danger in which it involved us, the loyalty of the Emperor Nicholas; then of the Empress and Rasputin. Before they parted, the Prince asked for some information about Mr. Lloyd George. M. Cambon drew a vivid sketch of him, in the following lines: "He is a Welshman, not an Englishman. In fact, he is the reverse of an Englishman: enthusiastic, bright, quick-witted, and unsettled. An Englishman never goes back on what he has once said: Lloyd George is apt to perform evolutions, his words have not always the weight of a Balfour's or a Bonar Law's. On the other hand, he has some qualities of priceless value at the moment; among others that of not being obsessed by the fetish of Con-

stitutionalism. Mr. Asquith would never have consented to discuss a matter of this sort without telling his Cabinet, whereas Mr. Lloyd George has solemnly promised not to mention it to any of his colleagues. He will say a few words only to the King, and get his promise of secrecy also." And here M. Cambon said that he now agreed with M. Ribot, in spite of what he had told the Prince at their previous meeting. The Emperor's letter said nothing about the Prince's going to see the King of England, but simply asked him to consult the British Government; MM. Cambon and Ribot both felt that nothing would be gained by approaching the King, who was punctilious in his duty to the Constitution. It would be better for the Prince to postpone his visit to England.

The Prince further asked M. Cambon what compensations could ultimately be found for Italy in Greece and Turkey; to which M. Cambon replied that it would be almost impossible to satisfy Italy, as her demands were so numerous. As for Corfu, which the Italians were then in process of occupying, it was odd to find the champions of the principle of Nationality occupying an island which was entirely Greek.

M. Paul Cambon returned to London next day, Sunday, April 15.

On April 15, M. William Martin called on the Prince, who set before him a plan which he thought of immediate importance, namely, that the President of the Republic should be induced to use his influence with M. Ribot so as to get him to make an arrangement beforehand with Mr. Lloyd George which would prevent Signor Sonnino from playing his old game of separating his Allies and so getting more out of them. It was only if M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George met first in Paris and agreed upon the maximum concessions to be made to Italy, that there was any chance of their being

successful at Saint Jean de Maurienne in modifying Italy's more unreasonable claims. It would also be a good thing to bring home to the Italians the risk they ran from the impotence of Russia, and to base the actual discussion on that risk. M. William Martin entirely agreed with what the Prince said, and promised to mention it to M. Poincaré.

Meanwhile, on April 3, at the moment when the United States was making up her mind to declare War on Germany, the two Emperors met at Homburg, accompanied by their Consorts, the German Imperial Chancellor, and Count Czernin. This action was not kindly received in France when it became known there. On April 16, M. Poincaré wrote to M. Ribot, saying what he thought of it.[1] At the same time that the Emperor Charles was making a secret offer of Peace to the Entente, the latest proof of which was his letter of March 24, he was publicly associating himself with Germany —on April 3—to treat with Revolutionary Russia, against the interests of the Entente; this made him suspect, especially as his Minister, Count Czernin, was notorious for his unfailing tactlessness and indiscretion.[2]

We have since learned, however, what attitude the Emperor Charles actually adopted at Homburg. Without revealing the task he had entrusted to Prince Sixte, of negotiating with the

[1] Socialist Congress, Oct. 9, 1918: Speech by M. Cachin, Deputy and Member of the Foreign Affairs Committee of the Chamber, reported in *Le Matin*, Thursday, Oct. 10, 1918, 3rd edition (*éd. des départements*), p. 2, col. 5.

[2] *Une Déclaration de l'Autriche.* The Habsburg Monarchy announces that it makes no claims of conquest, and is prepared to treat with the Russian Revolution. (*Le Matin*, Monday, April 16, 1917.)

Entente, he did his utmost to induce the Emperor William to take a rational view of Peace. He assured him that their two Empires would soon have the whole world in arms against them, and so could no longer hope to emerge from the War with victory ; Peace with the Entente would soon, he urged, be necessary for both Empires, and if the German Empire declined to consider Peace on reasonable terms, then the Dual Monarchy could not continue in an offensive Alliance beyond the coming summer or autumn at the latest. Any Peace with the Entente *necessarily* presupposed the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine by Germany to France, but he, Charles, was prepared to compensate Germany for such a sacrifice by offering his Ally William all those parts of Poland and Galicia which were at his disposal. That would amount to the German Empire's receiving an ell in the East for every inch it would have to forfeit in the West.[1]

So much the young Emperor said at Homburg in fulfilment of the promises he had made on February 20 and March 24 to his brother-in-law, Prince Sixte, but just so much, unfortunately, M. Raymond Poincaré was unable to guess when the news of the Homburg Conference reached him ; and if he could not guess it, still less could M. Alexandre Ribot. M. Aristide Briand might, possibly, have surmised it, despite the thick mists of uncertainty which Count Czernin was for ever—in the most light-hearted fashion—drawing over the banks of the blue Danube.

[1] This was recently confirmed by Herr Schager, on March 24, as reported by the *Morning Post's* Correspondent in Vienna. (*Morning Post*, Wednesday, March 31, 1920, p. 5, col. 1, " Czernin's Guile.")

This attempt by the Emperor Charles to move his Ally was the last made by a loyal and honourable man, before being impelled, by the evident interest of his subjects, to negotiate openly for a separate Peace with the Entente. It need hardly be said that no one at Homburg paid him the least attention. Germany was still blinded and deafened by her pride.

On their return to Vienna, on April 12, Count Czernin at the Emperor's command made a written summary of the situation, in which he reiterated some of the facts mentioned at Homburg.[1] This summary the Emperor sent next day to his Ally, the Emperor William, who was now at Kreuznach. From this document we may extract certain passages :

"It is evident to me that, by the late summer or autumn, we shall have to bring the war to an end at all costs."[2] "I do not suppose that internal conditions in Germany are different, really, from those here ; but I am afraid that false impressions may be formed in military circles in Berlin."[3] "In Germany they are counting on great results from the submarine war : I myself think these expectations will prove false."[4] "Your Majesty has, with the support of my own responsi-

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[1] Count Czernin published this report himself on December 11, 1918. See Ottokar Czernin : *Über die Politik während des Weltkrieges. Rede, gehalte den 11 Dezember 1918* (Zweite Auflage, Wien, Verlag von Moritz Perles, I., Seilergasse 4, 34 pp. 8vo), pp. 10-14.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 11. "So bin mir doch vollständig klar darüber . . . dass im Spätsommer oder Herbst um jedem Preis Schluss gemacht werden muss."

[3] *Ibid.* p. 12. "Ich glaube nicht, dass die interne Situation in Deutschland wesentlich anders steht als hier, nur fürchte ich, dass man sich in Berlin in den militärischen Kreisen gewissen Täuschungen hingibt."

[4] *Ibid.* p. 13. "Man setzt in Deutschland grosse Hoffnungen auf den Unterseebootkrieg. Ich halte diese Hoffnungen für trügerisch."

bility, evaded the frequent attempts made by our enemies to separate us from our Allies, for Your Majesty is incapable of any dishonourable action. But Your Majesty has commanded me to inform our Allies, the Statesmen of the German Empire, that our strength is now exhausted, and that Germany must not count upon our support beyond Martinmas of this year. This command I have obeyed. . . ."[1]

This document, whose import is unmistakable, was signed by Czernin; and its despatch to the Emperor William by the Emperor Charles on April 13 was equivalent to a termination by the Monarchy of her Alliance with Germany on November 11, 1917, at the very latest, if the German Headquarters were still determined to carry on the War, and if the terms of Peace which Austria had asked from the Entente could be realised by that date.

It will now be apparent how utterly mistaken the French Government was in believing that the Homburg Conference and the attitude publicly adopted by Count Czernin on the Russian question signified a double game to be played at the Entente's expense and for Germany's benefit. The French were mistaken, and the consequences of their mistake were to prove irremediable.

While these events were transpiring in Germany, Paris received a fresh excitement in the shape of

[1] *Über die Politik während des Weltkrieges, etc.*, p. 14: "Euer Majestät haben die wiederholten Versuche unserer Feinde uns von unseren Bundesgenossen zu trennen unter meinen verantwortlichen Deckung abgelehnt, weil Euer Majestät keiner unehrlichen Handlung fähig sind. Aber Euer Majestät haben mich gleichzeitig beauftragt den Verbündeten Staatsmännern des Deutschen Reiches zu sagen, dass wir am Ende unserer Kräfte sind und dass Deutschland über den Spätsommer hinaus nicht mehr auf uns wird rechnen können. Ich habe diese Befehle ausgeführt. . . ."

two Press Telegrams, sent from Rome on April 14, to the Information Agencies. These were couched in the following terms :

PRESS COMMUNIQUÉS FROM ROME

PARIS, *April* 16, 1917.

Telegram from M. Jules Rateau, dated Rome, April 14 (*Wireless*).

ITALY WAITING

Four million men under arms. Cadorna, Dictator, instead of launching an Offensive, speaks of nothing, even to Ministers, but defence. Fighting spirit seems to have died out. Rome is completely changed. People are afraid of the Austrian Offensive. They are sick, not of the War, but of inaction.

The Italian Government understands that the Austrian Minister at Berne has recently communicated Austria's Peace Terms to the British Minister there, who has forwarded them to London. These terms appear to have been communicated at Easter or a few days later.

Telegram (*Havas*) *dated Rome, April* 14

Austria has planned her Offensive which Germany promised to support. Germany has not done so: the Offensive need no longer be feared. Austria by herself is unable to launch it.

In commenting on these paragraphs, we have a right to insist that Italy now assume the Offensive so as to carry out her programme of annexations, or, failing that, that she abandon both her Offensive and this extravagant programme.

It was rumoured that the Commander-in-Chief, Cadorna, was posing as Dictator ; but, instead of thinking of an Offensive in support of that which General Nivelle was then preparing to launch, he

spoke only of defensive schemes to the Government at Rome, over which the Lieutenant-General of the Kingdom was presiding. He published a statement that there was no longer any fear of a combined attack by Germany and Austria, as Germany had withdrawn her support. Moreover, the Italian Government understood that the Austrian Minister at Berne had recently communicated to his English colleague there the terms upon which Austria would make Peace. These terms were known about Easter day.

It was difficult to state offhand with any confidence exactly what lay beneath this mysterious propaganda. But anyhow, if Italy was resolved to confine her military efforts within strict limits, she ought, surely, to have restricted her schemes of expansion in proportion, so that the projected Conference at Saint Jean de Maurienne might lead to a general agreement to end the War at once on all those Fronts where the Entente troops were not faced by Germans.

On April 18, in spite of various objections raised to dissuade him, the Prince obtained M. William Martin's consent to his meeting Mr. Lloyd George, if possible, as soon as he arrived in Paris on his way to Saint Jean de Maurienne.

The Meeting with Mr. Lloyd George (Wednesday, April 18, 1917)

About 11 a.m. M. William Martin called at the Quai de Béthune, and said that M. Lloyd George would arrive that evening at 6. He would go at once to the Hôtel Crillon, and at 7.15 would visit the President of the Republic, from whom he would go on straight to the station about 9: so that there would not be too much

time for him and the Prince to meet. The Prince insisted that he must and would see Mr. Lloyd George. M. Martin again pointed out the risk of the British Premier's saying something indiscreet before Signor Sonnino—mentioning, for instance, that he had seen the Prince.

The Prince proposed to go to the Hôtel Crillon at 6.10, and wait there for Mr. Lloyd George and M. Martin. If the Premier had no other engagement, that would take up the whole of his time, M. Martin was to tell him, or the Prince could go straight to his room and see him there.

M. Martin said, further, that Count Czernin's statements about Russia formed a new feature in the situation; that MM. Poincaré and Ribot were much disturbed by them, and that Mr. Lloyd George, also, was certain to be annoyed.

As he left, M. Martin again expressed his uneasiness about Mr. Lloyd George's discretion, and said that if, before the evening, the Prince should change his mind, and decide that it was better for him not to meet Mr. Lloyd George, a line to himself at the Quai d'Orsay would be ample warning.

An account of this interview follows: the Prime Minister promised to keep the Emperor's letter secret; and it must be admitted that he kept this promise.

Summary of the Prince's First Interview with Mr. Lloyd George (Paris, April 18, 1917)

The Prince called at the Hôtel Crillon at 6 o'clock. Ten minutes later Mr. Lloyd George arrived with M. William Martin, who escorted him to his suite, and returned to tell the Prince that the Prime Minister would see him in five minutes.

The Prince was taken then by M. William Martin to the Prime Minister's sitting-room (No. 111) and introduced.

Mr. Lloyd George. I am very glad to see you.

M. Martin left them together. Mr. Lloyd George asked the Prince to sit down by the fire. After some remarks on the Offensive then taking place, in which the Prince expressed his admiration for the British Army, and especially for its artillery, which Mr. Lloyd George had created, he came to the point. He explained briefly the part he had played so far, and how he had in no way solicited it.

The Prince. Without a move on my part, the Emperor trusted me, and I am bound by honour not to betray the trust he puts in me. And therefore I obeyed an impulse of my conscience asking you to see me in order to have the opportunity of laying before you a few points. I will speak plainly like a soldier and not as a diplomat. I am a soldier and not a diplomat.

If Germany happened to hear anything about the present negotiations, she would exert reprisals against Austria and, as well, against the Emperor. I have the most serious reasons to fear a murder as in the case of the heir of Turkey. An indiscretion cannot happen here certainly. But I have some fears about Italy.

Mr. Lloyd George. You can be sure of Sonnino and Boselli.

The Prince. I do not doubt these gentlemen's loyalty. But you know how easily the most well-kept secret can slip through the fingers.

Mr. Lloyd George. We had an old feeling of friendship towards Austria. We would willingly shake hands with her even to-day if she would leave Germany. And I dare say that in France you are in the same disposition. But Italy nourishes rather bitter feelings against Austria. Italy is our Ally. We cannot make Peace without her.

The Prince. The ambitions of Italy are great. And contradict in a certain manner the principles of nationalities.

Mr. Lloyd George having asked what the situation was in Trieste, the Prince told him that there were more Italians in Marseilles than in Trieste, and that Istria

and Dalmatia were purely Slavonic. He gave several instances. Mr. Lloyd George said that, in his opinion, we ought to give the Italians the Trentino triangle, as far, perhaps, as Bozen.

The Prince. If Italy took by her arms the territory she claims, there would not be anything to object to. But Italy does not want to attack.

Mr. Lloyd George. I understand. (*Then, passing to Germany, he asked the Prince*) Is not Austria playing the game of Germany ? Because in this case we should shut the door in her face.

The Prince. Absolutely not. And the best proofs are the propositions of the Emperor.

Mr. Lloyd George. Indeed, his letter does not suggest a game in common with Germany. But a few days after the letter, he went to Homburg, where he stayed a few days with the German Emperor. Do you know something of what happened there ?

The Prince. No. But how can you imagine, having read the letter and in particular what is written there, and in what terms, about Alsace-Lorraine, admitting the just claim of France, that the German Emperor agrees with such an idea ! If German propositions were specified they can only be parallel, and then the Allies will reject them.

Mr. Lloyd George. Absolutely.

The conversation dwelt for some time upon this point. Mr. Lloyd George hoped that Bavaria would be led to follow the example of Austria, and, the Prince added, perhaps Bulgaria also.

Mr. Lloyd George. We have nothing but sympathy for Bulgaria, but not for her King. (He used some forcible expressions about the King.)

The Prince. What strikes me most is the advantage of being able to withdraw our forces from Salonika, should things take a turn for the worse and the Germans manage to withdraw their troops from the Russian Front and bring them on to ours.

Mr. Lloyd George. Precisely. But next year we shall

have an Army of a million Americans on our side, well equipped, and we will strike Germany to pieces.

The Prince. We, in France, would prefer to do it this year, and it is with the idea of breaking up the Germanic "bloc" and so considerably accelerating the final overthrow of Germany that I have lent myself to these negotiations. If I had the least suspicion that Austria was capable of playing Germany's game, I should not so much as move a finger in the matter.

Mr. Lloyd George. To bring all this about, it is necessary that Italy should be willing to make Peace.

The Prince. If, on the other hand, Italy's claims are too extravagant, I am very much afraid that Austria may break off negotiations altogether.

Mr. Lloyd George. It is for that reason that we must see Signor Sonnino, in order to find out what we have to go upon. I shall be back on Friday, and shall be very glad to see you again then.

The Prince. I am entirely at your disposal. (*At this point they rose.*) I have explained to you my dread of what may result from an indiscretion. If the Emperor should happen to be assassinated, I should feel responsible, all my life, for having betrayed his secret. I have explained the gravity of the situation to M. Ribot, and he has given me his word of honour never to breathe a word of the Emperor's letter or of his personal intervention, of the negotiations themselves or of my share in them. I must now ask you to give me your word as a gentleman that you will do the same.

Mr. Lloyd George, who was leaning against the mantelpiece, now turned and said gravely, "I promise!" holding out his hand to the Prince.

The Prince. You can understand how heavily this responsibility, which I have in no way sought, weighs upon me; and that, without your promise, I should be most ill at ease.

Mr. Lloyd George, after a moment's thought. But, believe me, you can trust Sonnino and Boselli.

The Prince. Doubtless! At the same time I must ask you, as I have asked M. Ribot, to keep my secret from Signor Sonnino.

Mr. Lloyd George. Well! I have promised. But tell me, how does M. Ribot propose to broach the subject to Signor Sonnino?

The Prince. M. Ribot told me that he meant to warn Signor Sonnino to expect overtures from Austria, which can hardly surprise him in view of the recent statements by Count Czernin, which any one could see for himself in the newspapers, and with which the Italian papers were particularly taken up.

Mr. Lloyd George. But I have just thought of a plan which seems to me even better. You know, perhaps, that Count Mensdorff is in Switzerland, and that he is saying a great deal about Peace. I could put before Signor Sonnino the latest report I have received on this subject.

The Prince. That strikes me as admirable, and far better than M. Ribot's plan.

Mr. Lloyd George. We will do that, then. I shall return on Friday morning. I shall spend some hours in Paris. How can I communicate with you?

The Prince. I think the safest way is through M. William Martin.

Mr. Lloyd George. Splendid! That's settled.

The Prince then took leave of the Prime Minister at 6.55 P.M.

After this conversation, the Prince wrote to M. William Martin:

LETTER FROM THE PRINCE TO M. WILLIAM MARTIN

PARIS, *April* 18, 1917.

MONSIEUR LE MINISTRE—I am most deeply indebted to you for having overcome all difficulties and brought about a meeting between Mr. Lloyd George and myself. The interview went off perfectly, and must be of great

value. Mr. Lloyd George expressed a great anxiety to see me again next Friday, on his way home. I asked him to apply to you to let me know at what hour I should call upon him. You see, I am still reckoning upon your unfailing good-nature and upon your friendship for myself, both for this, and also to arrange for me interviews with M. Ribot before and after my interview with Mr. Lloyd George.

Believe me, Monsieur le Ministre, yours most gratefully and affectionately,

SIXTE DE BOURBON.

To continue the story, Mr. Lloyd George returned from Saint Jean de Maurienne to Paris on April 20, and the Prince then saw him again. Despite his request, however, and the manifest goodwill of M. William Martin, circumstances prevented his seeing M. Alexandre Ribot.

SECOND CONVERSATION WITH MR. LLOYD GEORGE AT THE HÔTEL CRILLON (APRIL 20, 1917)

M. William Martin having informed the Prince that Mr. Lloyd George would be ready to see him at 2 o'clock, he called at that hour and was introduced by M. Martin. They exchanged greetings, and then Mr. Lloyd George asked: "Have you seen M. Ribot?" The Prince said he had not, and Mr. Lloyd George went on: "What makes it much more difficult for us to speak to the Italian Premier is this, that we have not been able to acquaint him with the Emperor's direct overtures to us. We have utilised the statements of Count Mensdorff and such information as we could get through other channels; but it has not been easy. Signor Sonnino declared that Italy had been actuated by her claim to the *terra irredenta*, and that she could not possibly make terms of Peace with Austria in which her war aims were not realised. Moreover, no Government could remain a single day in office

which proposed a Peace without compensations: it would be swept away by the people, who would rise in Revolution, banish the King, and set up a Republic on principles of a fight to a finish."

The Prince. What does Italy demand ?

Mr. Lloyd George. A great deal. The Trentino, Dalmatia, and all the coastal islands.

The Prince. And Trieste ?

Mr. Lloyd George. Trieste might perhaps be left subject to discussion, though the Italians are very keen to get the town.

The Prince. And are all these conditions to be regarded as *sine qua non* ?

Mr. Lloyd George. Yes.

The Prince. Then on what conditions do you think we can make a Peace to include Italy ?

Mr. Lloyd George. It is essential that Austria give up something to Italy. Italy is our Ally, and we cannot make Peace without her.

The Prince. In that case, why does not Italy take the territory she covets by force of arms ?

Mr. Lloyd George. So far as we are concerned, we ask nothing more than to make Peace with Austria. We have no feeling of hatred towards her, any more than you have in France. If she really wants Peace, she must make these concessions; but this, I repeat, is only my private opinion. Officially, we can only reply that there is as yet no ground for negotiations. Do you think that Austria will be willing to make the sacrifice ?

The Prince. I know nothing whatever about it. I can only form a private opinion. I do not think that, without material compensations, she will ever consent to abandon territory which her enemy has not won from her in the field; but, once more, that is only my impression and I may be mistaken. Anyhow, we shall soon have the point definitely settled.

Mr. Lloyd George. Count Mensdorff's exact words were, "Nothing for Italy!" and in the Imperial letter,

which you were so good as to let me see, there is nothing said about Italy. But where are we to find compensations for Austria ? I fully understand what the feeling in Austria is, that Italy, who was their Ally, has deserted them and joined forces with us ; but, on the other hand, Austria will be obliged to come to terms. Even if Russia were defeated, the help we are getting from America will enable us to prolong the War indefinitely. My own programme has been drawn up without counting on America at all. I have calculated that, in spite of our losses by the submarine campaign, Germany can never starve us out, and now we have the whole strength of America behind us. We propose to utilise all the resources of the country, and, as you know, England was self-supporting for centuries. We hope to become more or less self-supporting again. We are cutting down our forests to use the timber, we are extracting all the coal and iron from our soil ; we will not give up the struggle.

The Prince. You are as firmly resolved as we are to carry this War, which is a matter of life and death, to a finish. I myself am delighted to see France and England in agreement on this point. I have always felt that such a union was necessary to both countries ; and now that we have fought side by side, now that our friendship is based on a mutual admiration of each other's martial prowess, I hope that the Alliance will continue for centuries, and will form the foundation and the safeguard of our future Peace.

Mr. Lloyd George. Yes, I trust that our Alliance will last for centuries, and that France and England, in concert with America, will maintain the Peace of the World. England has been very slow in making up her mind to move. The English are slow.

The Prince. But I don't think you are.

Mr. Lloyd George (*laughing*). Yes, they are slow, but they are always determined to finish what they have begun. That is how they have always won their wars.

The Prince. But, to return to Austria, which is,

properly speaking, a Power bordering on the East, it appears to me that we can have no stronger guarantee of her future policy than the Emperor's own wishes. His own power is enormously enhanced by the fact that he is the keystone of an arch composed of so many different nations : while he remains, I am confident that we shall see Austria, one day, the Ally of France and England.

Mr. Lloyd George. We are quite ready to welcome her ; but once again, she must sacrifice something to Italy. And I repeat once more that, even though we cannot, for the moment, enter officially into negotiations, the day that Austria shows herself willing to cede the Trentino and Dalmatian Islands, we can begin to arrange terms for her.

The Prince. Good. I shall tell that to the Emperor's Envoy, and shall let you have his answer.

Mr. Lloyd George. I should very much like to discuss all this with you personally.

The Prince. Nothing easier. I shall come to London.

Mr. Lloyd George. I should be very glad if you would. It is much better that we should discuss it together.

The Prince then took his leave, and Mr. Lloyd George left Paris at 3.30.

So it appears that, at Saint Jean de Maurienne, the Italian Minister had brought strong opposition to bear upon the inclination shown by France and England towards making terms with Austria ; and threatened them, should they overrule his objections, with a Revolution in Italy. Moreover, the inclinations of France and England were based on no such common foundations as should have been laid by M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George in private discussion on the way from Paris : foundations which would have remained more or less fixed and immovable under pressure of the Italian veto.

The impression brought back by Mr. Lloyd George was that Italy's claims were very considerable: she asked for the Trentino, Dalmatia, and all the Adriatic Islands. Trieste by itself might be discussed, perhaps, but the rest, no. However, Mr. Lloyd George was unwilling to abandon the idea of a separate Peace, on the lines of Austria's offer. He felt himself that such a Peace was still possible if Austria "gave up something" to Italy. It would be quite enough to promise her the Trentino and the Dalmatian Islands. If Austria consented to make this sacrifice, the Entente would be able to negotiate for Peace on her behalf, and save Trieste, which was indispensable to the Monarchy as an outlet to the sea. This English "something" of April 20 recalls Signor Giolitti's *parecchio*, but it goes further. It is the expression of a reasonable policy, which, however, was not the policy of Baron Sonnino. He was out for "all or nothing," and clung to his position with a tenacity which defied discussion. The smallest military success on Cadorna's part, in the world of realities, seemed to reflect in his mind endless vistas of diplomatic triumphs.

But the impression brought home by M. Alexandre Ribot was quite different. He had decided that nothing more could possibly be done, unless (and this seemed impossible) Austria were to make such fresh offers as would satisfy all the requirements, not only of the Italian people, who had a keen and practical sense of expediency, but of the Baron Sidney Sonnino, who aimed at transforming the Kingdom of Italy, by one stroke of

the magic wand, into a vast Oriental Empire. According to M. Ribot, the impossibility of Austria's offering such terms made any further conversations with her futile.

Prince Sixte none the less determined to go on with his work of mediation, so long as the faintest possibility remained of his being able to reduce either the extent or the duration of a War which was proving so disastrous to France and to the whole of Europe. He would be present therefore, with his brother, at the place in Switzerland appointed for their meeting with Count Thomas Erdödy on April 24. On the 21st, M. William Martin gave him a letter of recommendation addressed to the Frontier Authorities at Delle and Pontarlier.[1]

On April 22, M. Jules Cambon, General Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, came to the Prince with the French Government's reply, declining the Emperor's offer. The terms of their conversation are recorded in two written notes which they exchanged. During the discussion M. Cambon had an opportunity of learning that Mr. Lloyd George's outlook was considerably wider than M. Ribot's. From March 31 to April 22 the French Premier's attitude was, in the words of a privileged spectator of these negotiations, that of a man who will successively "hesitate, procrastinate, suspect, withdraw, and then stand still."

[1] See Appendix XI. The same day the new travelling companion of the Princes received a Diplomatic Passport, and the necessary leave of absence from the Military Authorities. See Appendices XII., XIV.

The Prince's Notes of his Interview with M. Jules Cambon (April 22, 1917, 11.30 a.m.)

M. Jules Cambon told me that he had been instructed to give me the French Government's reply to the Emperor's letter. He first of all assured me that the secret had been kept from Italy by M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George alike. The latter, he said, was particularly careful in this respect. In view of the importance of transmitting the reply accurately, I asked him if I might take it down, and he dictated to me, as follows :

" No overtures of Peace from Austria can be considered without an equal consideration of the views of the Italian Government. Now, the proposals which have been submitted to us totally ignore the claims of Italy, while we have ascertained from the conversations which took place at Saint Jean de Maurienne that the Italian Government is not disposed to abandon any of the conditions upon which it came into the War. This being so, there is no good in our carrying on negotiations which can only end in a deadlock. If, at a given moment and in altered circumstances, the Austrian Government were to consider that fresh efforts might well be made to secure a separate Peace, Austria must then take into account the aspirations of Italy, which cover Trieste as well as the Trentino. We have greatly appreciated the feeling of sympathy for France and her Allies which the Emperor has shown."

I gave him a copy of this statement and added to it my reply, as follows :

" I shall convey the result of my mission to the Emperor. I shall strongly recommend him to bear in mind the sympathy shown him by France and England. But it is for him to decide how much he can and what he ought to do.

" My own mission is solely in the interests of France, and for her benefit alone : that is why I insisted on having a clear answer to the question of Alsace-Lorraine, which

is of capital importance both for ourselves and as furnishing Austria with definite and irrefutable grounds for acting independently of Germany. This answer I have been able to secure.

"I am well aware of the delicacy and difficulty of the Italian problem, which still bars the way. I do not see what solution the Emperor can find, in conformity with the feelings and inclinations of his subjects. That will be our great difficulty. The question is complicated by the internal conditions of Austria, with which we are not acquainted. I can form no views whatever about it."

M. Cambon took the Note, and said that, all things considered, he felt that although our hopes had proved false, still the negotiations had gone much further than he had dared to expect; that this state of things was a good preparation for what might come later; and that evidently what had done most harm was the swaggering tone of Czernin and Mensdorff.

I asked him what, in his opinion, were the *sine qua non* conditions for Italy.

M. Cambon. Trent and Trieste.

The Prince. What about Istria and the Dalmatian Islands?

M. Cambon. Those are still open to discussion.

I pointed out to him that Mr. Lloyd George took a different view of the Trieste problem, which seemed to surprise him. So I asked again, What did the French Government regard as necessary concessions to Italy?

M. Cambon did not seem to have any clear ideas on this point. He thought that we ought to grant Italy a part, at least, of what she claimed, indemnifying Austria by letting her have Silesia. There would be a real danger, real to France and Austria alike, in letting Italy fall into the hands of Germany. M. Poincaré was entirely on the side of Austria.

I then asked M. Cambon what he thought was going

to happen. He did not expect the War to end before next Spring; our strength would be enormously increased by the material support of America. He was only afraid that those "at the back of the front," whom the War had sorely tried, might some day insist on bringing it to an end.

I answered that to my mind the only vital question was the loss of men, and that all the determination of England and America to carry on the War indefinitely would not prevent our finding ourselves some day without a man left. The period after the War would be terrible.

M. Cambon. Ah! yes, after the War we shall begin to regret the War, for we shall find ourselves faced with difficulties the like of which were never seen before.

I said that for that reason we ought to do all in our power to hasten the end of the War, and that the best way was to detach Austria from Germany.

The Prince. We cannot go on interminably sacrificing men simply because the Italians are incapable of capturing their own objectives.

M. Cambon. You may say that in two months' time when we resume these conversations. For the moment, our attempt has failed; all the same, I consider that we have already made substantial headway.

He then went on to speak of Germany, and of the admittedly difficult situation in which she was placed; also of the Emperor William, to whom he compared King Constantine of Greece. At this point I took the liberty of suggesting that I thought we were making a great mistake in wanting to dethrone King Constantine at that time; for, so long as we left him in power, we were still in a position to reward ourselves and our Allies, and perhaps even some of our enemies, with Greek territory. M. Cambon entirely agreed, but said that public opinion in France had cried out for Constantine's head, ever since the massacre of the French sailors on December 1, 1916.

I answered that the public were not interested in Greece, and that King Constantine should have been dethroned at once after December 1, and not now.

In taking leave of me M. Cambon once again emphasised his opinion that the conservations might be successfully continued at a later date.

The same day, before leaving Paris, the Prince wrote a letter to the Emperor in which he explained the principles by which he was guided.

LETTER FROM PRINCE SIXTE TO THE EMPEROR CHARLES

PARIS, *April* 22, 1917.

MY DEAR CHARLES—In forwarding the reply to your letter of March 24, I enclose a short summary of the negotiations; but first I beg you will feel assured that the most inviolable secrecy has been observed in this matter. Italy cannot have the least suspicion; for not a word has been said about your letter. I cannot add any personal observations to this reply: you alone are qualified to decide what should be done next. On one point only will I express my own opinion, and that is to call your attention to the tremendous importance to yourself of not breaking with France and England, whatever you may feel inclined to do about Italy. I attach the greatest importance to this, because, even if your hopes of peace with France and England are stultified by Italy's attitude, the fact remains that the essential bases of a future Peace are mutually accepted by the other three Powers: this agreement cannot fail to have its effect in the long run, and may, sooner or later, bring them to an understanding from which Peace may evolve. Circumstances may alter at any time. I am happy to have been able to secure this result which, to my mind and in spite of apparent evidence to the contrary, brings Peace definitely nearer. I am firmly convinced that I am doing my duty as a good citizen of France in seeking,

despite the inevitable difficulties, to shorten the War by bringing about Peace with Austria and thereby saving the lives of many Frenchmen.

If time was of slight importance to the diplomats, it meant much to the men in the trenches.

CHAPTER IV

ITALY MAKES OVERTURES AT BERNE, AND AUSTRIA ANNOUNCES HER WISH FOR A SEPARATE PEACE

(April 25–May 12, 1917)

THE Princes left Paris on April 23 and, entering Switzerland by Belfort, reached Zug during the 25th. Count Erdödy had arrived there the day before, and to him Prince Sixte gave the letter he had written on the 22nd, with the request that he would take it at once to the Emperor, and would ask him to decide definitely whether he would or would not treat with Italy through the Entente, on the basis which Mr. Lloyd George had personally accepted on the 20th. America's entry into the War must have the effect of making Austria realise, even more clearly than in the previous month, the necessity of concluding such a Peace as she had proposed: even though that involved her making such concessions to Italy as England deemed indispensable. Mr. Lloyd George was of opinion that these concessions need include no more than the Italian-speaking Trentino and some of the Dalmatian Islands; and so, in all other respects, the Monarchy would find her mastery of the Adriatic unimpaired, for she would still keep Trieste, Istria, Croatia and the adjacent Islands,

and the mainland of Dalmatia, that is to say, everything she really required. The Adriatic would not become an Italian lake, but would still be an International Sea: in spite of Italy's gaining possession of Lissa, there would still be an approach by sea, and freedom to trade with Dalmatia, Croatia, and Istria, and in particular with the ports of Narenta, Fiume, Pola, and Trieste. If the Monarchy should have any objection to a direct cession to Italy of the Italian Trentino and the Dalmatian Islands, these might be made over to England and France, who would then make a fresh cession to their Ally. Moreover, the Monarchy would have the right to insist, should she desire so to cover the surrender of her territory, that a vote should first be taken of the inhabitants of those districts, whose transfer to Italy England considered necessary, under the impartial administration of Commissioners from Neutral States; thus, if a majority in the Trentino declared for Italy, the Emperor would not have to reproach himself with abandoning them.

Count Erdödy replied that even in the Italian-speaking part of the Trentino there was only a minority in favour of union with Italy, and that a plebiscite, therefore, would not be satisfactory to the Government at Rome. In the Dalmatian Islands the whole population was of Slav origin, and would never accept the Italian yoke. It would not do to allude to any such plebiscite in dealing with Italy. In any case, the time had come for a decision on the Italian problem, and it would be well for the Emperor to bow to necessity and make a definite statement of his views.

About noon on April 26, Count Erdödy left Zug for Vienna to give this message to the Emperor. At 8.30 on the evening of May 4 he returned to Neuchâtel, where he met the Princes at the house of M. Maurice Boy de la Tour. He brought with him two letters, which he handed to Prince Sixte. The first, in German, was from the Emperor, and ran as follows:

> I have to thank you for your kind letter, and I am glad to learn of such good bases of Peace for my beloved Austria, but there are two points which are still not clear (*unklar*); it is absolutely essential that I should see you. This Peace depends on your coming.—Your very affectionate brother-in-law, CHARLES.

The second letter, from the Empress, stated:

> There are fresh developments which are not clear. Italy is trying to secure more through you than she has asked us for directly. Come to us.

In addition to these letters, the Count had been given the following verbal message:

REPORT BY THE EMPEROR'S ENVOY, NEUCHÂTEL, MAY 4, 1917

The Emperor desires to continue the negotiations and to realise Peace. He agrees to a *separate* Peace with the Entente, but does not wish to be drawn into any actual betrayal of Germany, such as an attack upon her after this Peace is concluded. He does not believe that Germany will attack him; but, if she does, he thinks that he will be able to meet her.

Five offers of Peace have already been made to Austria since 1915, principally by Russia.

About three weeks since Italy made an offer of Peace to the Emperor, asking for nothing in return but the

Italian-speaking portion of the Tyrol. The Emperor refused, so as not to be engaged in two separate negotiations at once. Consequently Italy is now looking to gain further advantages by way of England, which is impossible. The Emperor is quite well able to defeat Italy, but why kill another hundred thousand men ? Far better to make Peace.

At present France is very well liked in Austria : it would not do, therefore, for France to be the agent for the restoration of the Trentino to Italy, as that would turn public feeling in Austria against her. It would be better to make a direct cession to Italy. As for the Dalmatian Islands, there is not a single Italian upon any of them, and their inhabitants would kill any Italians who did land there. A plebiscite in the Trentino is impossible. The vote would go against Italy, but it would form a precedent for the other peoples of the Monarchy, which cannot be allowed, A rectification of frontier might be made on the Isonzo, but Austria must keep Gorizia, as the railway to Trieste passes through it.

Besides Italy, Russia, through Lvov, has just made an offer of Peace to Austria.

We should begin with an Armistice, keeping the troops in their respective positions, and the Blockade would be raised.

If Austria makes Peace with the Entente, the workers in German factories will at once strike, and will cease to produce munitions. There has already been serious trouble in Germany on the first of May, which passed quietly in Austria.

If Austria makes Peace, she will involve Turkey and Bulgaria, but it is better not to include those States in the terms, as that must mean further delays.

If Austria makes Peace, she can allow the wheat purchased by the Entente in Russia to pass through Switzerland, but she must also allow the wheat sown in Turkey and Rumania by the Germans, the amount of which is known, to pass through after the coming harvest.

If Austria makes Peace, Czernin requires that the French Officers now opposing the Austrians on the Russian front be withdrawn to the German sector of that front.

The Russian soldiers, and even their Officers, come across the Austrian lines to ask whether Peace has been signed. When a General appears a few rounds are fired, but things are quite different in the German sector, where machine-guns are still trained on the Russians.

The significant feature of this message was that the Monarchy was now prepared to make Peace with the Entente irrespective of Germany. The Emperor Charles and his Minister, Count Czernin, now that their advances at Homburg on April 3 had been rejected by the German Empire, were bound to admit the necessity of liberating the Monarchy from an Ally who was leading her to her ruin. And so now, for the first time, they made without hesitation a clear statement to the Entente. The excessive claims of Italy now gave them no cause for anxiety, for Italy herself, about three weeks earlier, had made an offer of Peace to the Monarchy in which she restricted her claims to the Italian-speaking Trentino alone, a claim which the Emperor and his Minister were both ready to admit. It was true that this offer did not come from Rome, and was made without Baron Sonnino's knowledge; it came from the Army Headquarters, where General Cadorna was assuming the rôle of a Dictator.

This sudden disclosure was eminently surprising; but on consideration it had a striking significance for those whose attention had been drawn to the Press Telegrams which reached Paris from Rome

on April 14. However, the Emperor stated that he would not treat directly with Italy, even when she had taken up what he must regard as a reasonable attitude. He wished to treat with her only through the Entente.

The Prince was persuaded by Count Erdödy to make a second and final visit to Vienna to carry out the negotiation of this separate Peace which, as it now seemed, might very soon be signed; and decided to start alone with the Count next day, May 5, at 2.20 P.M. He would reach Vienna on the evening of May 7, spend the next day there, and start back so as to reach Neuchâtel on the 11th. His object was to arrive there in time to induce the Emperor to accept Italy's offer at once, if he had not already declined or postponed it, for a direct acceptance would mean an immediate Peace between Austria and the whole Entente, and the collapse of Bulgaria as well as of Turkey. The conversation between the Princes and Count Erdödy ended at 11 o'clock that evening.

Next morning, May 5, before the Prince left for Vienna, a letter was drafted for him to submit to the Emperor and his Minister; this was framed to conform to the existing situation so far as it could be determined from Austria's statement of her intentions. The main points of the letter were these:

DRAFT LETTER GIVEN TO COUNT THOMAS ERDÖDY FOR SUBMISSION TO THE EMPEROR (NEUCHÂTEL, MAY 5, 1917)

I note with satisfaction that France and England agree with what I regard as the essential bases of the Peace of

Europe, although they persist in their refusal to conclude a Peace in which Italy has no part. As it happens, Italy has just now come to me with a request for Peace, abandoning all the insupportable claims she has hitherto maintained to the conquest of the Slav countries on the Adriatic. She now asks for no more than the Italian-speaking Trentino. I have postponed the consideration of this appeal until I hear from you what answer France and England make to my Peace overtures.

So now, to-day, I announce my willingness to establish a state of Peace between the Monarchy and the Entente, on the base agreed upon with France and England, and, taking into account the recent request made to me by Italy and the known views of Prince Lvov. This base comprises the three points expressed in my letter of March 24, relative to Belgium, Serbia, and France. It further comprises, in answer to the recent offer by Italy, the cession to her of the Italian-speaking Trentino ; and lastly, in answer to Prince Lvov's offer, the restoration *in status quo ante bellum* of my relations with Russia and Rumania.

The establishment of a separate Peace between the Monarchy and the Entente, while a state of War with Germany continues, must not in any event involve my assuming the offensive against the German Empire, until a general Peace has been restored. At the same time, should the German Empire, through any misapprehension of my views in this matter, ever come from now onwards to attack the Monarchy, the Entente is bound to support me to the fullest extent of its powers, in repelling any such offensive movement.

It is desirable, pending the conclusion of Peace between the Entente and the Monarchy, to proclaim an immediate Armistice, during which my troops shall remain in the positions they now occupy. Under this Armistice an exchange of prisoners should be carried out between the Entente and the Monarchy. Similarly the economic blockade between the Entente and the Monarchy should

be raised, so that, especially, the grain purchased by the Entente in Russia can be transported to France, through Switzerland or Italy. Correspondingly, the . . . tons of harvest due from the grain sown in Rumania and Turkey by the Germans should be allowed free transport into Germany through Bulgaria and Serbia.

Next comes the narrative of the Prince's second and last visit to Vienna.

Narrative of Prince Sixte's Second Visit to Vienna (May 5–11, 1917)

Count Erdödy arrived at Neuchâtel on May 4 from Austria, and requested Prince Sixte to return once again to Vienna, at the express wish of the Emperor, on the same conditions as before and with the same guarantees. The Emperor had decided to go the whole way, but still required those definite assurances which the Prince alone, and only by word of mouth, could give him. A certain reticence on the part of France, and the attitude of the Ribot Government, were none too encouraging: and it might be questioned whether the conditions imposed indicated a genuine desire for peace. Moreover, there was now an additional factor in the proposals made at Berne by an Italian emissary, who claimed to be commissioned by Cadorna and the King, and offered peace in return for no more than the cession of the Italian-speaking Trentino. He had gone in the first instance to the German Minister, who had sent him to the Austrian Minister. His offer was made without the knowledge of Sonnino, who would be duly removed from office if it came under serious consideration: it was prompted, apparently, by the moral of the Italian army and of the population generally. The Emperor had refused to listen to it three weeks earlier, as he feared that such negotiations, even if they did not conceal a fresh snare set for him by Italy, would only confuse the issues already under consideration.

The Prince decided to start at once with Count Erdödy. Leaving Neuchâtel at midday on May 5, they spent the night in a small Swiss village in the Rhine valley, crossed the frontier next day without any difficulty, and on the evening of the 7th reached Vienna, where the Prince stayed in Count Erdödy's house.

At 2 P.M. on May 8—a bright spring day—the Prince called at Laxenburg, where the Emperor was waiting to receive him in that part of the park which he reserved for his own use: no one else was admitted there, and it was sentinelled by his Guards. The Emperor spoke of the successful results of their previous interview: he had fully understood that Lloyd George was dealing more fairly with him than Ribot, but at the same time he placed great reliance in the perspicacity of M. Poincaré, whose prestige and authority would, he hoped, effectively overcome the false modesty of his Ministers.

The Prince then explained to him how matters stood at the moment, and how that moment was the best for coming to a conclusion. For now Austria was no longer to be thought of as humiliated, seeing that Russia, Serbia, and Rumania were no longer dangerous in the military sense; the common sense of the Monarchy would certainly rally round the Emperor in his attempt to seize this opportunity to conclude Peace on sensible terms, even if an element of sacrifice were involved; the food problem was well understood in Austria, and an early peace would set the people free to prepare for next year's harvest; while our position, as a member of the Entente, was considerably strengthened by the arrival of America in the field. He pointed out to the Emperor that the Americans were preparing a colossal offensive which would prove irresistible: whereas the submarine campaign, in spite of the material damage it had done us, had failed to secure its object and was bound to come to nothing, as the Germans must indeed be realising. A determined stand by Austria and a separate peace between her and the Entente would compel a general peace, if not immediately,

at any rate during that year. And, lastly, the intervention of the United States made an early conclusion imperative, as there was every reason to fear that this Power, which would have a preponderant vote in the Allied Council, might overlook the claims of Austria and consent to the partition of the Monarchy. The Prince added that he had never concealed from the Emperor his own desire for a French Peace, which, without injuring any of her Allies, would ensure that France, who had made the greatest sacrifice, should be given the highest reparation.

The Emperor replied that he entirely agreed with all this : that it was with France, and, through France, with England and possibly America, that Austria principally wished to ally herself after the War, to ensure her own independence as well as the peace of the world : as matters stood, there was nothing but the Italian difficulty in the way of a settlement. He repeated what he had already told the Prince through Count Erdödy with reference to the Berne proposals, and promised to procure for him more detailed information. The envoy was, it seemed, an Italian Colonel, whose identity was known, and not in any sense a private adventurer.

The Emperor then returned to his former suggestion that England and France must intervene to settle the Italian question. The Prince expressed his regret that the Emperor had not seized the opportunity which had already been offered. The Emperor stated that he was prepared to make the necessary sacrifices to Italy ; but that these must be no more than was strictly fair, confined, that was, to territories Italian in speech and sentiment. Popular feeling must be taken into account in dealing with all these districts, and it would not do to trace arbitrary frontiers upon a map for countries of which one had no first-hand knowledge.

At this point the Prince suggested that they would most probably be able to find men in Switzerland whose honesty would be above suspicion and who would be best

qualified to solve these knotty problems. To a certain extent the same differences of language and sentiment were found in Switzerland, in spite of which the necessary sense of nationality was preserved there.

The Emperor agreed that it was wise to anticipate at once, in some such way, the difficulties which would have to be faced sooner or later. In speaking as he did, he was unreservedly taking the first step towards a settlement, and with a ruthless sacrifice of his own personal pride. After a success in the field achieved under the most difficult conditions, he was ready to make an offer of peace to Italy ; but the gallantry which all the troops of the Monarchy had shown in defending the Tyrol from invasion made it essential that some compensation should be given them for the loss of that territory. If the national aspirations of the Italian people had to be considered, those of his own subjects must not be overlooked.

The question then remained, where this compensation should be found : in Silesia, for instance, or the German Colonies ? Either of these solutions was objectionable, and either would prove highly impolitic in the future. Besides, they went altogether beyond the principle of compensation, which must be at the expense of the State which was itself to receive an extension of territory from the Monarchy.

The Prince then suggested that one of the Italian Colonies might meet his requirements. Tripoli was barred as a too recent acquisition, which would yield nothing, and was also too close to Italy. There remained Erythrea and Somaliland. The latter, in particular, had a future before it, and was quite unknown to the great majority of the Italians. He could say confidently that they would not resent its cession, while from the Austrian point of view the novel experience of an African dominion could only be pleasant, especially when it was taken in exchange for a crowd of blustering and uncontrollable irredentists. A negro was, in short, better value than an irredentist.

At this point the Emperor was informed that Count Czernin awaited his orders. He came in with a more pleasant expression than on the first visit, and spoke with greater frankness. He began by repeating the Emperor's statement with regard to the Italian offer, and undertook to furnish the Prince with all the necessary details, such as the envoy's name and the date of his visit. The Emperor then asked the Prince to repeat briefly what he had just told him. Count Czernin listened to this, and laid strong emphasis on the principle that compensation should be at the expense of Italy, and not of Germany or any third party. He added that Austria could cede nothing without a guarantee from the Entente that the rest of the Monarchy would be maintained *in statu quo.* He too spoke of President Poincaré only, and seemed to invest him with an influence and power to decide such matters, which, unfortunately, he did not possess.

The Prince refrained from offering any instruction in the Constitutional Law of France. So far, he said, as he was aware, Count Czernin's claim for compensation was entirely justified, and was in conformity with the views expressed by French and English Statesmen. He would like to know, however, what would be Germany's attitude towards a Peace concluded by Austria. Count Czernin replied that the French indulged in a fantastic idea that Austria was completely under the thumb of Germany: nothing could be further from the truth, which was that, without Austria, Germany must starve to death, whereas the Austrian Army, now that Russia was out of the reckoning, could place in the field when the time came enough divisions to win the respect of any other State. He himself, it must be understood, treated the German Chancellor without ceremony: and paid no attention whatever to the bombast of the German General Headquarters.

The Prince smiled, and said: "After what I have just heard, I shall not be surprised to hear some fine day that the German Emperor has taken away your Iron Cross."

"But I have not got one," the Count answered, with an air of evident irritation.

"You must be a very remarkable man," said the Emperor, laughing; "the only Statesman on record who has not been awarded the Iron Cross."

Count Czernin resumed his explanation. His animosity seemed mainly directed towards the Rumanians, and he was on the way to a piecemeal annexation of their entire country, when the Emperor interrupted, with a smile: "No, no: let us leave out the Rumanians. If we annex them I shall have yet another language to learn."

Czernin controlled himself, but stated that he was positive a large majority of Rumanians wanted nothing more than to be included in a Federal Austria.

"So much the better," said the Emperor, "if what you say is true. In the meantime let us take care not to annoy them. Our best policy still is to treat them with generosity."

Count Czernin then insisted, at some length, that the next and final interview should take place between two professional diplomatists, and that, preferably, the Entente should send one man as representative of all the Powers. "Your Majesty knows that on our side we have exactly the man we want." Count Czernin then begged the Emperor to excuse him, as he was required at the Ministry in Vienna. He took his leave of the Prince, and remained for a few minutes in conversation with the Emperor. In shaking hands with the Prince, he said again how pleased he was with the way things were shaping, and added, with a smile: "I trust that, very soon, we shall no longer be enemies."

The Emperor rejoined the Prince in the best of humours, and smiled as he spoke of Count Czernin's determination to push forward the men of his own group, now that the main difficulties had been smoothed out. Then, growing serious, he promised to write the Prince a further letter, in which he would state in detail what he wanted done with Italy, and to which the Entente might give a definite

answer in unmistakable terms. If this proved favourable, the plenipotentiaries from either side were to meet in Switzerland, and to get the negotiations finished with all possible speed. Austria would probably send Prince Kinsky, a retired diplomatist and the brother-in-law of Count Czernin, while the Entente would, he hoped, nominate Prince Sixte.

That, said the Prince, could not possibly happen : so far as he was concerned, the moment he had witnessed the meeting of the two plenipotentiaries in Switzerland to draw up the terms of Peace he would consider his task as ended, and would ask no more than to be allowed to rejoin his Battery on the Yser, and fight the Germans. But he would still like to ask one question, which might seem indiscreet. He requested that the Emperor would not answer it unless he thought fit.

" We have been given a general impression that the Emperor William, at Homburg, planned with Austria a fresh offensive, political as well as military, against the Entente. As to the military offensive, I should not dream of asking you anything whatever ; besides it is we who have advanced, and who can go on, if we want to, this year. But I am very much more concerned with the political offensive, for, if it is launched, there are plenty of people who will believe that Austria is a mere tool in Germany's hands. And in that case an Austrian peace offer would be nothing more than a concealed offer from Germany.

The Emperor thought for a little and then answered : " You are entirely mistaken, and I am sure you will believe me when I say so. If Germany goes on refusing to listen to our reasonable suggestions, we shall make Peace without her ; it is at once our right and our duty, and we are well able to do it. In the event of friction, however, between Germany and ourselves, I must be able to count on the support of the Entente. For the rest, I can rely already on the common sense of the bulk of the German people."

Next day, May 9, the Emperor received the Prince again at the same place. He gave him an autograph letter, saying : " I hope it is now quite clear."

The Prince again promised secrecy, and the Emperor, after repeating the points on which they had agreed, gave him a paper, explaining that it was a note by Count Czernin to accompany the letter. On these two sheets of yellowish paper the Minister had summarised under four heads what he had said, the previous day, in the Emperor's presence. The Emperor and Empress assured the Prince of their conviction that Peace would very soon be signed, and that a new era would then dawn for the Monarchy. Bulgaria and Turkey must of necessity follow Austria's example, and that immediately. It was mutually understood that, when the time came, an adjustment must at once be made of interests in the Near East. Austria would support the claims of France in return for economic assistance from her. The Emperor emphasised the need for discretion, which the Prince formally pledged himself to observe. He assured the Emperor that the President and M. Ribot in France, and Mr. Lloyd George in England, fully realised the serious nature of the steps he had taken and would on no account divulge his secret. And so every one was delighted, hoping to see an early and propitious end to the War. The Prince set off the same evening, and arrived the next morning but one, that is May 11, at Neuchâtel, accompanied by Count Erdödy.

While Prince Sixte was in Vienna, his travelling companion, who had been left at Neuchâtel with Prince Xavier, went back to Paris to report to the French Government the unforeseen turn of events revealed by Count Erdödy. He left Neuchâtel on May 7, and reached Paris the following evening. There, the latest news from Rome showed that the King of Italy was anxious about the military situation. At Saint Jean de Maurienne his Govern-

ment, disregarding the plans of General Cadorna, had promised to launch an offensive, and this promise would have to be fulfilled now that the French offensive was checked.

On the morning of the 9th this companion met M. William Martin at the Quai de Béthune, and told him in so many words what Count Erdödy had said at Neuchâtel: that afternoon, he saw M. William Martin again, at the Quai d'Orsay; M. Martin said that he had informed MM. Poincaré and Ribot, and dictated the following two clauses, which were to be included in the terms, should Austria agree to the proclamation of an Armistice:

(1) From the beginning of the Armistice, Austria shall prevent the transportation of any troops or military supplies by Germany to Turkey or Bulgaria, or *vice versa.*

(2) The Armistice cannot be concluded unless the German troops stationed in Bulgaria or Turkey remain there in isolation from Germany. In an extreme case they might be allowed to pass through Austria on their way to Germany.

M. William Martin then went on to say: "It would be just as well for you to see M. Ribot, and to receive his instructions. . . . After all, you have had no instructions as yet, and everything is going better than could be expected."

At M. Jules Cambon's request a fresh military leave certificate was thereupon given to this officer,[1] who left Paris at 7.45 that evening, and reached Neuchâtel at 11 next morning. He also took with him a letter from M. William Martin,

[1] See Appendices XIII., XV.

which would give him an introduction, should he require it, to M. Beau, the French Ambassador at Berne.[1]

Prince Sixte stayed a day longer in Vienna, and so did not himself return to Neuchâtel until the 12th, when Count Erdödy came with him. In reply to his own draft of the 5th he brought the second of the Emperor's autograph letters, dated May 9, with the Note added by Count Czernin. These two documents had been handed to him at the same time, and were to be supplemented, as the letter states, by the verbal instructions of Count Erdödy.

The Emperor's letter was written in French, and ran as follows :

SECOND AUTOGRAPH LETTER BY THE EMPEROR

[LAXENBURG], *May* 9, 1917.

MY DEAR SIXTE—I note with satisfaction that France and England are in agreement with me upon what I hold to be the essential basis of a European Peace. At the same time they express their opposition to any form of Peace in which Italy does not participate. As it happens, Italy has just approached me with a demand for Peace between herself and the Monarchy, in which she abandons all the inadmissible claims of annexation which she has hitherto maintained in regard to the Slavonic States on the Adriatic. She has limited her claim to the Italian-speaking portion of the Tyrol. I have myself postponed the examination of her demands until I hear from you what answer France and England may make to my offer of Peace. Count Erdödy will inform you of my own and my Chancellor's views on the various points involved.

The understanding which the Monarchy has reached

[1] See Appendices XIII., XV.

with France and England on so many essential points will enable us, we feel sure, to overcome whatever obstacles may remain in the way of an honourable Peace. I have to thank you for the help you are giving me at present in carrying out the duties of Peacemaker which I have undertaken in the common interest of both our countries. This war has laid upon you, as you said when you took leave of me, the duty of remaining faithful to the name you bear and to the historic past of your House, first in tending the gallant men who were wounded in the field, and latterly in fighting yourself for France. I fully understand your motives, and, although we have been separated by circumstances for which I, personally, am in no way responsible, my affection for yourself is unaltered.

I trust that, with your consent, it may still be possible for me to express my own personal views to France and England without having to employ any agent but yourself.

I beg you once more to be assured of my warm and brotherly affection. CHARLES.

Attached to this letter was a note in German by Count Czernin, which ran as follows:

AUTOGRAPH NOTE BY COUNT CZERNIN, ATTACHED TO THE EMPEROR'S LETTER

VIENNA, *May* 9, 1917.

(1) Eine einseitige Gebietsabtretung O[esterreichs]-U[ngarns] ist ausgeschlossen; bei einer Compensation durch anderes Gebiet wäre der Gedanke ventilirbar, falls in Betracht gezogen wird, dass der heldenhaft verteidigte mit dem Blute unserer Soldaten getränkte Boden einen für uns unvergleichlich hoheren Wert hat als irgend ein neues Gebiet.

(2) Welches sind die Garantien, die uns geboten werden, dass bei einer Friedensconferenz die Integrität der Monarchie (mit den eventuell jetzt beschlossenen Grenzrectificationen) bestehen bleibt?

(3) Eine definitive Antwort kann erst nach Beant-

wortung der vorstehenden zwei Punkte gegeben werden, da O[esterreich]-U[ngarn] erst dann mit seinen Verbundeten in Besprechungen eintreten kann.

(4) Immerhin ist O[esterreich]-[Ungarn] bereit die Besprechungen fortzusetzen und nach wie vor geneigt für einen *ehrenvollen* Frieden zu arbeiten um damit auch den allgemeinen Weltfrieden anzubahnen.

(1) No unilateral cession of territory can be entertained by Austria-Hungary; in the event of a compensation by counter-cession, the idea could be entertained, provided it be borne in mind that the ground heroically defended and watered with the blood of our soldiers has for us an incomparably higher value than any fresh territory whatsoever.

(2) What guarantees are offered to us that the integrity of the Monarchy (with the rectifications of frontier now definitely agreed upon) will be maintained at a Peace Conference?

(3) A definite reply can only be given when the two points above mentioned have been answered, inasmuch as only then can Austria-Hungary discuss the situation with her Allies.

(4) In any event, Austria-Hungary is prepared to continue the conversations, and is now as hitherto ready to work for an *honourable* Peace, and also, by this means, to increase the prospects of a general World-Peace.

This note was translated into French by Prince Sixte, on his arrival in Paris, so that he might read it to the President of the Republic.

TRANSLATION OF COUNT CZERNIN'S NOTE, MADE BY THE PRINCE AND READ BY HIM TO THE PRESIDENT OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC, AT THE SAME TIME AS THE EMPEROR'S SECOND LETTER.

May 9, 1917.

(1) L'Autriche-Hongrie ne saurait consentir aucune cession de territoire sans compensation. Au cas d'une

compensation, il conviendrait de tenir compte du fait qu'un territoire, quel qu'il soit, n'aura jamais, pour la Monarchie, la valeur d'une terre qui a été arrosée par le sang de ses soldats.

(2) En dehors de cette rectification de frontière envisagée, l'intégrité de la Monarchie doit être, dès à présent, garantie par l'Entente, de telle manière qu'elle soit assurée au moment où s'ouvrira la conférence générale de la paix.

(3) Aussitôt que les deux conditions sus-mentionnées (compensation à la rectification de frontière et garantie de l'intégrité de la Monarchie) auront été acceptées par l'Entente, l'Autriche-Hongrie pourra conclure sa paix séparée avec l'Entente. Alors seulement elle mettra ses alliés actuels au courant de la situation.

(4) Dans tous les cas, l'Autriche-Hongrie est prête à poursuivre, comme par le passé, des pourparlers en vue de conclure avec l'Entente une paix *honorable* et, par suite, de préparer les voies pour une paix générale et définitive.

(1) Austria-Hungary cannot agree to any cession of territory without compensation. In the event of compensation, it should be borne in mind that no territory whatsoever can ever have the same value for the Monarchy as one watered by the blood of her soldiers.

(2) Apart from such rectification of frontiers as is contemplated, the integrity of the Monarchy must be guaranteed forthwith by the Entente in such a manner that it shall be assured when the general Peace Conference opens.

(3) So soon as the above conditions (compensation for the rectification of frontiers and a guarantee of the integrity of the Monarchy) are accepted by the Entente, Austria-Hungary will be able to conclude her separate Peace with the Entente. And only then will she acquaint her present Allies with the situation.

(4) In any event, Austria-Hungary is prepared to

continue conversations, as hitherto, with a view to concluding an *honourable* Peace with the Entente, and so to clear the way for a general and definitive Peace.

In the course of a final conversation, held at Neuchâtel on May 12, between Count Erdödy, the two Princes, and the French officer who had accompanied them there, the Count made the following statement in response to their request for some definite information about the Italian offer and the circumstances surrounding it. It was made quite clear that the Emperor and Count Erdödy knew of this offer only through Count Czernin.

FURTHER STATEMENT BY THE EMPEROR'S ENVOY

NEUCHÂTEL, *May* 12, 1917.

The Emperor states that the Italian demand for Peace was made in the following way :

A special delegate came from the Italian General Headquarters to Berne, about a week before the interview at Saint Jean de Maurienne. He went first to the German Minister and then to the Austrian. Their demand was addressed first to Germany, and offered Peace on the sole condition that Austria should cede the Trentino ; Gorizia and Monfalcone remaining Austrian so that the railway communication with Trieste need not come within range of Italian guns. Only Aquilea was to become Italian. The offer was inspired by the general attitude of the Italian Army, now weary of the war, and by the fear of a Revolution. Sonnino knows nothing of this move. It is certain, however, that it has been made with the approval of a strong group of politicians (*e.g.* Giolitti and Tittoni) and that it comes from the King of Italy.

Germany was asked to put pressure upon Austria to make her accept these terms.

The Emperor's Envoy then added, with regard to the question of a separate Peace :

As for the prisoners, their exchange could only be carried out gradually, and not before the harvest had been taken in.

As for crops, Germany had sowed rather more than Austria in Rumania ; the sowings in Turkey were unimportant. The Emperor had not the exact figures at the moment, but they could easily be ascertained. The difficulty of transportation complicated everything so much that Germany had not yet harvested the whole of her last year's crop from Rumania, and had sent her recruits to feed on the spot upon the crops of Southern Hungary.

Count Erdödy stated that the supply of corn from Rumania would not suffice to alleviate the distress in Germany. During the previous reign Hungary supplied Germany with enormous quantities of cereals. Rumanian corn without additions from Hungary and Austria would be quite insufficient for Germany's needs. What she principally lacked was fats, grease for cooking, and grease for her machinery. A dinner without grease was in Germany a contradiction in terms.

The Socialists of Austria had addressed an appeal to the Emperor to continue his Policy, which tended towards an honourable Peace. The 1st of May had passed without the slightest disturbance in Austria. The Socialists had declared that, as it was in their interest to come to an honourable Peace, they would avoid anything in the nature of a strike, which could only postpone the coming of Peace.

In Germany there had been very serious outbreaks, due to hunger. The general feeling was that the workers there ought to force the Government's hand to make Peace, supposing Austria were to do so. Trucks of beetroots going from Holland and North Germany to the South had recently been held up and requisitioned by the German Military Authorities and sent express to

Essen to quiet the working population there. Generally speaking, the ill-feeling between Germany and Austria was increasing, on account of the Austrians' being better fed than the Germans.

In Austria the general situation was good. The radical reforms of the new reign, the organisation introduced into every department, the prosecution and suppression of smugglers and profiteers, as also the vigorous rounding up of some 200,000 exempted men of military age, had encouraged the population.

The measures previously adopted against the Czechs had been revoked by the Emperor. In the case of the Deputy Klovatch, for instance, this was what happened. Klovatch, who was in prison charged with high treason, asked the Tribunal for permission to visit his father who was ill. The Tribunal found itself unable to give such permission, but the Emperor, hearing of this, ordered Klovatch to be set at liberty for so long as would enable him to visit his father. He had already pardoned Kramarcz and his daughter, and almost all the other Czech and Serbian prisoners.

The breach with America became inevitable owing to Wilson's attitude in persistently refusing to receive Count Tarnowski. The latter would, however, return to America in a private capacity, if England granted him a safe-conduct, so as to be able, when the time came, to renew relations with her.

On the Russian Front there was no activity. Their Artillery alone, where commanded by French, English, or Japanese Officers, continued to fire. In one sector, Russian Infantry had thrown hand-grenades at the foreign Officers who persisted in firing their guns. The Russians were constantly coming into the Austrian trenches to ask when Peace was due; even Russian civilians, Members of the Duma, had crossed the lines to find out if there was any prospect of Peace. Prince Lvov had already made three offers. Austria was assured that Russia would make Peace with Germany.

From the moment when the economic blockade between Austria and the Entente was raised, not only should all submarine warfare on Austria's part cease, but the German submarines should no longer use the coasts of the Monarchy as bases, which would make a great difference in the Mediterranean.

The Emperor had given the strictest orders to his submarines never on any pretext to touch a hospital ship.

He complained of the tone of the French Press about the Monarchy, which was calculated to stir up ill-feeling. He had given instructions that no attack upon France would be allowed. The Empress and he had already intervened three times to prevent the Cathedral of Rheims from being used as a target for Artillery. The German Emperor had always replied that it was not true that his Artillery had aimed at the church.

As for the compensation due to Austria for the cession of the Italian-speaking Trentino, the Emperor required some compensation that could be put into effect at once, and that would justify the loss of the Trentino in public opinion. No Power was at present strong enough to detach Silesia from Germany. Austria did not wish to be paid herself at the expense of her Ally: compensation should come from the country which profited by the cession. The Italian Colonies included: Somaliland, 400,000 sq. km., 365,000 natives, 300 Italians; Erythrea, 118,600 sq. km., 350,000 natives, 2500 Italians, and 5000 non-Italians.

Then there was Salonika?

The Emperor was considering the expediency of completing the negotiations in Switzerland so as to bring them to an end as early as possible. He proposed to send to the Prince, on his next visit, about June 15, as well as Count Erdödy, the Prince Kinsky, one of his Ministers Plenipotentiary, a Czech, and the brother-in-law of Count Czernin. The Prince might, he suggested, be accompanied by a Diplomat from the Entente, perhaps M. William Martin.

Next day, May 13, the German Chancellor came to Vienna. His object was to induce the Monarchy to unite herself still more closely with the fortunes of Germany; and, beginning, perhaps rather late in the day, to be influenced by the policy indicated at Homburg on April 3, he told Count Czernin in confidence that the German Empire would, he felt, be obliged to surrender part, at least, of Alsace and Lorraine to France, if she was to have Peace. But he could not get Ludendorff to agree with this. On May 14, against the advice of the majority of his Ministers, the Emperor Charles, confident of making Peace himself with the Entente, rejected Germany's appeal for a closer Alliance: the rupture between Vienna and Berlin was now almost complete.[1]

[1] It was probably during June 1917, after this conversation at Vienna on May 13, and after M. Ribot's speech on May 22, that Count Czernin made the report on Poland in which he wrote to the Emperor:

"Ich bin überzeugt der Schlüssel der Situation liegt im Westen. Wenn Deutschland Frankreich und Belgien herausgibt und noch etwas dazu, dann ist der Friede da. Der Reichskanzler hat mir dieses Opfer streng geheim zugesagt. Die diesbezügliche Pression aber kann ich nicht mit Erfolg ausüben, wenn ich ihm gleichzeitig erkläre, dass wir ihm dafür im Osten (Polen) alle denkbaren Schwierigkeiten bereiten werden, damit er sich auch dort nicht kompensieren könne, und dass wir Polen für uns beanspruchen. Nur dadurch, dass wir auf den Balkan gehen und Deutschland Polen verkaufen, kann der Gedanke an eine partielle Abtretung von Elsass-Lothringen Gestalt annehmen."

(I am convinced that the key to the situation is to be found in the West. If Germany withdraws from France and Belgium and surrenders some territory besides, Peace will be made. The Imperial Chancellor has, in strict secrecy, promised me this sacrifice. But I cannot apply pressure of this sort with any hope of success, if at the same time I let him see that we are going to make all sorts of difficulties for him in the East (Poland), so that he will not be able to find any compensation there, and if I tell him that we are claiming Poland for ourselves. It is only if we look towards the Balkans for ourselves, and surrender Poland to Germany, that the idea of a partial restoration of Alsace-Lorraine can be realised.) See *Morning Post*, March 31, 1920, p. 5, col. 1, "Czernin's Guile."

Unfortunately the Emperor had ignored Prince Sixte's suggestion that he should accept without more ado Cadorna's Italian offer; he still declined to treat with Italy except through the Entente. However, the negotiations had now gone so far that the separate Peace seemed as good as made. The Monarchy asked the Entente to send a single diplomatist, representing all the Allied States, to Switzerland about June 15, to meet Count Czernin's brother-in-law, Prince Kinsky, and to sign a Treaty of Peace on the bases already agreed to. It would be enough if Italy consented to give up the least of her African Colonies to the Monarchy, in exchange for the Trentino and Aquilea, with which she had just announced, at Berne, that she would herself be satisfied. The separate Peace certainly seemed ready now for signature.

CHAPTER V

THE ENTENTE ASK FOR ITALY'S EXPLANATION: SILENCE IN ROME

(May 18–June 23, 1917)

THE Prince reached Paris at 6 o'clock on the evening of May 16. At 10 o'clock on the morning of May 18 he informed M. William Martin, with whom he now had a thorough understanding, of the contents of the two documents he had brought with him. M. William Martin evidently felt that the negotiations were now nearing their result, for he realised that the hour of diplomacy might soon strike. Unconsciously, he was in agreement, on one point at least, with Count Czernin, who had amused and gratified his Sovereign by expressing an opinion that this decisive hour had at last come. At the same time, M. William Martin placed great confidence in the offensive promised by Italy at Saint Jean de Maurienne; it had begun on May 14, and was to last till the 30th, and its success would, he thought, open a wider horizon to the Italians.

On May 19 the Prince drafted an outline of the conversation he meant to have next day with the President of the Republic.

Draft Conversation (May 19, 1917)

I

I am instructed to acquaint you with the terms of a fresh letter from the Emperor, attached to which are a note by Count Czernin and a report from Count Erdödy.

The effect is that the King of Italy, etc.

Well, the Entente and Austria are now agreed upon the three points mentioned in the Emperor's letter of March 24. At present, Italy would be prepared to come in if she were assured of the Italian-speaking part of the Tyrol. Before concluding Peace on these bases, Austria asks for two guarantees :

(1) A reasonable compensation for the cession of the Tyrol, which will appeal to public opinion in the Monarchy.

(2) A guarantee by the Entente to the Emperor of the integrity of his Dominions in their present extent, against any proposals that may be made to reduce them.

Once these two guarantees have been given, the Emperor is prepared to send a Plenipotentiary Extraordinary, chosen outside the present personnel of his Corps Diplomatique. It would be as well that there should be a single representative of our side, and a Frenchman rather than an Englishman. An Italian would be impossible, in view of Italy's present attitude. One might select M. William Martin, who has been familiar with these negotiations from the start. He knows Mr. Lloyd George and speaks English.

These two Plenipotentiaries would have to settle minor difficulties only, for they would meet on the bases already agreed to by both parties. Their meeting should be secret.

II

Russia may have in mind a separate Peace with Germany. It seems that Prince Lvov has already made certain overtures : so that, if we do not come to an agree-

ment with Austria we may see Russia and even Italy make Peace without us. The retirement of Generals there gives us cause for anxiety about the moral of their Army.

German propaganda is working its way into Russia, England, and France. A futile Peace must, at all costs, be avoided. We ourselves could not assent to a cession of the Trentino by Austria without a corresponding cession of Alsace-Lorraine to us. The Emperor has in view a Peace which will maintain the Balance of Power in Europe. The concessions we are to extort from our Enemies must be taken as a whole. That is to say : no Alsace-Lorraine—no Trentino.

England wants to preserve the Balance of Power as much as we do. From the moral point of view also, we must have material compensation for the damage we have suffered.

Mr. Bonar Law's answer to questions in the English Parliament by a group inclined to favour Germany (by allowing no annexations or compensations, and refusing to disintegrate the Germanic Block) should be borne in mind. When Mr. Annan Bryce asked whether the Allies were making a separate Peace with Austria and Bulgaria, he replied : "I do not think that anything would prove more fatal to Germany than if one of the other Central Powers were to separate from her."

Mr. Lloyd George presumably agrees with this.

We need the unanimous feeling of Europe—including Austria, Bulgaria, and Turkey—to force Germany to respect the terms of Peace, when it does come.

Germany has begun to subjugate Austria, prior to treating France and Russia in the same way.

Then there is the question of the Press.

As things are at present, a serious offer has been made ; indeed, so far as the Emperor is concerned, Peace is practically signed. We must take this offer, or leave it. Either way the answer means a great responsibility for the French Government : and the French Government must assume this responsibility in future. The Emperor

has taken his share: he has refused to acknowledge Italy's offer; and has three times rejected proposals by Prince Lvov. He now makes a final appeal to France. If the present Government here declines to come to terms with him, there must be no shirking or concealment of the fact that the Government accepts the entire responsibility in the face of Europe and of Posterity, in the same way as the French Government has already assumed the responsibility for its relations with Bulgaria, Rumania, and Greece.

As for myself, whatever answer you may make, I am obliged to take this offer personally to Mr. Lloyd George.

We must prevent Russia from making Peace with Germany, on the basis of the Pact of London. If from this point we include Russia with Italy in our negotiations (as M. Ribot said, "we shall inform Russia at the same time and place") it may well be to her advantage, but it is evident that we must at all costs make it impossible for her to conclude a separate Peace with Germany by virtue of the Pact of London.

And now follows an account of the final interview between Prince Sixte and the President of the French Republic, in which M. Alexandre Ribot took part.

Final Interview between Prince Sixte and the President of the French Republic (May 20, 1917)

The Princes arrived in Paris at 6 o'clock on the evening of May 16.

At ten o'clock on the morning of Friday, May 18, Prince Sixte informed M. William Martin of the Emperor's letter and the attached Note by Czernin, and asked for an interview with the President of the Republic on the following day. This interview could not, however, be arranged before ten o'clock on the morning of the twentieth, M. Martin calling at 9.30 to escort the Prince. M. Ribot had

gone to the Élysée the previous morning to discuss this matter with the President. On his arrival the Prince found M. Poincaré by himself. He handed him the Emperor's autograph letter, which the President read, the Prince afterwards reading him the Czernin Note.

The President said that he himself did not find the solution of the compensation problem at all simple, as the Italians were always more ready to take than to give. He asked which of their colonies we could contemplate taking from them. The Prince mentioned Somaliland. The President observed that Italy had asked France ten times and more for Djibouti, until he had become really angry with her !

At this moment M. Ribot came in and the President gave him the Emperor's letter. While he was reading it, the President asked why the letter was written in pencil, and whether that showed distrust ? The Prince answered that the Emperor's hand having become tired, he preferred, as a rule, to write in pencil. The President remembered that the previous letter also was written in that way.

M. Ribot read the letter through, and began by observing that the opening phrase, in which the Emperor set forth the three essential points already gained, did not correspond, to his mind, with what had been previously agreed.

In the discussion which followed, the Prince took the line that we ought to congratulate ourselves on having gained our three points : Belgium, ALSACE-LORRAINE, and Serbia ; M. Ribot replying that there was still need for revision of all these points, that in the case of Serbia, for instance, Cattaro must be specifically named, and that the answer arising from the last interview had dealt solely with Italy's participation in the Conference. The President, however, considered that, as things then stood, Serbia should be quite satisfied with the restoration of her own territory and, in addition, such access to the Adriatic as the Emperor specified in his letter, with Durazzo.

M. Ribot pointed out that Rumania had been completely overlooked. Our obligation was greater to her than to Serbia, as she had only entered the war as our Ally: moreover there was the Polish question. The President answered that our Allies had come into the war on the strength of promises which he, personally, considered excessive; but that the course of events would inevitably mean a curtailment of their aspirations.

"But it is not for us," said M. Ribot, "to curtail their aspirations! To return to Italy, we have signed our name to her claims, and we cannot undertake to persuade her to give up what we have promised to secure for her." M. Ribot went on to ask for more information about the Italian offer to Austria.

The Prince said that both the Emperor and Count Czernin had told him that a representative from Italian General Headquarters had called at the German Legation at Berne, saying that he was sent by the King and by General Cadorna, and requesting that Germany would transmit to Austria the King's wish for Peace on no terms beyond the cession of the Trentino to Italy. The Austrian Legation had taken note of this request, to which the Emperor had answered that, for the present, no answer must be expected.

Signor Sonnino had not been informed of this overture, which was made during the week previous to the interview at Saint Jean de Maurienne. The fact that he was regarded as negligible made it apparent that this movement originated with the Giolittian party. From information received, the danger of internal revolution in Italy was directly responsible for it.

M. Ribot declined to believe that the King and Cadorna would have pledged themselves in such a way without Sonnino's knowledge. The Prince replied that it was perfectly intelligible, if one bore in mind the system of dual control prevailing in Italy. The notorious attitude of the Deputy Chief of the General Staff, General Porro, bore out the suggestion. M. Ribot admitted that Porro

was quite capable of sending one of his officers to see how the land lay, but he refused to admit that the King or Cadorna could be involved ; for one thing, he failed to see what advantage such a course could bring them. The Prince answered that Italy's interest lay in exacting a maximum of concessions from either side. At Milan things of the gravest import had come to light.

M. Ribot said that this overture to Germany was a thing of the gravest import, but that he would not admit that Italian duplicity could have been carried to such a point. We could base nothing upon these proposals, for to do so would be to play the game of Signor Giolitti against Signor Sonnino, who was our one and only friend. Besides, if we encouraged Italy to make a separate Peace, we merely deprived ourselves of an Ally.

Prince Sixte. How so ?

M. Ribot. Why, the moment Italy ceases to fight Austria she will have no front left to meet an enemy on.

Prince Sixte. And is not Germany just as much her enemy as Austria ? Do you suppose that, when she signs her treaty with Austria, she will simultaneously make Peace with Germany ? The Pact of London is perfectly clear on that point.

President Poincaré. Certainly, Italy must go on fighting Germany.

M. Ribot. But how do you propose that she shall go on fighting when there is no point of contact between her territory and theirs ?

Prince Sixte. Why, by bringing her Army into France ; and by continuing to furnish us with munitions of war.

M. Ribot. Italy will never do that.

The Prince and the President exchanged glances. M. Ribot reverted to his idea that Sonnino must be supported ; and said that, for his part, he found the question of a compensation for the Trentino exceedingly difficult.

M. Poincaré. We, certainly, are not going to pay Italy's compensations.

Prince Sixte. So far from that, I feel strongly—and the Emperor agrees with me, that we ought to couple the Trentino question with that of Alsace-Lorraine : the idea being to maintain a European balance.

M. Ribot. But how do you propose to couple the Trentino with Alsace-Lorraine ? The two questions are entirely separate. One concerns Austria, the other Germany.

M. Poincaré. No, no ; it is quite feasible. We should tell Italy that she would not get the Trentino unless we got Alsace-Lorraine.

M. Ribot still maintained that he found it impossible ; he returned again to his idea of conversations with Italy : insisting on a personal interview with the King, in which he could be asked to prove his sincerity. Unless we could have a discussion with Italy, there was nothing to be done. He suggested that the King be invited to visit the French front, and to discuss the whole question in detail with the President.

The Prince replied that it was quite plain that a conversation must, sooner or later, be held with Italy ; and that Italy would most certainly not reveal to France the double rôle she had been playing, until Signor Giolitti was actually in power. The fact that Sonnino had been kept in the dark showed, he said, the strength of Giolitti's party ; but if M. Ribot insisted on seeing things in that light, he would not offer any opposition.

M. Ribot. If we are not to hold conversations with Italy, we must leave the whole thing alone. It is impossible to make any progress if you refuse to allow this matter to be discussed with the King of Italy.

Prince Sixte. Very well, then. I will only draw your attention to what is happening in Russia : Deputies from the Duma have crossed the Austrian lines with an offer of Peace.

M. Ribot. As for Russia, we need not inform her of our negotiations until they are practically finished.

The Prince observed again that the importance of

making Peace with Austria seemed to him all the greater since the Austrian Socialists had declared themselves solid in support of the Emperor's efforts to secure an honourable Peace; whereas in Germany the Socialists were in opposition to the Pan-Germans and the Military Party then in power. A Peace with Austria could not fail to produce serious disturbances in Germany. In any case Germany could not keep herself alive, even with what she got from Rumania, without regular supplies from Hungary.

The President asked the Prince several questions about this point. M. Ribot said nothing until they had finished, when he again broached the question to the President of the King of Italy's visit to France. He proposed to telegraph to M. Barrère to find out whether the King would feel disposed to visit the French front and discuss the whole question with them.

The Prince rose to leave, saying that he would now go to London, as Mr. Lloyd George had begged him to let him know the outcome of the interview and to come and talk it over with him. M. Ribot thought it might be dangerous to talk to Mr. Lloyd George, who made up his mind far too quickly. The Prince replied that Mr. Lloyd George had kept his promise of secrecy since the previous interview, and that anyhow he would go first to M. Paul Cambon, and then perhaps to pay his respects to King George, with whose Army he had served for six months. The President saw no harm in that. The Prince said that he would next like to know what answer he should make to the Emperor. M. Ribot explained that this could not be settled out of hand, as it would take some time to arrange the King of Italy's visit to the French front, and that, therefore, the matter was not pressing.

Prince Sixte. All the same, I must take some answer to the Emperor.

M. Ribot. Certainly; but there is plenty of time. Unless, of course, the King of Italy should categorically

deny the negotiations, in which case the answer can be prepared in a few days.

The President promised to send word to the Prince on the Belgian front when the time came. The Prince took his leave, and the interview ended at 11 o'clock. To M. William Martin, who escorted him to the Quai de Béthune, the Prince repeated the main points of the interview, without concealing his dislike of M. Ribot's dilatory methods. As he saw it, the result of further delay would be : Peace, or, at least, a cessation of regular warfare on the Russian, Rumanian and Italian fronts ; which would set the Central Powers free to bring a new offensive against either our home front or Salonika. Were Sarrail to be defeated, the whole East would be thrown open to the Central Powers. M. Martin said he fully understood the Prince's misgivings, and he begged him to carry on the work he had undertaken, as the end in view was of such cardinal importance to France : he would himself, he promised, speak to M. Poincaré again the following day.

The Prince replied that he was not in the habit of abandoning any project he undertook, that he would go on with this as he saw it to be his clear duty as a French citizen, and that he would go at once to see Lloyd George. The longer things were delayed the less we could hope to do for the smaller States ; for, as Austria's situation improved daily, public opinion would make fresh demands, and the Emperor need grant fewer concessions to Rumania and Serbia.

Impression made on the Prince by this Conversation

The President. Very quick-witted and clear-sighted, very well informed of the European situation, keenly patriotic. His will, however, not translated into action, which his constitutional position made impossible.

The Premier. Aged and worn-out. Kept taking off and putting on his tinted spectacles. Could see all the difficulties of the undertaking, but could see nothing more.

Especially afraid of Parliament. Not a man of action : his mentality a negative factor.

It seems superfluous to add anything further, after the lapse of three years, to the impression made on the Prince at this interview by the two French Statesmen. Evidently M. Ribot had made up his mind to break off negotiations altogether. Like M. William Martin, he reckoned on an Italian victory at an early date.

Two days later the Prince crossed to London, in order to acquaint Mr. Lloyd George with the situation, although he had received but little encouragement from M. Ribot, who on that same day, May 22, in the course of a speech on Germany in the Chamber of Deputies, made a guarded allusion to the Austrian offer, which he qualified as " indirect and ambiguous " ; precisely, in fact, what it was not, seeing that for the last five months the offer had come directly and in frank terms from its responsible source, the Emperor Charles.[1]

[1] M. Ribot, addressing the Chamber, said : " They will come to us, asking for Peace, not, as they come to-day, hypocritically, through indirect and ambiguous channels, but openly and honourably : and we will make Peace on conditions worthy of France, of France in the past and of our France to-day. If they do not ask us for Peace, we shall find out the way to enforce it on them " (*loud applause from all parts*). The *Journal des Débats* adds: " M. Ribot was loudly applauded, and has scored the greatest success of his long Parliamentary career " (*Journal des Débats*, Thursday, May 24, 1917, p. 3, col. 3). In this debate Germany alone was under consideration, and M. Ribot had in mind the speech made by the German Chancellor in the Reichstag on May 15, in reply to a resolution by Scheidemann imploring him to make Peace : " The people are ready to-day to make a Peace without annexations. The Entente have publicly announced their War-Aims : Germany has always kept hers secret. Peace must be made. Our Ally Austria has already expressed her desire for Peace. At Vienna the situation is clearly appreciated. If Germany persists in this attitude, you will have Revolution throughout the country." In replying to this demand by the Socialists, the Chancellor could only refer to the offer made

On May 23 the French Ambassador at the Court of Saint James's procured for the Prince an interview with Mr. Lloyd George; and also an audience of the King. The same day he was asked to allow copies to be made of the Emperor's two letters, and of the note by Count Czernin which he had with him. These copies were made by the Premier's Secretary, Mr. Davies.

The following is an account of this interview, in which Mr. Lloyd George showed, as he had done on the previous occasions, the utmost anxiety to help to bring about what he considered a favourable result.

The Prince's Interview with Mr. Lloyd George (London, May 23, 1917)

I left Paris on the morning of May 22 at 9.10, and reached Boulogne at 3.15 P.M. The boat was then ready to start, and I reached London at 8.30 that night. On my way to the Hotel I left a letter at the Embassy for M. Paul Cambon, asking for an interview with him, and for his help in arranging a meeting with Mr. Lloyd George. I stayed at the Hyde Park Hotel.

May 23. As no answer had arrived, I went out, to various places, in the morning, coming in at 11.45. I then found a note from M. Paul Cambon, which had been left at the Hotel at 11.33, in which he asked me to go at once

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jointly by Germany and her Allies on December 12, 1916. His own ambition was, he said, "to find a quick, and, at the same time, a satisfactory way out of the War. I can do, and I can say no more" (*Journal des Débats*, Thursday, May 17, 1917, p. 1, col. 5). It is impossible to decipher from the Chancellor's reserved and cryptic attitude, in his "vow of silence," any demand, even a hypocritical demand for Peace. In any case, what M. Ribot was pleased to term the "indirect and ambiguous channels" of Germany could be none other than the Emperor Charles and Count Czernin, whom M. Ribot persisted in regarding, unwarrantably, and at the moment, most unfortunately, as the mouth-pieces of Germany.

to the Embassy. I was there at 11.50, and learned from M. Paul Cambon that he had told Mr. Lloyd George of my wish to see him, and that he was expecting me; he then sent word to the Prime Minister that I would be with him in a few minutes. He said to me in so many words that he did not believe that Italy would make Peace for nothing more than the Trentino. I fixed an appointment with him for 7.30 at the Embassy. I then returned to fetch my papers, reached No. 10 Downing Street at 12.30, and asked for Mr. Davies, Mr. Lloyd George's Private Secretary, as M. Cambon had advised me.

The house in which the British Government has installed its Premiers for three centuries is quite small and rather old-fashioned. I was shown into an anteroom decorated with all sorts of horns from the Colonies. Admiral Jellicoe, with a portfolio under his arm, arrived at the same moment. Mr. Davies took me to the Premier's study, where I waited a few minutes. It was in great disorder: a large bureau (quite commonplace), with several tables, vases of flowers, a typewriter, books and reports. I could see that I was in the house of a "business man." Mr. Lloyd George came in. He said he was very glad to see me again, that M. Ribot had written to tell him that I was bringing fresh information, and he asked if he might see the Emperor's letter. I gave him the translation, which he read carefully. When he came to the paragraph about Italy he shook his head and muttered something. Then he read the last part aloud.

Mr. Lloyd George. It's a very kind letter, but how on earth are we going to find him a compensation? What is there that Italy could give up to Austria? Perhaps we could manage it with some of the German Colonies.

The Prince. That does not strike me as practicable, for, since Austria is anxious for Peace simply in order that she may not have to go on fighting, I hardly think that she would bring herself to accept a German territory; she would then be immediately embroiled with her old Ally, and might even be forced to go to war with her.

Mr. Lloyd George. But what else can we do ?

The Prince. All I know is, that Austria would laugh at the idea of her being compensated with a Colony.

Mr. Lloyd George. What about Erythrea or Somaliland ? They are poor Colonies.

The Prince. I have good reason to know that : I have been in Erythrea myself. But the long and short of it is, that if Italy wants to have the Trentino, she must either conquer or purchase it. It is not our duty to purchase it for her. After all, Italy can do nothing without the consent of yourselves and France.

Mr. Lloyd George. Quite so.

The Prince. I can discern another problem of a higher order which is the Balance of Power. To my mind, the acquisition of the Trentino cannot be treated as a separate question, independently of the acquisition of Alsace-Lorraine by France.

Mr. Lloyd George asked me to tell him all I knew of the overtures made by the Italians. He seemed to find it difficult to believe that the King of Italy could have pledged himself without Sonnino's knowledge, as "he can do nothing without Sonnino. I think that the best thing would be to suggest a meeting between the Heads of the three States, the Kings of England and Italy and M. Poincaré, each accompanied by his Prime Minister. They could meet somewhere on the front, making an excuse of the state of things in Russia, which is causing us great anxiety."

The Prince. Very well, but do you not think that, if Italy actually did make overtures at Berne, as the Emperor of Austria and Count Czernin assure us, the King of Italy will deny everything ?

Mr. Lloyd George walked up and down with a worried air, then said : "We ought to see the King at once. I will telephone now and ask for an audience." He left the room for a moment to give instructions. When he returned I began to tell him of the Emperor's plan of sending Prince Kinsky with Count Erdödy. Mr. Lloyd

George replied that he wanted no Diplomats : Diplomats were invented simply to waste time ; besides he had no one at hand whom he could send to speak to Prince Kinsky. I suggested tentatively that M. William Martin might be employed on such a mission. Mr. Lloyd George retorted that it was simply a waste of time to let so important a question be discussed by men who were not authorised to speak for their countries. Why could not M. Ribot and himself meet Czernin ? I pointed out to him what I regarded as the insuperable difficulties in the way of such a solution. Mr. Lloyd George still insisted that only those men who were at the Head of the Government of each Country, and had authority in their Parliaments could meet together to discuss questions of such grave importance.

The Secretary came in to say that the King would receive us at 3 o'clock. Mr. Lloyd George asked me to be at Downing Street ten minutes before that hour. I hurried home to luncheon, as it was then nearly half-past one. I reached Downing Street again at 2.45, and was shown in to Mr. Davies, who offered me a cigar—moderately good. Mr. Lloyd George joined us, wearing a frock coat and tall hat. We got into the car and drove to Buckingham Palace. Mr. Lloyd George told me that in that old house in Downing Street the war against Napoleon had been fought. Pitt lived there. I answered that the present-day Pitt must feel quite at home there, while engaged in so formidable a war as this : fortunately it was the Germans and not the French that he was fighting. "Thank you !" said Mr. Lloyd George, evidently flattered. Then he spoke of the French Statesmen. Ribot was too old : Briand was younger, but lacking in energy. Painlévé was all right, but not "matter of fact" enough. Pétain inspired him with most confidence. He regretted, as I did, the absence of Joffre, but said he did not think the Marshal was a great military genius.

The Prince. What about the Marne ?

Mr. Lloyd George. Yes ; but was he really responsible for that ? Some say not.

The Prince. He was so far responsible for it that in an order dated, if I am not mistaken, August 25, he arranged for the check on the Marne, and the counter-offensive, and actually forecast the battle which was to save the Entente.

Mr. Lloyd George. Oh ! if that is so, he was a great general. Then saying, " Look, here is the letter M. Ribot wrote me about this business." He handed me a short letter written on cheap paper, a small sheet in the small handwriting of a busy man, pressed for time. The letter, which was in French, began with " Prince S . . . will tell you what news he has brought back from Switzerland," then went on to suggest the meeting of the three Constitutional Rulers, and said that to his mind there were enormous difficulties in the way of our coming to any sort of agreement with Austria, that we could not forget our Allies, that Serbia and Rumania must receive an indemnity, of which no mention was made in the Emperor's letter, that we could not be certain of the attitude of Germany, and that they must lay their heads together before coming to any decision. The closing words of the letter were wholly illegible.[1] I observed that

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[1] *Le Temps* was able to publish on January 3, 1920 (No. 21342, p. 6, col. 1-2, " La Négociation du Prince Sixte : deux lettres "), this letter from M. Ribot to Mr. Lloyd George, dated May 20, 1917, and Mr. Lloyd George's reply, dated May 23. The letters ran as follows :

Dear Mr. Lloyd George—Prince S . . . is to go to London to-morrow. He will show you an autograph letter which you will read with interest ; we have told the Prince again that it is impossible for us to do anything without consulting Italy. I cannot bring myself to believe that the move referred to in the letter can have been authorised by the King. It seems to me essential that we have the full facts. The simplest plan would be to speak to the King himself, and to do this we could invite him to come to France and visit our Army and yours ; in this way we could, without arousing suspicion, arrange a meeting between him, the King of England and the President. You could be present with your King, as I should be with M. Poincaré. We could see whether it may be possible to conduct a discussion of these issues with any prospect of success. You cannot fail to realise

in the first of the Emperor's letters, a translation of which was in his possession, the Serbians had not been forgotten.

Mr. Lloyd George. No. There was an avenue to the sea for them.

. . . . . .

When we were once more in the car Mr. Lloyd George said again that he would communicate at once with M. Ribot and would then give me an answer. We arranged that I should come to luncheon the following Wednesday at 1.45, at Mr. Lloyd George's house. Meanwhile, I would go to Ryde; Mr. Lloyd George would give orders to obviate any possible difficulties which might arise from the Isle of Wight's being a restricted Naval Area, owing to its proximity to Portsmouth Harbour.

If any fresh circumstance arose, Mr. Lloyd George

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that it will be very difficult to come to any agreement. It comes to this, that we cannot sacrifice Serbia, and still less Rumania, who only came into the War at our request. In any case we must act with extreme caution, and I think that, pending further developments, the confidential information we have received, to which we were bound to give a hearing, should be kept secret by those few persons to whom, so far, it has been disclosed.

Dear M. Ribot—I have to-day seen your informant, and taken him to the King, who approves of your suggestion that a meeting should be arranged in France between the two Kings and M. Poincaré, and their Ministers. Will you be so good as to take the necessary steps to invite the Kings of England and Italy to visit the French front at an early date?

In your invitation to the King of Italy you might hint that M. Poincaré would like to have an early discussion of the Russian situation, about which he has received special information. I am afraid that if we do not let the King of Italy know that there is a particular reason for our desiring to meet him at an early date, he may postpone coming for some weeks, until the excuse we can now offer may no longer serve. We want, if possible, to concentrate our efforts so as to crush the military power of Germany. No other Power counts in comparison.

May I ask for your opinion on these suggestions? My special messenger will await your reply.

Most hearty congratulations on your wonderful speech in the Chamber. It has made a great impression in this country.

was to telegraph for me to return at once. M. Ribot meant to come to London, as he was anxious to secure the downfall of King Constantine of Greece, at all costs.

Mr. Lloyd George asked me what I thought of King Constantine's son, who might be put on the throne instead of him, with Venizelos as Prime Minister. I said I knew nothing of the Crown Prince of Greece. We parted, the best of friends, at 4.20. I went home to write some notes. At 5.30 Mr. Davies came from the Prime Minister to ask if he might make copies of my three documents, the Emperor's two letters and Count Czernin's note. I gave them to him to copy, and he brought them back at 7.30.

That evening the Prince discussed the situation with the French Ambassador, who greeted him most warmly, but showed a certain disillusionment with men and affairs, hardly calculated to stimulate a young man to action.

THE PRINCE'S VISIT TO M. PAUL CAMBON, AT THE FRENCH EMBASSY, LONDON (MAY 23, 1917, 7.30–8.20 P.M.).

The interview took place in a little room opening out of a larger room on the ground floor. The ambassador received me in a very friendly, almost an affectionate manner. I said that I had come to tell him what had passed between Mr. Lloyd George, the King and myself, not only because of the confidence I had in him and the sympathy he had always shown me, but also coming as a citizen of France to her Ambassador. He questioned me at some length upon my interviews. He too refused to believe that the King of Italy could have compromised himself so gravely. He said that the King was a most prudent man, and would never dream of challenging public opinion by trying to impose by force on his people a necessarily unpopular Peace. The Italians would never relinquish one of their extravagant claims. In any case,

it seemed desirable that the rulers should meet so that we might all know at length where we stood with Italy. He himself, however, was quite certain of the result. Italy would never give up any of her claims.

I asked him this question: supposing Italy were to make Peace with Austria, she would still be obliged to support us in every way possible against Germany, and to help us to reconquer Alsace-Lorraine. I told him what M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George thought about this. Once again M. Cambon was quite positive. "Italy will do nothing for us. She has only one idea, to perfect her preparations for joining in the economic struggle after the War, when all the other Allies are exhausted." I insisted on my point, but M. Cambon repeated that Italy would never do anything for us. She had announced again and again that she had come into the War solely to conquer the territories she coveted.

The Prince. Then, if Peace were made between Austria and Italy, that Peace would benefit those two Powers only, not France.

M. Cambon. Yes. At the same time, we should gain something from the great impression such a Peace must make upon Germany, as in that way it must hasten the end of the War.

The Prince. But would the shock sustained by Germany do more for us than balance the loss, at the same time, of Italy's support?

M. Cambon. No.

The Prince. In that case, it will be quite impossible for me to take any further part in the negotiations, since they must be to the disadvantage of France. In agreeing to collaborate, I considered nothing but her interest. It was not I who first thought of the negotiations; but I have done all I could, in the belief that Peace with Austria would seriously injure Germany. From the moment when Italy's attitude and her plans for the future make such a Peace disadvantageous to France, I cannot conscientiously go on working for it.

M. Cambon. That question will not arise for you, for you will find that the Italian claims will upset everything.

The Prince. I must, however, remark with regret upon the part of catspaw which we are consenting to play for Italy. We supply her with everything necessary for the conquest of the Provinces she covets, while she will do nothing at all to help us to regain our own lost Provinces. (*M. Cambon shrugged his shoulders, and the Prince went on.*) After seeing our Army, our peasants, all France sacrificing everything, blood and treasure, without a murmur, it is painful to feel that our destinies are bound up with those of such selfish Allies.

M. Cambon. Yes, it is *our* people that one should look at. They are splendid.

The Prince. But how do you account for our giving in like this to Italy? After all, she is in the hands of France and England. If we refuse her coal and shipping she cannot keep going.

M. Cambon. That is true, but she has repeatedly said that she had joined us solely in order to satisfy her own ambitions. Moreover, we cannot cut off her supply of coal, for that would be tantamount to a declaration of War.

The Prince. Yes, the coal and iron with which she forges her industrial weapons, while we in France are using the last ounce of metal to carry on the War. I am weary of saying this. It is all well known; I am inventing nothing. But to-day, if you speak the truth about the Italians, people go about saying that you "don't like the Italians."

M. Cambon. But I think the same of them, much as I love Italy.

The Prince. I am obliged to you for speaking to me so plainly: I can only repeat that I am guided by nothing but the best interests of France.

M. Cambon. And I repeat, that for you no case of conscience need arise. But above all, be prudent, keep your own counsel, for Italy alone will get the benefit.

Remember, a tinge of scepticism is always necessary, so act with circumspection.

The Prince. I have never acted, save in harmony with France, and I have done my best to serve her. If there is nothing for it but to go on with the War, I will gladly go on with it. At the same time Mr. Lloyd George regarded this business with plenty of enthusiasm. He said to me on his return from Saint Jean de Maurienne: "With the Trentino and the Dalmatian Islands I can make Peace."

M. Cambon. Mr. Lloyd George is impetuous: he is a Celt.

He then began to speak of King George V. as an excellent man, honest and conscientious, and of Edward VII., finally of the Kaiser, who was hated by the other Monarchs because of his way of treating them like schoolboys. And, among the crowned heads, the King of Italy had been especially offended.

The Prince. And yet in Italy the Germans have been very successful. Italy is like a wife who likes to be beaten. The Germans have made her admire and respect them simply by their rudeness to the Italians.

M. Cambon. That is perfectly true.

He added that the relations between Italy and France were not always easy, as the Italians were, or said they were, frequently annoyed by our behaviour. After a digression on Russia I rose to go. M. Cambon begged me to await the course of events in patience. If M. Ribot came to London (as he said, to speak of Russia, for I did not tell him what Mr. Lloyd George had said to me, that the Greek question and the deposition of King Constantine were M. Ribot's sole idea of Foreign Policy!) then we should have some news. He asked me to call upon him on my return from Ryde, and showed me down to the great entrance of the Embassy, always friendly and simple, speaking softly and slowly, with a certain air of melancholy.

I then left London for Ryde.

London and Paris were now agreed on the necessity of asking the King of Italy to come and discuss the situation with his Allies: but Baron Sonnino was to oppose this scheme with the utmost determination and energy. His resistance and his obstinate silence were in themselves instructive. His tenacity might be admirable, but some kinds of silence are eloquent in themselves.

Mr. Lloyd George was convinced, to begin with, that Italy could not refuse a request which seemed to him eminently reasonable: moreover, her reply—which would be satisfactory—must come almost at once. He asked the Prince to call upon him again on May 30; and then, as he still had not received the answer which he expected at any moment that day, or the next day at the latest, he introduced to the Prince his colleagues in the British War Cabinet.

Interview with Mr. Lloyd George
(London, May 30, 1917)

I left Ryde at 5.30 A.M., and reached the Grosvenor Hotel in London at noon. I telephoned at once to Mr. Davies, Mr. Lloyd George's Private Secretary, to find out whether my invitation to lunch with Mr. Lloyd George had been postponed. He replied that I was expected at 1.40.

I reached No. 10 Downing Street at that hour, and was shown into a reception room on the first floor. Mr. Lloyd George came in a few minutes, with the Lord Chief Justice, Lord Reading, whom he introduced to me. He then took me aside, and told me that an invitation had been sent to the King of Italy, whose answer was expected at any moment. A servant then announced the other guests. Mr. Lloyd George told me that these were his

colleagues in the War Committee, and asked whether I had any objection to being introduced to them in my own name. I replied that this seemed the only possible course, and that a good reason for my being there was that I had served for some months with the British Army. At that moment the other Ministers came in. First Lord Stamfordham, with a small white moustache. He did not say much. Then Mr. Bonar Law, Chancellor of the Exchequer, in a blue suit, very simple and good-natured. I could detect the Scotsman in him, far less stiff than the English type. After him Lord Curzon, looking every inch a lord, talking well, and delighted to tell stories and recall historic events. Then Sir Edward Carson, very tall, with a look of ill-health ; a pensive expression. We spoke for a moment of Belgium, and then went to table, passing through a large corner room in which Mr. Lloyd George had laid out a collection of trophies brought from the war by his son : these he showed us with obvious paternal pride. The dining-room is large and very English, with portraits of English statesmen. Lloyd George sat at the head of the table, with myself on his right hand and Lord Stamfordham on his left. On my right Lord Curzon, on Lord Stamfordham's left, Mr. Bonar Law ; then Sir Edward Carson, and, facing the Premier, Lord Reading. I spoke first to Lord Curzon, about his visit to Nieuport and Ypres. Then all the Ministers began to relate their experiences in the trenches. Mr. Lloyd George confessed that, when he went up the line and had passed our guns, he felt a slight pressure upon his chest and stomach. Lord Curzon would not admit that. Then the conversation turned upon the chief English orators. Each of the party gave us some personal memories. I felt I was among persons of good breeding, whose opinions were not all the same, who could recall with a smile their rhetorical duels in earlier days, and were now in complete agreement to work together for the good of their country. Mr. Lloyd George said : " We must at least be in a position to

invade Germany ; one or two miles." I replied that I thought that not enough. We must show the Germans in Germany what war was like, and submit them in their turn to some of the hardships they had imposed on us. Mr. Lloyd George then spoke of Rheims, of the devastations the Germans had wrought in the country over which they retired, and of the splendid behaviour of the whole French people. He praised our Generals. Lord Curzon said that the French Generals were men of culture. Foch and Nivelle had each made an excellent impression. Bonar Law alone of all these Ministers knew the antecedents of the French Ministers. Mr. Lloyd George expressed great admiration for Albert Thomas. While we were still at table, and drinking coffee, General Robertson, Chief of the General Staff of the Army, arrived. His manner reminded me a little of the Belgian General Rucquoy.

He asked me how I came to be with the Belgian Army. I explained briefly. General conversation began again. Mr. Lloyd George enlarged on the idea that England ought to make France a present of a certain amount of coal, since France had lost the greater part of her coal-fields. Bonar Law disagreed, and stuck to the financier's point of view. Lloyd George began to laugh : " There you have the Chancellor of the Exchequer reinforced by the Scotsman." The financial problem was then discussed. Bonar Law summed up thus : " The money shortage will not stop the War, but after the War we shall be crippled. As Prime Minister during the War you have a very hard time, but the man who will be Prime Minister after the War will have a pretty bad time too." Mr. Lloyd George assented, maintaining that none of the belligerents would be held up by lack of money. The only things which could bring the War to an end in the material sense would be lack of food and lack of coal. The lack of coal was severely felt in Italy. We rose from table, and moved to the next room. While Mr. Lloyd George spoke to Lord Reading, I talked for some minutes

with Lord Curzon. He said he found the Belgian Front depressing, and, naturally, I agreed with him. As we parted he bade me present his compliments to the King and Queen of the Belgians. He also asked if I had any news of my own family. I replied that the only news I could have from Austria came through the press, but that some of my relatives were in Switzerland, and naturally I heard from them sometimes. He questioned me about Zita and Charles, and asked whether Zita still had pleasant memories of England: then about Charles' character. I told him how it was thanks to Charles alone that we got out of Austria at the beginning of the War. He said he pitied him with all his heart, but that only so young a Sovereign could steer his country through these critical times. The Ministers said good-bye to me and went off to the Cabinet room. Mr. Lloyd George took me aside and asked me how long I meant to stay in London. I replied that I had thought of going back next day, but could prolong my visit if the Prime Minister thought it would be of any use.

Mr. Lloyd George. In that case I should like you to stay here until we have an answer from the King of Italy. As I have told you, we have invited him to visit the Front in France, on the pretext of talking about Russia.

The Prince. But do you suppose he will be able to come during the Italian offensive ?

Mr. Lloyd George. Oh, yes, yes. Anyhow, the offensive is over. At the same time I don't think he will want to come to Compiègne ; I think he will prefer an interview on the Italian frontier, but that presents no difficulties. I have no doubt he will bring Signor Sonnino with him.

The Prince. But supposing he refuses to come at all.

Mr. Lloyd George. He cannot do that. He will come. If the worst comes to the worst, a Conference between the three Prime Ministers would be bound to throw some light on the situation.

The Prince. But aren't you afraid that this will be

purely and simply a repetition of Saint Jean de Maurienne ? Have you any hope that Signor Sonnino will renew his pledges, without Trieste, Istria, Dalmatia, etc., etc. ? Which would mean that we should be at precisely where we were two months ago, and that there would be nothing for it but to abandon all ideas of weakening Germany by stripping her of her Allies.

Mr. Lloyd George. It is just for that reason that I am making a special point of King Victor's coming. Signor Sonnino will probably raise various objections. He keeps on saying that we must not frighten the Russians, who would not like it if they knew that their Allies were discussing their affairs. Signor Sonnino is a violent man. We need to moderate his violence, with the King's help. The King holds different views from Signor Sonnino. You will see that we shall make something out of the King. (*Mr. Lloyd George here shook his head, repeating*) Signor Sonnino is a violent man, too violent !

The Prince. When do you expect to have the answer ?

Mr. Lloyd George. To-day or to-morrow. That is why I am asking you to be patient for a little longer. As soon as I have an answer I will send word to your hotel. We shall then have a definite statement and a definite answer to give you.

The Prince. What I should like would be to have some sort of answer to make to the Emperor's letter.

Mr. Lloyd George. Yes, yes. Don't worry about that.

The Premier escorted me downstairs and I left him at 3.20.

Mr. Lloyd George begged the Prince, who was anxious to return to his regiment, to stay a day or two longer in London, until he could give him the answer he required.

In due course an answer did come from Rome, but, strange to say, it evaded the question. Mr. Lloyd George was surprised by this, but sent a

further message to Baron Sonnino, and was now awaiting a further answer, which should prove satisfactory. This was the message which Mr. Davies gave the Prince on June 1, in the Prime Minister's absence.

NOTE BY PRINCE SIXTE OF A CONVERSATION WITH MR. DAVIES (LONDON, JUNE 1, 1917)

Having received no answer from Mr. Lloyd George, I telephoned at 11.12 A.M. to Mr. Davies. He said that the Premier had gone out of London, but that he would telephone to him. I insisted on having an answer of some sort, as I had no intention of ending my days in London. At 4 P.M. Mr. Davies called for me at the Grosvenor Hotel. Mr. Lloyd George had instructed him to tell me that Signor Sonnino had sent an evasive answer to his telegram, saying that he saw no need for a meeting between the Allies at present. The Premier had then sent him a letter by courier, explaining what he wanted; and the answer to this should arrive on Sunday at the latest. He asked me therefore to wait a little longer; and Mr. Davies also pressed me to stay. I said that I must go back to Belgium. Mr. Davies asked me to telegraph to Belgium that I was detained by urgent private affairs of the greatest importance. Mr. Lloyd George was quite determined to see me again after he had had an answer from Signor Sonnino. I agreed to stay, and wrote to the King of the Belgians by the Courier of the Belgian Legation in London.

A few days later the Prince had a fresh interview with Mr. Lloyd George, who began to show signs of annoyance at being repeatedly frustrated in his design to meet the King of Italy and Baron Sidney Sonnino together. "That honest gentleman . . . refuses to come. Apparently, he smells a rat!"

Final Interview with Mr. Lloyd George
(London, Tuesday, June 5, 1917)

As there was still no answer I telephoned to Mr. Davies a little before midday to ask how things were getting on. He answered that nothing had come as yet from Rome. In that case, I said, I should like to speak to him at once, and I was coming to Downing Street. When I got there Mr. Davies told me that Signor Sonnino had still not answered, and that he was sorry we should have to waste our time in London. I replied that, as a matter of fact, it was impossible for my brother and myself to remain indefinitely in London. At that moment Mr. Davies was sent for by the Prime Minister, and came back the next minute to say that Mr. Lloyd George was waiting for me. He showed me into the study. Mr. Lloyd George assured me that he was as annoyed as I could be at the procrastination of Signor Sonnino, with whom it was almost impossible to carry on negotiations.

Mr. Lloyd George. Signor Sonnino is as stubborn as he is, evidently, honest. Some time back we invited him to this Conference, without, of course, telling him what was to be discussed, but he would not come. He evidently smelt a rat. Just fancy! he has proposed that our King should meet Poincaré, and then visit the Italian Front. But that's no good! We won't do that. They must come to us.

The Prince. In the event of Signor Sonnino's refusing absolutely to give any answer, I shall ask you to be so good as to give me one, so that, with the approval of the French Government, I may transmit their views and yours upon the Austrian proposals to the Emperor, even though your answer be in the negative.

Mr. Lloyd George. No, no. Italy owes us an answer, and she shall give us one, I assure you; it is just because Signor Sonnino is so obstinate and difficult and troublesome that I want the King of Italy to have a say. His influence will balance Signor Sonnino's. The chance of

Peace with Austria is too important for us to let it slip. For the moment, we can only say that these negotiations with Italy make the whole thing long and difficult, but that, once they are settled, things will move faster. But why should not you come with M. Ribot and myself to the interview with the Italians ?

The Prince. That seems to me almost impossible, in view of my own peculiar position.

Mr. Lloyd George. But it would not be a bad idea.

The Prince. There is one question which has been occupying my mind, and which can only be settled by immediate action, and that is the question of the harvest. At the present time, it seems to me impossible to come to any conclusion so long as the harvests in Turkey, Rumania, and Hungary have not been gathered. I mean that, apart from transport difficulties, Germany has her harvests assured.

Mr. Lloyd George. That is true ; but, on the other hand, we are getting better news now from Russia, and the revival of Russia is bound to make the Austrians more ready to meet us. I am sorry you have had to waste so much time here, but you will quite understand that it was impossible for me to telegraph to Rome in so many words that the Austrians were ready to begin negotiations. The whole of Rome would have known it next day. That is just what we don't want.

The Prince. With regard to Italy, I have just been reading in *The Times* the Declaration in which she assumes a Protectorate over Albania. This does not seem to make things any easier. What is Italy's exact object ?

Mr. Lloyd George. I know nothing about it. I was most surprised to learn of this Italian Declaration. I must find out what it means. But I think it is primarily a blow struck at Greece.

The Prince. That, I think, depends on what the Italians mean by Albania. Is it a question only of those territories of which they are at present in occupation, whose population is mainly Greek ; or do they mean to

annex the whole of Albania, including Durazzo and all the North ? If they have the latter object in view, their blow is aimed not at Greece but at Serbia. My idea was that Albania ought to become Serbian, since every one, even the Emperor of Austria, agrees that Durazzo is the future seaport of Serbia. If Durazzo is claimed by the Italians, the Serbs will have to have access to the sea by Cattaro or Ragusa, which is not at all the same thing. For not only are the Serbians claiming Durazzo, before anything else, on the ground that it is the seaport most suited, geographically, to their requirements, but I do not see how it is going to be easy for us to persuade the Austrians to give up Ragusa. For, allowing that we have reached a satisfactory solution with regard to the Trentino, or any other territory to be made over to Italy, it would still be for Italy's benefit that Austria would have to suffer a further amputation on the Adriatic coast in losing Ragusa. This discontent of the Serbs is likely to prove to Austria's advantage, and to bring about a change of sympathies in the Balkans, some day, that may be dangerous to us.

Mr. Lloyd George had interrupted me at several points to say that he entirely agreed with me, and that he felt that, for the present at any rate, Italy meant to occupy Valona only. There would be plenty of time later on to consider what we ought to do, since for the present Austria occupied the greater part of Albania. He then asked how he could most easily communicate with me. I suggested the British Mission, of which Prince Alexander of Teck was in charge, at our General Headquarters at La Panne. We decided that he should inform me as soon as an answer had been extracted from Signor Sonnino, and that he should see me at Paris when he went to meet the Italians. He said as I left him : "I am extremely sorry that I have kept you waiting so long, and I thank you very much for the trouble you are taking."

We left London on Wednesday, June 6, at 11.50 A.M. for La Panne. A car met us at Boulogne, and we reached

La Panne at 7.15 P.M. We had an interview with the King from 8.30 to 10.20. On Thursday, June 7, we were with the King from 9 to 10, then left to join our regiment at Lampernisse. On Friday, June 8, I started for Calais in a car at 9, and reached the Quai de Béthune, Paris, at 8.50 P.M.

The King of Italy would not come to London, or to Paris, or to Modane: neither would Baron Sonnino, but he was not wasting any time at Rome. On June 3, without a word of warning to his Allies, he enriched his country by annexing Albania, to make up for Trieste, which Cadorna had failed to take.

The Prince could now see no reason to prolong his stay in London. The general situation was fairly clear. In this final interview, Mr. Lloyd George had thanked him very warmly for his assistance, and had expressed the hope that they would meet again when he knew what to make of Italy's new line of conduct: he would give the Prince his answer to the Emperor's letter and Count Czernin's Note.

It appears, however, that the British Premier never threw any light on the mystery, for the Prince did not see him again.

Meanwhile, the Austro-Hungarian Reichsrat was opened, on May 31, with a Speech from the Throne, in which the Emperor said:

"I must not, at this time, ignore the Rights vested in me by the Constitution, which gives me the SOLE authority to decide the terms to be enforced, at the solemn moment when Peace is concluded.

"I am convinced . . . that no vigorous revival of

our National life is possible without a reshaping of the constitutional, administrative, and legislative foundations of our Commonwealth, both here and in the other Kingdoms and territories, especially Bohemia."

The Emperor promised to "establish, at an early date, the preliminaries of a free development of racial and cultural tendencies, on a footing of absolute equality, and in a framework of Imperial Unity."

"We are still in the midst of War, and of a War unprecedented in its horrors. . . ."

". . . Even though this Central Group of Powers be fighting with irresistible valour for honour and for the right to exist, we are at all times ready to bury the hatchet with any one who will honourably refrain from hostilities. Any State therefore that may desire to renew more friendly and humane relations with us may be confident of finding us ready to meet such offers in the most genuine spirit of conciliation. But until that time comes . . . our sword will still be sharp. United by the closest ties of loyalty to the German Empire, our ancient Ally, and to the Powers whom the justice of our cause has brought to our side during the War, we are resolved, if need be, to determine the issue of this War by force of arms, ALTHOUGH WE SHOULD PREFER TO OWE OUR VICTORY TO THE TRIUMPH OF REASON." [1]

On the day when these words were uttered, the Deputy Korochetz, President of the Jugo-Slav Club of Serbian, Croatian, and Slovene Deputies of the Monarchy, made the following announcement:

The undersigned Deputies at a meeting of the Jugo-Slav Club, basing their claim upon the principle of Nationalities, and upon the Rights of the Croat State,

[1] *Journal de la guerre* for June 1917. (Monthly Part "F," of forty pages numbered 545-584.) Printed and published by M. Berg, pp. 546-7.

demand that all those parts of the Monarchy which are inhabited by Slovenes, Croats, and Serbs, should be united in an independent and democratic State, free from the domination of any Foreign Power and PROTECTED BY THE DYNASTY OF HABSBURG-LORRAINE. They declare that they will use all means in their power to realise this ambition of their Nation: the undersigned will, with these reservations, take part in the work of Parliament.

Such was the feeling of the young Emperor, and of the Jugo-Slav inhabitants of his dominions, after M. Ribot's speech of May 22. The Italian offensive had come to an end, without the capture of Trieste. A Federation of the races of the Monarchy, on a basis of autonomy, was now possible.[1]

The following day M. Ribot replied to the Emperor in these words: "Peace can be secured only by victory." On June 5, he said, further: "No more secret diplomacy."

The Prince left London on June 6, paid a visit to the King of the Belgians, and reached Paris on the evening of June 8. On June 12 he had a conversation with M. William Martin, and told him of the impressions he had formed in London.

CONVERSATION WITH M. WILLIAM MARTIN
(PARIS, JUNE 12, 1917, 4.45-5.45 P.M.)

The Prince gave M. William Martin a detailed account of the interviews he had had in London with Mr. Lloyd

[1] A telegram from Rome, dated June 4, informed the Parisian public that "Fr. Tacchi-Venturi, Secretary-General of the Society of Jesus, states that Austria-Hungary is prepared to treat with Italy on the basis of the cession of the Trentino and an Italian Suzerainty over Trieste. He will advise the Pope to adopt a line of action which will tend to make Austria dissociate herself from Germany."

George. He laid particular stress upon the following points : Mr. Lloyd George was quite decided to carry on the negotiations with Austria, in spite of the difficulties which Baron Sonnino was creating. The Foreign Office would find out something before long, as the Prince had the impression that there had been some leakage of information in Paris. If M. Ribot did not wish to go on, the English would take up the matter on their own account, and would then reap all the advantages.

The English Premier had spoken like M. Ribot. That was, he did not wish to link the question of Alsace-Lorraine (and of Belgium) to that of the Trentino ; but Italy could not possibly be allowed to withdraw from the War after receiving the Trentino, leaving France to carry on until she had reconquered Alsace-Lorraine and liberated Belgium.

M. William Martin said that Baron Sonnino had no intention of meeting the French and English Ministers. The Prince requested that, whatever happened, he might be put in a position to give the Emperor some answer as soon as possible. M. Martin promised to mention this to M. Ribot.

Since M. William Martin confirmed the report that Baron Sonnino declined to meet Mr. Lloyd George and M. Ribot, the Prince asked him, as he had asked Mr. Lloyd George on May 30, to let him have some kind of message for the Emperor as soon as possible.

On June 16, there began in Paris a very curious and unpleasant campaign of calumny against the Queen of the Belgians, of which a leading instance is to be found in an article in *Ruy-Blas*, reprinted in the *Petit Bleu*.[1]

[1] *Ruy-Blas*, June, 1917, p. 7, col. 1-2, "Carnet d'un grincheux." *Petit-Bleu*, June 17, 1917, p. 3, col. 1, "Les Princesses boches f . . . . la guigne."

On June 20, M. William Martin told M. Ribot of the Prince's request: M. Ribot expressed the opinion that "Nothing can be done for the present; we can do nothing without Italy." [1]

On June 21, M. William Martin sent a message, asking the Prince to receive M. Jules Cambon. Bad news had come from Italy, and this had to some extent modified M. Ribot's attitude. He still avoided meeting the Prince, but insisted that he wanted him "told on no account to abandon the course he had adopted, and not to feel discouraged."

The following is an account of M. Jules Cambon's final visit to the Prince, on June 23. This visit was made, he said, on his own initiative.

M. Jules Cambon's Visit to the Prince (34 Quai de Béthune, Paris, June 23, 1917, 9.45-10.45 a.m.)

After greeting the Prince M. Cambon asked if he meant to stay any time in Paris. The Prince replied that, in view of the coming offensive on the Belgian Front, he was returning there on Monday. M. Cambon, who knew about the plans for the offensive, expressed his regret that the Russians, despite their protestations, seemed incapable of making a sustained offensive in support of ours. He then began a long monologue on the Russians, explaining that he felt bound to make the Prince acquainted with all the facts, so that he might be in a position to appreciate the final advice he was going to give him. This advice was obviously to be given in strict confidence, as M. Ribot was still resolved to act with great caution.

[1] On June 21, Baron Sonnino made up his mind to address a few words to the Chamber of Deputies at Rome. What Italy needed was, he said, a permanent Peace, and therefore "it is necessary that the national frontiers of Italy should be guaranteed." (*Journal des Débats*, June 22, 1917, p. 4, col. 1-3.)

M. Cambon. M. Ribot's point of view has never altered. From the first he has declared the impossibility of arriving at any result without Italy, while Italy is giving France a great deal of trouble at present. Signor Sonnino's idea was to meet his Parliament with full hands, and for that reason he wanted to conclude an agreement with us on the Asia Minor questions and to present the occupation of Albania as an accomplished fact. In Asia Minor, however, the pretensions of Italy were so extravagant that we could not come to any agreement. France has replied to the Italian proposals with counter-proposals, which naturally go beyond what France really means to obtain, on the principle of ask the more to get the less. In fact, there is no agreement so far, and so Signor Sonnino's design of presenting a statement to the Italian Parliament has not been realised. As for Albania, Signor Sonnino acted without informing the Allies, and that has caused ill feeling in France and England alike, and has called forth protests from both Powers. On the top of that has come the trouble with Greece, which completes the imbroglio. Italy's policy in Greece has always been different from ours. Mr. Lloyd George's attitude towards all these questions has been what one might expect from a man of his impetuous nature, of advancing by sudden dashes. Yet France has been and is no less closely united to England despite this characteristic of Mr. Lloyd George, than to Russia and Italy. Mr. Lloyd George has taken firmly in hand the negotiations with Austria which we are now considering. His first idea, in agreement with M. Ribot, was a meeting between the two Kings and the French President. Signor Sonnino has not chosen to agree to this. He must have got wind of something, and so puts forward all sorts of difficulties to make an interview impossible.

The Prince. That is just what Mr. Lloyd George said.

M. Cambon. England then suggested a meeting of the three Premiers. Signor Sonnino was opposed to this plan also. Meanwhile the provisional Government of

Russia proposed a solemn Council to consider the Allies' War Aims. M. Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George withheld their assent, and rightly, since such a proposal coming from Russia might involve us in all sorts of difficulties. It is quite true that the Provisional Government now in power has succeeded more or less in keeping together what one might call Russia, but it is not a Conservative Government; far from it. Their change of front has been amazing; I will just tell you what has happened in Greece. First of all, the Russians were opposed to any sort of interference with the internal affairs of Greece, and to deposing Constantine. Then they received M. Jonnart's Mission, and now they have taken up their original attitude again. The English wish to hear nothing more about Salonika; we had the very greatest difficulty in persuading them to undertake that expedition, and now they are withdrawing their troops, saying that the expedition has had no result, while it is becoming impossible for them to guarantee supplies and transport. Furthermore, General Sarrail launched an attack, about three weeks ago, which ended in a real check. These are the difficulties we have to contend with in that direction. The deposing of King Constantine may bring about a very serious crisis in Greece. If we had carried out a firm policy towards Greece, in view of King Constantine's conduct, we should have been in a position to disregard that country as soon as Peace was concluded, but now that we are supporting M. Venizelos, we have undertaken obligations on his behalf which not only prevent our acting with entire freedom but even compel us to act as the friends of Greece.

The Prince. That is just what I said to Mr. Lloyd George on May 23, before M. Jonnart's intervention had been decided on.

M. Cambon. What else would you have? We must take public opinion into account. The man in the street would not have understood our keeping Constantine on the throne of Greece.

The Prince. Mr. Lloyd George made the same remark to me, and I told him that the public had insisted on firm action in Greece after the massacre of December 1, but that now they paid very little attention to Greece and fully realised that more important interests were at stake.

M. Cambon. And there are others as well. General Sarrail for instance has repeatedly informed us that he could not undertake any offensive operations so long as there was a risk of his being attacked by King Constantine's forces. Well . . . that is over now. But, to come to Venizelos, just think of the difficulties that may arise. We have occupied Preveza. It was not ourselves, but the Naval Authorities who ordered that. A Naval officer has gone to occupy that island, on which the Italians had already landed, and there were Venizelist troops as well. Well, we can go on waiting from day to day until the Venizelists fire on the Italians. What are we to do then ? We are on the edge of a crater. The Italians say we have offended them. Our relations are highly strained. Signor Sonnino is intolerable.

The Prince. I told you all this when I returned from Italy in February. Of course you have read " Rastignac's " article in the *Tribuna*, in which he attacks the *Correspondant* for its recent articles on Italy.

M. Cambon. Now that I have explained to you how things stand, this is the point that most concerns us. About the tenth of July, there will be a meeting of the heads of the French, British, and Italian Governments. The Russians will be represented by their Ambassador, M. Maklakov, who is said to be highly intelligent, for, being primarily interested, like all Revolutionary Governments, in its own internal affairs, the Provisional Government of Russia will not send us any of its members. Well, we have refused Russia's request that we should meet to discuss our War Aims. But, now that the attitude of the Russian Government, and, in particular, the abandonment of all their claims on Constantinople, has created an entirely new situation, we are practically

obliged to reconsider our War Aims to some extent. Only this reconsideration will follow the lines that we, not the Russians, lay down. At this meeting of the Heads of Governments the question of Austria-Hungary must, of necessity, arise. It will be suggested to the Italians that they should adopt a more conciliatory attitude towards Austria, with a promise of compensation in the Balkan Peninsula ; but, as I said just now, our relations with Italy are so strained, that we want England and not ourselves to undertake this suggestion and to carry it into effect. You might perhaps convey this to some of your friends in England.

The Prince. I am entirely at the disposal of France, if the Government requires my services.

M. Cambon (*uneasily*). But I am speaking now as a private citizen. You know that M. Ribot does not wish to put himself forward ; but I think you understand.

The Prince. Oh, yes. England has adopted a more active policy than France.

M. Cambon. That is true, but it is due to the English character, and to their understanding with the Italians. Well, the meeting will be about the tenth or fifteenth of July.

The Prince. But do you think that Signor Sonnino will still be in power then ?

M. Cambon. If he is out of office, so much the better. His successor will be easier to manage. You know the attacks to which Sonnino is exposed. His successor will no doubt form a transition Cabinet, which will prepare for Giolitti's return to power. As it is, Giolitti has a majority in both Houses. What do you think about it ?

The Prince. I myself have no shadow of doubt about it. Giolitti will be in office in a short time. His Cabinet may be nominally under Tittoni or de Martino or some one, but whoever it is, it will be the Germanophile Giolitti who will be governing the Chamber and the country. This development in Italy could have been

quite easily foreseen ; and, since we are speaking of Italy, let me say plainly that I am afraid Austria may prove far more unmanageable than she would have been two months ago, now that the Italian offensive has been held up. Two months ago we could have held over her the threat of an Italian offensive which might take Trieste from her by force. This offensive has now been launched, and—nothing has come of it. Even the Italians themselves admit they have used all the forces at their disposal.

M. Cambon. Quite so. That makes the check all the more annoying.

The Prince. It would have been better not to have launched an offensive at all, and to have confined ourselves to the threat, than to have failed in the offensive that was launched. The result is that the Austrian Government has declared by Count Esterhazy that it is ready to continue the discussion of Peace, but on equal terms, and with the sense that Austria is in a stronger position than ever. But that is only one aspect of the problem. What disturbs me far more is the feeling I had in London with regard to Alsace-Lorraine. My own idea, with which, as it happens, M. Poincaré agrees, is that the future of the Trentino must be bound up in that of Alsace-Lorraine. Neither M. Ribot nor Mr. Lloyd George would take this line ; the President alone feels, as I do, that Italy cannot possibly be allowed to have the Trentino unless Alsace-Lorraine is definitely assigned to us. M. Paul Cambon confirmed my opinion when he assured me that Italy would retire from the War once she had secured the Trentino.

M. Cambon. That is true ; Italy would do nothing more for us. It is much the same with Russia. Even though we have no belief in the strength of the Russian Army, we are doing all we can to prevent Russia's making terms with Germany, so that we may keep the blockade to that extent closed. The same applies to Italy.

The Prince. That is exactly what neither Mr. Lloyd

George nor M. Ribot would understand. If we secure the Trentino for Italy to-day, she will at once withdraw from the War ; whereas if we tell her that she shall have the Trentino the day that we ourselves get back Alsace-Lorraine, then she will be obliged to remain faithful to the Alliance.

M. Cambon. Now that is a splendid idea. It should be advocated : I will speak of it. . . .

As he left M. Cambon repeated that the Conference would be held at Paris about the tenth of July. The Prince replied that he could easily be sent for at any time, if he was wanted. He begged M. Cambon to send his kindest regards to his brother, and to say how much the Prince regretted not having seen him again in London.

On June 25, at 8.10 A.M., the Prince finally left Paris to rejoin his regiment, so as not to miss the offensive, then almost due, upon the Belgian Front.

The War once more absorbed him : his task as a Peacemaker was ended.

In London he had met with a reception always polite, interested, and attentive. So, too, in Paris ; but it must be said here that he had found M. Alexandre Ribot's attitude towards him full of reserve, reticence, and evasion ; because his great intellect, accompanied by no warmth of heart, however well it might be served by his rare pliancy and his wide reading, was ill-supported by his indecision and feeble judgment. In his hands his wounded country lived on but from day to day : this old man, bowed with years, could conceive of no future but his own.

As it transpired, despite the Prince's definite request, and Mr. Lloyd George's promise, no answer was ever given by the Entente to the

questions raised in the Emperor's letter of May 9, and in the accompanying Note by Count Czernin.

Italy's silence, when faced by the questions of the Entente, became merged in the Entente's silence when faced by the Monarchy and its demand for Peace.

CHAPTER VI

COUNT CZERNIN'S PLANS AND THE THREE ANGLO-FRENCH NOTES OF COUNT ARMAND

(July 4–August 27, 1917)

In the month of May, while Austria, ready herself now for a separate Peace, was awaiting the Entente's reply to the Emperor's second letter, Count Czernin began attempting to form personal relations with the Government in Paris, through diplomatic agents directly controlled by himself, and independent of the channel which Prince Sixte had till then kept open between the Emperor and M. Poincaré. This move by Count Czernin was first discernible, towards the end of May, in Switzerland, where Count Revertera was endeavouring to arrange a meeting with Count Armand, an officer of the Second Bureau of the French General Staff, with whom he was personally acquainted. M. Painlevé, our Minister for War, came to know of these preparations at the beginning of June, and spoke of them to M. Ribot. It need hardly be said that neither the War Minister nor the General Staff had the least idea that any proposals had already been made through Prince Sixte. M. Ribot gave as his opinion that "the conversation suggested would be of no

value," and justified his refusal by telling M. Painlevé that "similar and still more definite proposals had already been made to the French Government by persons better qualified to make them, but that these proposals had come to nothing because Austria's refusal to surrender Trieste would make it impossible to overcome Italy's opposition." [1]

As soon as it became evident that the German Chancellor was more or less in agreement with the Austrian attitude, that is to say, about May 13 or a little later, Count Czernin began gradually to abandon the idea of a separate Peace, which could never, he felt, prove anything but a forlorn hope: he then began to study a form of Peace which should not entail the separation of Austria from Germany. But he overlooked two difficulties: the first being this, that the restoration of Lorraine and some portion of Alsace to France seemed ample to Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, whereas France would never agree to any such partial reparation. The second difficulty was that, even if Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg could rely upon the more reasonable elements of public opinion in Germany to support his plan of an eventual Peace on such lines, he was bound to take

[1] On January 4, 1920, speaking of Prince Sixte's mission, M. Ribot gave a clear expression of what he had always felt when he said, "It is evident from the documents that this attempt was doomed to failure from its inception. Such a Peace was wholly impossible. It would have incurred us the hostility of some of our Allies, the effect of which would have been incalculable. . . . Do not forget that the Committees of both Chambers have been furnished with the official documents, and that the Chamber of Deputies has voted in an Order of the Day that such a Peace was never possible at any time." (*L'Intransigeant*, Sunday, Jan. 4, 1920, 41st year, No. 14397, p. 1, col. 5, "La Mission du Prince Sixte. Déclarations de M. Ribot.")

into account the insurmountable antagonism of Ludendorff.[1]

These relations between Count Czernin and the German Chancellor, who was allowing himself to be convinced of the necessity for Peace, are implied in the wording of the Report on Poland [2] submitted to the Emperor Charles, and are substantiated by the Intelligence Reports which accompanied Count Czernin's incessant attempts to get into touch with Paris without the agency of Prince Sixte. His efforts were now directed towards a general Peace with Germany and Austria; but these efforts, which became apparent, through the same channels, towards the end of June, were destined to bear no fruit. Count Czernin then sent to inquire the terms which France would impose, as though he were not already well aware of them, or they could have changed in the interval.

He was advised to refer to what M. Ribot had said in the Chamber on June 5:

"Secret Diplomacy has been mentioned: there can be no secret diplomacy."

A Voice from the Extreme Left. "There has been." (*Interruption.*)

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[1] See Dr. von Harnack's letter of June 30, 1917, published in the *Bayerischer Courrier*, in which a recent conversation with the Chancellor is analysed: "His views were closely allied to those of Scheidemann, David, and Heine, but he was still unable to discount the influence of the Conservatives, whom he ought first of all to have split into factions, so as to make himself master of his own actions. Our chief danger, according to Bethmann, lies in that party in Germany which persists in believing in a German victory. For, he added, the best we can hope for is a stalemate." (*Journal des Débats*, Tuesday, July 17, 1917, p. 1, col. 6, "La Dernière Manœuvre de M. de Bethmann-Hollweg.")

[2] See note on page 153.

M. Ribot. "The fullest publicity should be and shall be given here. (*Loud applause.*) We cannot make light of the Sovereignty of the People. There is no obscurity, no insincerity in the policy of France, and it is you who will, when the time comes, make the ultimate decision, with no thought save for the best interests of your country. . . . We do not pursue a policy of conquest or of subjugation. . . . We aim only at justice and what is right. We intend to recover those Provinces which have never ceased to be French (*loud applause from all parts of the Chamber*) and which were French of their own free will. . . . We intend that they shall return to France because those who took them took them from us by force. (*Applause.*) . . . It is essential that Justice be secured by this League of Nations which is coming into existence before our eyes; which will, in the next few years, become Mistress of the World. (*Loud applause.*) Unlucky are those nations whose despotic Governments shall prevent their joining in this noble fellowship! It will secure our children from any recrudescence of the barbarism that has assailed ourselves." (*Applause.*) [1]

This speech was followed by an Order of the Day, carried by 467 votes to 52 in the Chamber, in the following terms:

The Chamber of Deputies, which directly expresses the Sovereignty of the French People, sends greetings to the Democracy of Russia, and to the other Democracies in Alliance. . . .

It announces that France intends to secure by this war, which German Imperialism has inflicted upon Europe, the evacuation of invaded territory, and also the restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to their Mother Country, and just reparation for all her losses.

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[1] This speech was delivered to the Secret Committee which sat from June 4 until 1.35 A.M. on June 5. (*Journal des Débats,* Wednesday, June 6, 1917, p. 2, col. 6–p. 3, col. 2.)

With no thought of conquest or of subjugation of foreign peoples, she hopes, rather, that the valour of the Armies of the Republic and of her Allies will enable her, once the military power of Prussia is overthrown, to obtain permanent guarantees of Peace and Independence for great and small Peoples, grouped under a League of Nations such as is already being organised.[1]

The following day, June 6, M. Ribot carried a similar resolution in the Senate:

I have said in the Chamber that Peace can be won by Victory alone (*loud applause*) and will not come out of any secret conference in any foreign town. . . . We are already in sight of the end. . . .

The restoration of Alsace and Lorraine will not be regarded by our Allies as an act of conquest. Reparation for our losses, too, will be no more than mere justice. There has been no secret diplomacy because, as I have said in the Chamber, no secret diplomacy is possible. Any step which any Government might take without the consent of the Chambers and of the Sovereign People, would be null and void from the first. (*Hear, hear.*) I concealed nothing from the Chamber: I have nothing to conceal from the Senate.[2]

This speech was followed in the Senate by an Order of the Day of the Supreme Assembly, which ran:

The Senate . . . convinced that a lasting Peace can be secured only by the Victory of the Allied Armies, announces the determination of France, loyal to her Allies, and true to her ideals of the Freedom and Independence of all Peoples, to continue the War until she has secured the restitution of Alsace and Lorraine, the

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[1] *Journal des Débats*, Wednesday, June 6, 1917, p. 1, col. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, Friday, June 8, 1917, p. 3, col. 1-4.

punishment of criminals, reparation for damage, and guarantees against any revival of German militarism.[1]

Some days earlier the Chamber had met to discuss the Stockholm Conference, where the Socialist Deputies hoped to be allowed to meet the German Socialists, and to consider the possibilities of Peace. In this debate M. Ribot had made a clear statement of his position.

That is all very well, but the future Peace of the World cannot be brought about by any one Party, whatever it may be. . . . To-day it is the Socialists who are meeting to consider our War Aims : to-morrow the Catholics of the different countries may claim the same privilege, and so forth : what is to become of their responsible Governments ?

The Peace that is coming must not be a Socialist Peace, nor a Catholic Peace, nor the Peace of any Party : so far as France is concerned, it can only be a French Peace (*loud applause from the Left, the Centre, and the Right*), that is to say, a Peace which shall embody the common aspirations of the whole country. And, gentlemen, who is to speak for the country ? Who but the Government, supported by the Chambers (*hear, hear*), supported by their authority, calling upon them, when the time comes, to assist it with their counsel, and by the formation of Committees to which the Government will communicate all necessary information before the negotiations reach their final stage ? (*Renewed applause from the same parts of the House.*) This is the course which we are bound by the Constitution, and also, I am sure, by the unanimous will of the country, to adopt. (*Loud applause from the same parts.*)

And now, gentlemen, how can it be possible for us, at this stage of the grim and horrible struggle, to meet and to converse with persons who are our Enemies ?

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Friday, June 8, 1917, p. 1, col. 2.

(*Renewed applause.*) Who have never, at any time since the opening of this terrible drama, by a single word disclaimed their parts in the crime which has been committed against us? (*Loud applause.*) . . . And it is to-day, when the soil of France is still defiled by the feet of an invading Army, that we are asked to take part in these conversations! (*Hear, hear.*) Gentlemen, it is inconceivable. . . .

No, gentlemen, Peace can only be secured by Victory. (*Loud and prolonged applause from the Left, the Centre, the Right, and from several of the Socialist Benches. A great many of the members rose to their feet.*)[1]

Such is the substance of the speeches which Count Czernin found himself called upon by Count Revertera to study, in answer to his request for information. The feeling and desires of France could not have been shown more plainly. It is true that this feeling, which was quite unmistakable towards Germany, was still silent with regard to Austria.

But meanwhile the Pan-Germanist leaders had decided to overthrow Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg, who had become too ready to listen to suggestions from Vienna. As soon as his downfall seemed probable, Count Czernin, who sincerely regretted it, redoubled his own activities in Switzerland. He felt that his cherished scheme of a general Austro-German Peace must now be abandoned, and that he would have to fall back on the cruel but necessary alternative of a separate Peace between the Monarchy and the Entente.

On July 5, Prince Colloredo-Mansfeld came to Geneva and lost no time in announcing that the

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Sunday, June 3, 1917, p. 1, col. 6–p. 2, col. 2.

whole of Austria wanted Peace: "We shall get what we want without the Germans, and, if they decline to join us, we shall make Peace in spite of them."

On July 4 or 5, the Aulic Councillor, Baron Gunther, was instructed by Count Czernin to convey to Switzerland, but not through the ordinary diplomatic channels, a Note hinting that Austria, if the Integrity of the Monarchy should be guaranteed, would be prepared to reconstitute herself as a federation of autonomous nations, grouped under the Emperor's sceptre. This Note was despatched on July 10. Austria proposed to remain henceforward in complete military passivity on all her fronts, but France must guarantee the Integrity of the Monarchy.

Three days later, on July 13, the German Chancellor capitulated to the campaign which had been carried on against him, and tendered his resignation.

In France the Secret Committee of the Chamber closed its deliberations with a long sitting which began on July 7 and lasted until 3 A.M. next day. Speaking of the German propaganda, M. Ribot said:

> Germany . . . requires an immediate Peace. . . . She expects, by sowing the seeds of demoralisation among her adversaries, to obtain from them Peace at any price. (*Applause.*) . . . This Peace, whose terms Germany wishes to dictate to us, would be the peace of the grave, a grave in which all the aspirations of our country would be irrevocably buried. (*Loud applause.*) We have passed together through hours of difficulty and of danger, without losing anything of our confidence or of our courage.

And now, at last, the light of a new dawn appears on our horizon : not only is America taking her place in the line of battle, but the Russians are renewing their offensive, while the Greek Army, so long in readiness to attack us from the rear, has now vanished. . . . Our victory is assured, so long as we are willing to show ourselves worthy of victory by resisting to the last.[1]

General Brussilof had indeed begun his offensive on July 6, and was to continue until the 20th. It was followed by an Austro-German counter-offensive against Russia's southern armies, which lasted from July 21 to August 8.

No sooner had Prince Colloredo and Baron Gunther made their appearance than (on July 12, the eve of the German Chancellor's resignation) Count Revertera telegraphed from Vienna to Switzerland. He sent a fresh request, on Count Czernin's behalf, for detailed information as to the conditions recently indicated, as the War Aims of France, in M. Ribot's speech, which he had been asked to read early in June, but to which no comment or explanation had been attached.

Under this pressure from Vienna, the General Staff of the French Army produced, on July 20, this statement :

The chief enemy of France is Germany. Conversations with Austria have, therefore, less interest for us than for some of our Allies. But the withdrawal of Austria would have an effect of such military importance (the separation of Bulgaria, stoppage of the oil-supplies which are indispensable to the enemy submarine campaign, to his air service, and so, indirectly, to his artillery, the restoration to the Serbs and Rumanians of their own territories,

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Monday, July 9, 1917, p. 3, col. 2-4.

etc.) that it would appear advantageous were we to assist Austria in separating from the Enemy Coalition: in the first place, this would facilitate our defeat of Germany in the field; it would, in addition, provoke, now and for many years to come, feelings of hostility between the two Central Empires which must shatter the scheme of a Mitteleuropa.

This question being one for the Government, what answer are we to make? Should the conversations be continued? If so, what further information can we give as to the conditions referred to by M. Ribot in his speech? What reply can we make to Austria's demands for guarantees of the maintenance of her integrity?

These questions by the General Staff were answered at 6 P.M. on July 24 by General Foch, in the following Order:

M. Ribot's speech makes only an indirect reference to Austria. But there is no objection to the conversations being continued and developed, Austria being given to understand that France approves of the principle of the Integrity of the Empire, provided that the repartition of its various component States is so arranged as to respect the different nationalities and assure a proper representation to each. But, of course, we cannot yet state in detail to what extent the integrity of Austrian territory may have to be broken.

On July 19, a week after the despatch of Count Revertera's telegram from Vienna, the Reichstag of the German Empire was addressed by Dr. George Michaelis, who had succeeded Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg as Chancellor. He announced his desire for a Peace by victory. "The territory of our Fatherland," he said, "is sacred soil. We cannot negotiate with an enemy who claims part

of our territory. If we make Peace we must first of all insist on an irrevocable guarantee of the frontiers of the Empire . . . but we cannot make any offer of Peace at present." [1]

It was quite evident that the new Chancellor was simply the mouthpiece of Ludendorff; but the Reichstag was reluctant to abandon the ideas which Herr von Bethmann-Hollweg had come to adopt before his fall. No sooner had Dr. Michaelis spoken than Herr Fehrenbach rose to move a resolution in favour of Peace, which was carried by 214 votes to 116, with 17 abstentions.

The Reichstag said no more about a Peace by victory, but spoke of a defensive War, waged to guarantee the "Integrity of the Empire," of an amicable Peace which should lead to the permanent reconciliation of the warring nations, and of an economic Peace secured by the freedom of the seas. Until such a Peace could be realised, the German people believed that their unity still made them invincible.

In short, the new Chancellor declined to ask for Peace, and the Reichstag as a whole, though now and for the future pacifically inclined, would not hear of any restoration of Alsace and Lorraine to France.

This stand by Germany was criticised, the same day, in those official circles at Vienna which Count Czernin generally inspired. The *Neue Freie Presse*, for instance, said:

The fundamental principle of the whole of Austria's policy since the accession of Charles I. is the desire to

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[1] *Journal des Débats*, Saturday, July 21, 1917, p. 1, col. 6–p. 2, col. 1.

restore the blessings of peace to the human race at present divided against itself in mortal combat. The chief stimulus of this desire, in our Sovereign's heart, was, before the Russian Revolution, the spectacle of the fields of battle. This determination is unalterable; it will prove stronger than any opposition that may be brought to bear against it. It is, therefore, with the deepest gratification that Austria notes the expression of a similar determination by Germany, affirmed by a majority of the Reichstag.

From now onwards our Emperor will find his policy supported by the majority of the German Reichstag.

The accession of our Emperor has marked the beginning of a new era. His words have had an enormous effect in Germany. . . . Now that the eventual possibilities have been openly discussed, Berlin and Vienna cannot fail to come to terms of perfect understanding.[1]

Count Czernin was now glad to return to his old idea of a general Austro-German Peace. Twice he had been obliged to relinquish this idea: first in April, after the sterile conversations at Homburg, and at the instance of Prince Sixte, and again at the end of June, when the fall of Bethmann-Hollweg had become inevitable. But to this idea he clung, despite his own irresolute temperament, to the very last: though it must be admitted that Count Armand's mission was, quite unexpectedly, to help to confirm him in his adherence to it.

In the meantime the War seemed to have become eternalised, while the diplomats temporised; and fresh complications developed. The repre-

[1] The *Journal des Débats*, Friday, July 20, 1917, p. 4, col. 2, says, "The language of the official Press is of interest, for it renders in formal phraseology the ardent and desperate longings of the Austrian Government."

sentatives of the Jugo-Slav subjects of the Monarchy had, on May 31, announced their readiness to accept a federation of autonomous races, grouped under the Emperor's sceptre. Since then the powerful and ever active intellectuals of these countries, domiciled outside the Monarchy, in the United States, London, Paris, and especially Rome, where they found strong support for themselves, and, at the same time, gave incessant inspiration to the Master Doctrinaires of the Entente, decided on a Declaration of Independence for their fellows inside the Monarchy, who were neither consulted nor given time to formulate their own wishes. And so, on July 7/20, M. Ante Trumbitch, President of the Jugo-Slav Committee of Rome, London, Paris, and New York, issued from Corfu, on his own authority, a Proclamation of the Independence of the Serb, Croat, and Slovene territories of the Monarchy, and their union with the Kingdom of Serbia, which was represented there by its Premier and Foreign Minister, M. Nikola Pachitch: this is how the fates of nations are decided before the nations are permitted to decide for themselves.

During the important debate in the French Senate on July 22, in which were discussed the unsuccessful offensive of April 16 and the pacific propaganda with which Germany was then attempting to undermine the energy and determination of France, M. Ribot said:

> Germany must have Peace at any price! She alleges that she wishes to see a common understanding between all nations, she who refused all offers of arbitration when the War began. The League which has been formed to

oppose Germany will not be dissolved unless Germany first abandons her scheme of subjugating and enslaving the rest of Europe. Germany looks for a Peace which we cannot give her without dishonour to ourselves. She hopes to disintegrate our moral strength: she is behind this propaganda. (*Hear, hear. Loud applause.*) Should this country be brought to express a desire for Peace by mere exhaustion, she would no longer be worthy of the name of France.[1]

In this, as in all his earlier speeches, M. Ribot's attitude towards Germany was unexceptionable: he still made the same crowning error, however, of ignoring Austria, although he could hear her knocking at the door. It is evident that the General Staff and its distinguished Chief, General Foch, kept continually in the closest touch with the realities of the situation, as those realities became apparent. They saw more clearly than M. Ribot the advantages which might accrue to France from Austria's unfortunate position.

On July 24, at 9.10, Baron Sidney Sonnino and General Cadorna arrived in Paris, preceded, at 7.30, by Mr. Lloyd George, Mr. Balfour, and Sir John Jellicoe.[2]

[1] In this debate M. Clemenceau inaugurated his own activities, which came ultimately to play the principal part in the achievement of our victory, by making a sudden attack upon the Minister of the Interior, M. Malvy, whom M. Ribot had kept in office. "I have here," he said, "the documents of the Almereyda case, which M. Ribot cannot have seen. (*Laughter.*) They are at his disposal." Then, turning to M. Malvy, "I charge you with having betrayed the interests of France." M. Ribot replied: "You have spoken unfairly of one of my colleagues. I myself have observed all that M. Malvy has done during the last three years. His policy should be examined in the light of its results." . . . To M. de Lamarzelle, who asked whether he was associating himself with M. Malvy, M. Ribot replied: "It would be a cowardly act, were I to desert him" (*Journal des Débats*, Tuesday, July 24, 1917, p. 2, col. 1-4).

[2] *Journal des Débats*, Wednesday, July 25, 1917, p. 4, col. 1-2.

It had at last been decided to hold the Conference to reconsider our War Aims, of which M. Jules Cambon had spoken to Prince Sixte on June 23: Russia's sole representative was M. Sevastopoulo, Councillor of the Russian Embassy. This Conference was held at the Quai d'Orsay on July 25, 26, and 27; in opening it M. Ribot used the words: "Three years of war have weakened neither the ties that unite us nor our determination to conquer." [1]

It was now too late to ask General Cadorna for any enlightenment on that demand for Peace on moderate terms which, according to Count Czernin, Italy had presented to Austria at Berne, on or about April 12. Count Czernin himself had promised Prince Sixte, on May 9, to supply him with full and detailed information as to this offer, who had made it, upon what date and in what words; but he had not kept his promise. All that need be said here is, that the transaction did not pass unobserved at the time. Two years later it was still remembered in diplomatic circles at Berne. It is true that the Councillor of the Austrian Embassy, Herr Maurig, who had received the offer, had since died, and, it is said, by his own hand. Count Brandis, a Councillor of Legation, had also died, though from natural causes. One of these two diplomats had, it seems, telegraphed the terms of the Italian offer to Count Czernin, and he alone, after their respective deaths, could be aware of its precise terms: yet he seemed to have forgotten everything about it. In American

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Thursday, July 26, 1917, p. 4, col. 1, and Saturday, July 28, 1917, p. 4, col. 1.

circles at Berne there was still the impression, on May 24, 1919, that "General Buccalo (?) had, in the spring of 1917, got into touch at Berne, not with the Austrians directly, but with the German Minister, with the intention of making an offer of Peace to Austria. This had failed, and some months later another officer, who claimed to have been sent by the Italian General Staff, had come to Berne, using the name Montecchio (?). He had met with opposition from the Italian Legation, and had left Berne at once."[1]

But the military diplomats of Italy were not alone in their endeavours to form relations with Austria in Switzerland during the year 1917, so as to make provision for the eventual necessity of a swift and certain Peace. Several other incidents are remembered in political (apart from diplomatic) circles in German Switzerland. "In February 1917 there came to Zurich a certain Frau Grebner, widow of a German banker and sister of one of the Generals at the Italian Headquarters (?): she claimed that she had been authorised by the Italian Government to find a point of contact with Austria, saying, 'Italy is ready to make Peace with Austria on honourable terms'; and wanted a

[1] The persons from whom these impressions were gathered were evidently not over-scrupulous as to accuracy in matters of fact. Still the facts are there, and may yet come to light. There can be no question that the first name is that of Colonel Valentino Buccalo, an Italian Military Attaché in Switzerland until 1917, when he was made a General and sent to the front. He was taken prisoner, with the troops under his command, at Caporetto. While in Berne he had relations with his Austrian colleague, Herr von Einem, through a person intimately associated with the latter. Herr von Einem, in turn, was closely associated with Herr Maurig. The second name cited above recalls that of Signor G. Montecchio Parenzo, also an attaché at the Italian Legation in Switzerland.

meeting arranged between a high official of either Power, in Switzerland, with this object in view. Nothing came of her manœuvres.

"In May or June 1917 the same lady reappeared, announcing that the important thing now was to find two officials who would make the arrangements for the meeting of the Austrian and Italian Plenipotentiaries. The politician to whom she addressed herself replied that he would report this in Austria, as it was his duty to help those of the Belligerents who were aiming at the restoration of Peace, but that, when approached by a lady, he was naturally bound to ask himself whether she really had authority to make any such offer indirectly, and outside the customary channels of diplomacy. At this, Frau Grebner produced a telegram, sent, apparently, by Baron Sonnino himself, and instructing her to approach this particular politician, and to secure, if possible, the means of communication with Austria that Italy desired. She added that, in the event of her words being doubted, the Italian Consul-General at Berne had been directed by his Government to accredit her. Whereupon, the Austrian Legation was informed of this offer; instructions from Vienna were sought by telegram, and Count Czernin gave an evasive reply."

The terms which Italy wished to impose in this manner were these: the cession of the Italian-speaking Trentino, and the transformation of Trieste into a Free City.

Frau Grebner's *Odyssey* was to run into several further books, and to continue until the end of the War. This need excite no surprise; it is

rather one of many grounds upon which we ought to show our sincerest admiration of Italian diplomacy, which was able to conduct these manœuvres with such discretion and pliancy.

So far from being intimidated, from dwelling confined in her fortress and seeing only pitfalls to avoid, shocks to recoil from, Italy was carrying on her offensives with great judgment, was everywhere in contact with her enemy, and fully realised the importance of having several strings to her bow, however sound might seem the string in use at the moment. She even went so far as to keep several bows in her armoury! No; we should not blame, we must admire her.

During this Paris Conference of July 25–27, M. Alexandre Ribot, having failed to induce Italy to modify her claims, and being completely overawed by Baron Sonnino's imperious manner, allowed himself, without the slightest justification, to reveal the secret of the Emperor's letters of March 24 and May 9; this in spite of his own solemn promise and of the promise he had himself exacted from Mr. Lloyd George.[1]

[1] "In July 1917 M. Ribot considered that Austria's attitude and the incontestable duplicity of Count Czernin absolved him from his promise. He made a point of showing Baron Sonnino all the documents of the negotiations, including the Emperor's letters and the memoranda submitted by Prince Sixte. Baron Sonnino read these documents carefully, and then said to M. Ribot: 'You have behaved with the most scrupulous correctness towards us, and I can only thank you for it'" (*Le Matin*, Sunday, January 4, 1920, 37th year, No. 13074, p. 1, col. 6). This anonymous revelation by M. Ribot to *Le Matin* was confirmed, two days later, by M. Painlevé in *L'Éclair*: "Neither the Council of Ministers nor I myself knew anything of these negotiations. It was M. Clemenceau's historic phrase about Czernin which enlightened us. In July M. Ribot showed the full text of the negotiations to Baron Sonnino, who, after reading them, announced that the attitude adopted towards this matter by France and England

On July 28 the German Chancellor, Dr. Michaelis, took advantage of Russia's indiscretions to launch an attack upon French aggression, by disclosing the Franco-Russian agreement, signed in February 1917, in the "odious era of Tsarism," which dealt with the Sarre Basin and the neutralisation of the left bank of the Rhine.[1]

To this attack M. Ribot replied on July 31, in an address to the Chamber.[2] The previous day Mr. Balfour had made a simple and eminently sound statement of Britain's attitude in the House of Commons.

> We entered the War in the early days, as everybody in this House knows, with little in our minds beside the necessity of defending Belgium, and the necessity of preventing France from being crushed before our eyes. . . . We want to see it (Europe) come out of this struggle with fewer of those causes which divide mankind. . . . Until Germany is either made powerless or made free, I do not believe the peace of Europe can be regarded as secure.[3]

In this speech France might note with satisfaction the English Minister's recognition and firm conviction of the necessity of restoring to her Alsace and Lorraine. This necessity had been admitted by the Emperor of Austria as long ago as March 24.

Finally, after some two months, the rhetorical campaign came to an end on August 2, with M. Ribot's statement to the Chamber:

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had been one of the utmost correctness" (*L'Éclair*, No. 11327, Monday, January 5, 1920, p. 1, col. 3, "La Mission du Prince Sixte"). M. Painlevé stated that Austria's Peace Offer was not acceptable.

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Thursday, August 2, 1917, p. 2, col. 1, "Les allégations de M. Michaelis."

[2] *Ibid.* p. 2, col. 2-3.

[3] *Parliamentary Debates, Commons*, 1917, vol. xcvi. 1849-54.

The Government is of opinion that we shall arrive at such terms of Peace as we can accept, only when Germany shall come to us and beg for them. (*Loud applause from the Left, the Centre, and the Right.*) If we were to pay attention, before that time comes, to the insidious proposals which have been made, based upon falsehoods of which you know, we should be delivering up our country to her enemies. . . . Who could, at this moment, contemplate any conclusion of Peace with Germany ? . . . The time for Peace has not yet come.[1]

Once again, he could not have spoken better. The one fault this consummate Parliamentarian made was that, even if he concealed nothing from the Chamber, he still appeared to have forgotten Austria. A fresh conference was arranged in London, where its other members had to await the arrival of M. Ribot, kept in Paris by the prolonged Parliamentary Session: Baron Sonnino had reached London before him, and was to lose no time there. In a few days he had managed to establish a marked influence over Mr. Lloyd George. Speaking on August 4 in the Queen's Hall, in Mr. Lloyd George's presence, the Italian diplomat assured his London audience that "the War would go on until we had secured a lasting Peace." Mr. Lloyd George expressed his warm admiration for the brilliant Statesman who presided over the destinies of Italy, and in whose veins Welsh blood flowed.[2]

But it was not merely the destinies of Italy over which Baron Sidney Sonnino now presided. Quite openly he took the lead in the diplomacy of

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Saturday, August 4, p. 2, col. 5-6, p. 3, col. 1-3.
[2] *Ibid.*, Monday, August 6, p. 1, col. 6, p. 2, col. 1.

the Entente. Happy, indeed, is the man in whose veins Welsh blood may flow.

At length M. Ribot arrived with M. Painlevé and General Foch; and on August 7 and 8 the Conference was held.[1]

On July 24, as soon as the instructions issued by General Foch in reply to the report of July 20 were received, the General Staff brought its Swiss representative into touch with Count Nicolas Revertera. The report submitted by the General Staff on July 30 runs as follows:

> Contact between Switzerland and Vienna has been re-established on the prescribed conditions; Vienna is anxious for detailed information with regard to:
>
> (1) The bases of negotiation: Cessions of territory by Austria to her Enemies; eventual compensations for Austria, such as union with a reconstituted Poland; what modifications in the internal administration of the Dual Monarchy are expected by the Entente; what support Austria may rely on if called upon to resist Prussian aggression. . . .
>
> (2) The names of those members of Entente Governments who have adopted these bases.
>
> The impression formed in Switzerland is that Austria's impatience is due to her sense of the gravity of her situation.

At Versailles on August 1, and on August 3 in Paris, M. William Martin stated that, in his opinion, the absurd rumours current about the Queen of the Belgians were connected with the unfortunate fact that Germany had been informed of the visits

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Friday, August 10, p. 4, col. 1. M. Ribot broke his journey from Paris to London, going with M. Bourgeois on August 5 to visit the King and Queen of the Belgians, whom the President of the Republic and M. Bourgeois had already visited on July 22.

of the two Princes to Switzerland. Their friend, to whom, on the latter occasion, he made this surprising statement, replied :

The Germans cannot have had warning from anywhere in Switzerland of the Princes' movements, since strict secrecy was observed by the few persons there who saw them on their visits, all of whom are absolutely trustworthy. If the Germans have learned of these negotiations, it must be either from here, or, directly or indirectly, through Italy : in Paris there have been certain indiscretions, which leaked out ; these can be definitely indicated. In Belgium they were extremely desirous, on June 10, of continuing the negotiations ; on July 10 they had changed completely. As for the campaign against Queen Elisabeth, it began about June 15 ; where was it inspired ? You must admit, also, that the Prince was hardly satisfied with the treatment he received at M. Ribot's hands ; he was glad to return to the front, and on June 23, before he left Paris, he made it quite clear that he did not wish to be involved any further in this business until they could give him some answer to transmit to the Emperor.

On August 4 the General Staff followed up their report of July 30 with a Note as deserving of publicity as the instructions they received on July 24. We are fortunately able to reproduce this here in the form in which it has recently been made public.[1]

[1] *L'Opinion, journal de la semaine,* 13th year, No. 28, Saturday, July 10, 1920, pp. 31-37 ; No. 30, July 24, pp. 87-94 ; No. 31, July 31, pp. 115-21 ("Un nouveau chapitre de diplomatie secrète" ; "Les négociations Armand-Revertera" ; "L'Autriche et la paix séparée").

General Staff of the Army,
2nd Bureau, I.

Very Secret.

Paris, *August* 4, 1917.

Note

Sheer lack of food-stuffs may compel Russia to withdraw from the field. Germany's intrigues to bring about a separate Peace form a still greater danger, to which Russia's vacillating policy and fluctuating energy leave us immediately and constantly exposed. The Entente should therefore make the first move, and, by winning over Austria to Peace conditions, strike Germany a blow of the sort with which she threatens us.

By withdrawing from the field Austria would give us an advantage which it would be worth our while to acquire at a very considerable price; *e.g.* the maintenance of her integrity or an actual increase of her power. Our advantage will be both immediate and ulterior.

Immediate. Germany will be at once cut off from the Balkans. The loss of the Carpathian oil-fields must tie up her submarine campaign, incapacitate her artillery (by reducing aerial observation), and bring her whole industrial existence to a standstill by still further diminishing her scanty supply of lubricants. Germany will then be isolated, and we may even defeat her, in the military sense, by making it impossible for her to supply her armies with rations and other material.

Ulterior. The sole enemy of France, the sole danger to Europe is Prussia. Any constitutional reforms of other Governments must be of minor importance so long as Prussia is not definitely and absolutely conquered and reduced to impotence.

The Entente must, therefore, create a Power bordering on and irreconcilably hostile to Prussia. We can do this through the Habsburg Dynasty, if we attach to Austria by the ties of a personal sovereignty a federation of those States in which the Slavs form a majority, and associate

with those States a Poland restored to its frontiers of 1772, that is, a Poland extending from Danzig to the Carpathians. To this Union of States we should then join that German people who politically (and confessedly) are furthest removed from the Prussians, namely, the Bavarians. Finally, we should directly weaken and exasperate Prussia, by attaching to this Union Silesia, as it was annexed by Frederick II.

So Prussia, who has planned an Empire which should extend from Hamburg to the Persian Gulf, will be prevented from extending to the east by a new Power stretching from the Baltic to the Adriatic (Danzig to Fiume) and rendered independent, economically, by the possession of the industrial areas of Silesia and Poland.

England will again have complete freedom in Egypt and Mesopotamia.

Italy will certainly recover the Trentino, and, if she does not actually secure Trieste, will benefit by its being made a free port ; at the same time she will contribute to our general peace by curbing her extravagant schemes of aggrandisement.

Russia will lose no territory which is, properly speaking, Russian ; besides, her present incapacity compels us to consider, first and foremost, the overthrow of Prussia.

This Note was submitted, the same day, to M. Painlevé, the War Minister, who was impressed by the force of its arguments, and "again drew M. Ribot's attention to this question." He explained that "the failure of the Passchendaele advance and the definite defeat of the Russian Army had brought Generals Foch and Petain to the conclusion that the only tactics now possible was a separate Peace with Austria."

M. Ribot replied that the General Staff "might continue the conversations, provided they were understood to be wholly unofficial, and in no way

binding on the Government. It was a question of sounding rather than of negotiation." It is surprising to find M. Ribot lending countenance, even indirectly, to proceedings of whose futility he must have been convinced; for what was wrong when done by Prince Sixte could not become right by being done by Count Armand; if anything, it must be more wrong still.

Before acting upon M. Ribot's decision, which he communicated to the General Staff, M. Painlevé made a point of seeing Mr. Lloyd George, to acquaint him with the general situation, and to obtain his consent. He left Paris on August 5, reached London and saw the Prime Minister next day. "Mr. Lloyd George entirely approved." He said to M. Painlevé: "We have only one enemy, which is Germany. If German militarism is defeated, the principles of the Entente must triumph. The best course, certainly, would be to separate Austria. But Trieste is a stumbling-block. Trieste must be taken; once that is done, Austria will be reconciled to its surrender, and the compensations we find her will divorce her from Germany. Meanwhile the conversations should go on, even if there is little chance of their proving effective. For they can do no harm, and we are bound to try everything."

About 3 A.M. on August 7, M. Painlevé sent a telephone message from London to Colonel Goubet, the head of the 2nd Bureau, who was awaiting his instructions, and told him to send Major Armand to Switzerland. At 7 A.M. the Colonel communicated this order, himself, to Major Armand, who was at Bellegarde, waiting and ready

to cross the frontier. We must suppose that, if M. Painlevé took the precaution of consulting Mr. Lloyd George before sending Count Armand to Count Revertera, M. Ribot also consulted Baron Sonnino; for, as he had revealed all the earlier stages of the negotiations with Austria, it is not likely that he withheld the sequel.

In the Conference of the Allies' War Committee held in London next day (August 7) Mr. Lloyd George proposed to put additional pressure on Austria by attacking her on her Italian front. M. Painlevé strongly supported him, but they were opposed by the British military experts, and also by Italy.

So Major Armand entered Switzerland understanding that he was to induce Austria to agree to a separate Peace. From the report he made to the War Ministry on August 12, after his return, we may extract the terms he offered to Count Revertera.

TERMS TRANSMITTED AT 5 P.M. ON AUGUST 7, 1917

(1) Austria shall withdraw from the War and shall observe a strict neutrality.

(2) She shall cede the Trentino to Italy; also Trieste, or, at least, she shall make Trieste a free port.

(3) There shall be added to the Habsburg Monarchy:

(*a*) Poland, restored to its frontiers prior to the Partition of 1772.

(*b*) The Kingdom of Bavaria.

(*c*) Silesia, within its frontiers as at its cession to Frederick II.

(4) Silesia shall form one of the Hereditary States of Austria. Poland and Bavaria shall join the Federation

of States which the Emperor of Austria has announced his intention of forming.

(5) If the Dual Monarchy carries out Clauses (1) and (2), as above, England and France will do all in their power to support her in carrying out Clause (3).

On learning these "Entente terms," Count Revertera could not help saying: "I am quite delighted; this is more than we could have hoped for. Some of it is almost too good. They have talked only of dismembering us, so far, and now they want to make us into a great State." He showed as much surprise as pleasure at the suggested federation with Poland, and said that they must first make certain that Bavaria and Silesia would consent to join this new Union. "The Federation of the States of the Monarchy is the Emperor's idea, and we must carry it out. But Hungary is opposed to it, and the Pan-German element is very powerful. As for the Slav populations, who are in a majority, they must be made to come in, but the Czechs will never be satisfied."

Next morning, August 8, Count Revertera observed: "The Emperor is a perfect gentleman; he will tell me that you are buying his honour when you pay him at his Ally's expense. We must find some way in which he can honourably withdraw, for he is most anxious to make Peace."

Count Armand's duty was to induce Austria to agree to a separate Peace. Unfortunately the verbal instructions he had received went on to speak of "the idea of employing the Emperor of Austria as the bearer of the Entente's draconian,

but perfectly logical conditions to Germany," and this idea, he wrote in his Report, was favourably received. It is not clear with whom this idea originated, but it had fatal results, as we shall see. It led to the Entente's making an offer of Peace to Germany.

At 11 A.M. on August 8, Count Revertera stated: "I think that the Emperor will consent to transmit to Berlin the terms offered by the Entente, and by France in particular: these conditions are harsh, but not unreasonable. If, after the Emperor has exerted all his influence to secure the acceptance of these conditions, Berlin proves obstinate and refuses to accept them as a basis of negotiation, the Emperor may threaten Germany with the full consequences of such an attitude, and, if she still persists, may carry out his threat."

Speaking of Italy, he showed a reluctance to give her the Trentino, "which is steeped in Austrian blood, while the inhabitants are loyal to Austria." Trieste, he said, could not be ceded, but the question of making it a free port might be considered.

"The Emperor's ideal at present is to act as mediator between France and Germany. Later on, he wishes to form an alliance with France. Public opinion in Austria is favourable to M. Painlevé, but M. Ribot is regarded as irreconcilably hostile."

Count Revertera then asked if her Colonies were to be restored to Germany. Count Armand replied that this was improbable. "It is essential," said Count Revertera, "that, when

Peace comes, every one should be satisfied, and that there should be nothing in the Treaty which can breed a desire for vengeance. If we are to have Silesia, Prussia will be continually trying to recover it. Remember Tilsit."

It need hardly be said that neither of the Counts knew anything of Prince Sixte's mission: consequently Count Revertera still called in question the integrity of Belgium and Serbia, the restoration of Alsace as a whole, and the eventual cession of the Trentino by Austria. When we read the account of these conversations we cannot but regret that the Entente should have accepted Count Czernin's plan of eliminating Prince Sixte from these later discussions, and choosing a representative less fully authorised, less direct, and completely ignorant of all that had hitherto been said and done. This was tantamount to a renunciation of all the points he had already gained. However little satisfaction he might have found in continuing the mission he had been asked to undertake, the Prince, had a frank and open appeal been made to him, would have gone on without hesitating, and done his utmost; while, however distasteful he might have been to Count Czernin, he would never have made Count Armand's mistake of allowing himself to engage in conversations with any object other than that of a separate Peace with Austria.

On the evening of August 8, Count Armand sent a message to Count Revertera, by his Swiss agent, threatening to break off the negotiations. He made this agent say: "The French Envoy has not come to beg for Peace. The Entente has

certain definite objects in view: if they can attain these, and, at the same time, shorten the War, it is the duty of their Statesmen to find out and adopt the necessary measures. But if the way to Peace is not open, you must say so at once. You will receive no further communication from me. The War may continue for a year, for two years, for any length of time that may be required for the ultimate victory of the Entente." We can see that, in spite of M. Ribot's very cramping instructions, Count Armand was speaking quite plainly, in the name of France and, indeed, of the Entente. In uttering this threat he was meeting and resisting the evasions and changes of front which were stultifying the negotiations. Count Revertera replied, begging him not to break off relations.

On the morning of August 9, he expressed his conviction that, given good faith on either side, Austria and the Entente were now on the road to Peace. The Emperor desired nothing more, and would do everything in his power to bring Peace about, in the interests of humanity. "But, if France insists on having all the left bank of the Rhine, Peace is impossible. Besides, the Plenipotentiaries cannot meet until the bases of their negotiations have been accepted by both parties."

Count Armand returned to Paris, and there, on August 12, submitted an account of his mission to the War Minister, who sent him back to Switzerland with the following instructions:

Clear up these two questions:

(1) Does Austria definitely refuse to surrender Trieste?

(2) Is Austria genuinely sincere; and, in the event of her coming to an agreement with the Entente on the

terms that may be equitably imposed (and, in particular, on the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine to France), is she really prepared to break with Germany, should Germany refuse to accept those terms ?

Give him your views verbally, and find out his : not a word in writing.

But this was not all. The unfortunate plan of using the Emperor of Austria as a messenger from the Entente to Germany was still being developed. Count Armand was instructed to procure, in this way, the transmission to Berlin of the eventual terms of a general Peace.

The Emperor did not wait for Count Armand's return to Switzerland, but wrote from Reichenau, on August 20, the following letter to the German Crown Prince, which he founded upon Count Czernin's report of the conversations of August 7, 8, and 9.

Letter from the Emperor of Austria to the German Crown Prince

Reichenau, *am August* 20, 1917.

Lieber Wilhelm—Mein Flügeladjutant Oberstleutnant Graf Ledochowski überbringt dir meine grosse Verdienst-Medaille und ich bitte dich, dieselbe annehmen zu wollen für alles, was du in diesem gemeinsamen Verteidigungskriege für unsere Sache geleistet hast.

Mein Minister des Äusseren hat mir die interessante Unterredung gemeldet, die er mit dir zu haben die Ehre hatte, und alle deine Aussprüche haben mich von Herzen gefreut, weil sich darin meine Auffassung der Lage so genau widerspiegelt. Trotz aller übermenschlichen Leistungen unserer Truppen erfordert die Lage im Hinterlande unbedingt eine Ende des Krieges noch vor dem Winter ; dies gilt für Deutschland so gut wie für

uns. Die Türkei wird nun mehr sehr kurz mitmachen, und mit ihr verlieren wir auch Bulgarien, dann sind wir zwei allein und das kommende Frühjahr wird " Amerika " bringen und eine noch verstärkte Entente.

Ich habe anderseits bestimmte Anzeichen, dass wir Frankreich für uns gewinnen könnten, wenn Deutschland sich zu gewissen territorialen Opfern in Elsass-Lothringen entschliessen könnte. Haben wir Frankreich gewonnen, so *sind wir Sieger* und Deutschland kann sich anderweitig und ausgiebig entschädigen. Aber ich will nicht, dass Deutschland das Opfer *allein* tragen sollte, ich will selbst den Löwenanteil dieses Opfers tragen und habe Seiner Majestät deinem Vater erklärt, dass ich unter der vorerwähnten Bedingung bereit bin, nicht nur auf ganz Polen zu verzichten, sondern auch Galizien an Polen abzutreten und dieses *Reich* an Deutschland angliedern zu helfen. Deutschland würde im Osten ein *Reich* gewinnen, während es im Westen einen Teil seines Landes hergeben würde.

Im Jahre 1915 haben wir, ohne irgendeine namhafte Kompensation zu fordern, im Interesse unseres Bundes auf Bitte Deutschlands den treulosen Italienern Trento angeboten, nur den Kreig mit Italien zu vermeiden. Heute ist Deutschland in einer ähnlichen jedoch weit aussichtsvolleren Lage und du als Erbe der deutschen Kaiserkrone bist berechtigt dein wichtiges Vort mit in die Wagschale zu werfen und ich weiss, dass Seine Majestät dein Vater diesen Standpunkt bezüglich deiner Mitarbeit voll und ganz teilt.

Darum bitte ich dich, in dieser für Deutschland wie für Österreich - Ungarn entscheidenden Stünde, die Gesamtsituation zu bedenken und deine Bemühungen mit den meinen zu vereinigen, nur den Krieg rasch in ehrenvoller Weise zu beenden. Wenn Deutschland auf seinem ablehnenden Standpunkt verharrt und einen möglichen Frieden zerstört, so ist die Situation in Österreich-Ungarn äusserst kritisch.

Ganz besonders würde es mich freuen, wenn ich *baldigst* eine Aussprache mit Dir haben könnte, und dein

mir durch Grafen Czernin mitgeteiltes Versprechen, uns bald zu besuchen freut mich ganz ausnehmend.

Zita grüsst dich herzliebst mit mir.

KARL.

REICHENAU, *August* 20, 1917.

DEAR WILLIAM — My Aide-de-camp, Lieutenant-Colonel Count Ledochowski, will give you, with this, my great medal *Pour le Mérite*, and I beg that you will accept it as a reward for all that you have done for our cause in this common war of defence.

My Foreign Minister has told me of the interesting conversation he had the honour to hold with you, and all your observations to him have rejoiced my heart, since they exactly correspond to my own views of the situation. Despite all the superhuman efforts of our troops, the situation behind the front makes it imperative that we bring the War to an end before next winter ; this applies as well to Germany as to ourselves. Turkey can only hold out a very little longer, and with her we shall also lose Bulgaria ; then our two Countries will be left isolated, and next spring will bring America in, and actually increase the strength of the Entente.

On the other hand, I have trustworthy information that we can win over France to our side, if Germany can bring herself to consent to certain territorial sacrifices in Alsace-Lorraine. If we win over France, *the victory will be ours*, and Germany will be able to find ample compensation elsewhere. But I do not want Germany to be alone in making sacrifices ; I will myself give the lion's share, and I have explained to H.M. your father that, in these circumstances, I am prepared not only to renounce all claim to Poland, but also to add Galicia to Poland, and to help to incorporate the *kingdom* so formed with Germany. Thus Germany would gain a *kingdom* in the East, while in the West she would give up merely a slice of her territory.

In the year 1915, without exacting any real compensa-

tion, but in the interests of our Alliance and at the request of Germany we promised the Trentino to those treacherous Italians, so as to avoid war with Italy. Germany is in a similar situation to-day, though hers has far brighter prospects, and you, as heir to the Imperial Crown of Germany, are justified in throwing the whole weight of your opinion into this scale; I know that H.M. your father regards your collaboration precisely as I do.

And therefore I beg of you that, at this critical time for Germany and Austria-Hungary alike, you will consider the general situation and unite with me in an effort to bring the War to an early end in an honourable manner. If Germany persists in her negative attitude, and makes Peace impossible, then the situation in Austria-Hungary will be extremely critical.

I shall be most delighted to have an opportunity of speaking to you *as early as possible*, and the promise you made through Count Czernin, to come and see us shortly, has gratified me immensely.

Zita joins me in cordial greetings.

CHARLES.

In this letter to the German Crown Prince the Emperor was renewing the effort he had made at Homburg on April 3: he again indicated the necessity of the two Empires' making Peace on terms satisfactory to France, before the coming winter, failing which the Monarchy would be compelled to seek a separate Peace.

On August 22 and 23, Count Armand had a second conversation with Count Revertera, in which he read to him two Notes. The first referred to the eventuality of a separate Peace with Austria, on the lines indicated by the General Staff on August 4.

Text of the Note reserved for Austria

(*Communicated to Count Revertera, August* 22, 1917 : *also his interruptions, while hearing it read.*)

The war may bring about the Germanisation of Austria, an event which France and England would alike deplore, while it would be clearly opposed to the real interests of Austria and of the subjects of the Dual Monarchy. It may bring about the disintegration of Austria, but that is not at all desired by France or England, in spite of unauthorised rumours to the contrary.

Count Revertera. Our internal conditions are not making for disintegration. Your reports on Austrian affairs must have misled you ; but they are so complicated that we ourselves are not always able to diagnose them clearly. Anyhow, this message will gratify us, and will be much appreciated.

Count Armand. The true destiny of Austria, with which the Entente would be in sympathy, is what seems also to be the ideal of the Emperor Charles. For, so far as the Entente Powers have been able to interpret his generous motives, he contemplates a federation of the nations at present under his rule. This federation would allow each of its component States a large measure of autonomy, and would correspond with the democratic aspirations of the peoples.

Count Revertera. Democratic ! That is a great word with the Emperor [1] ; he is always using it.

Count Armand. The mere fact of such a federation would remove all antagonism between the new Russia and Austria, and would bridge the gulf which separates Austria from the mass of her Slav population.

A liberated and reconstituted Poland, threatened by no risk of hostilities with her Eastern neighbour, would gravitate towards this Danubian Confederation, and would ally herself all the more closely and naturally if,

[1] "The Emperor" ; *L'Opinion* (July 24, 1920, page 91) reads "l'Entente" for "l'Empereur."

as is probable, her first Ruler were selected from the House of Habsburg.

So far from hindering any such Confederation, France and England would prove their sympathy by forming a genuine Alliance with Austria, so as to give her every facility for the fullest economic development.

Count Revertera. An Alliance with England would not be popular.

Count Armand. Should the course of events involve the separation of Austria from Germany, France and England would fully endorse Austria's desire to recover her influences over those Germanic peoples who were formerly in her Empire, and would support her in realising this ambition so far as Austria, acting upon the wishes of those peoples, might find it practicable. Austria may, therefore, count on the whole-hearted support of France and England against any aggression by Germany. France will endeavour to promote friendly relations between Austria and Serbia.

A rectification of the Austro-Montenegrin frontier is possible. There ought to be a reciprocal understanding, or even mutual guarantees of some sort between Austria and France.

Count Revertera. Yes, most certainly, followed by an Alliance.

This note as a whole was well received by Count Revertera, who said to the Swiss agent: "There is a Note which deals especially with Austria. There is no need for me to discuss it with you."

The second Note dealt with the possibility of a general Peace with Germany and Austria, to be secured by the mediation of the Emperor Charles.

Text of the Peace Conditions, communicated to Count Revertera on August 22, 1917

Belgium.—Complete restitution. Belgium shall be restored in its full extent, and in its independent sovereignty, as it was prior to August 1914.

Complete reparation for all damage done in that country since the beginning of August 1914, to include the payment by Germany of pensions due to the casualties of war, and of Belgium's war-debts.

France.—(A) *Evacuation* of all territory occupied by the Enemy. Restitution by Germany of Alsace-Lorraine, as defined by the Treaty of 1814 (with the exception of territories now forming part of the Helvetian Confederation) and free of all charges.

(B) *Reparation* for damage done by the Enemy in occupied territory.

Compensation for the valuables and other wealth taken by him.

Repayment of levies raised by him.

Delivery of coal and wood at an equitable rate pending the restoration of coal-mines and forests.

Payment in compensation for merchant vessels destroyed by his submarines.

Restoration to working order of factories destroyed by the Enemy.

Commissions composed of neutrals shall assess the damages.

(C) *Guarantees.*—Stipulation to refrain from any military activity in the territories on the left bank of the Rhine, which will obviate the possibility of any future aggression. These stipulations need not involve any form of humiliation, their sole object being to render impossible any further act of war on either side.

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg shall not be included in the German Tariff Union. Its railways shall be withdrawn from any direction or control by Germany.

Heligoland shall be ceded by Germany to an Entente Power.

RUMANIA. — Rumania shall be restored within her frontiers as prior to the Treaty of Bucharest in 1913.

SERBIA.—Serbia shall be restored within the frontiers existing at the end of July 1914, and shall be territorially united with Montenegro.[1] A port on the Adriatic shall be given her.

BALKAN PENINSULA.—The Powers shall engage in discussion with a view to securing an equitable and lasting Peace in the Balkan Peninsula.

ITALY.—Italy shall receive at least the Italian-speaking portion of the Trentino ; also Trieste, but full guarantees shall be given to protect Austrian trade.

POLAND.—Poland shall be restored within the frontiers of 1772.

TURKEY.—The Straits shall be free and open.

The future of the Christian peoples of Turkey and of the inhabitants of Mesopotamia shall be decided so as to guarantee an equitable and lasting Peace in Asia.

GERMANY.—France is willing to negotiate so that Germany may recover or obtain Colonies by restitution or exchange.

While this second Note was being read to him, Count Revertera made the following observations :

BELGIUM.—(*No comment.*)

FRANCE.—(*evacuation*) " That will be automatic."

(*Alsace-Lorraine*) " But Alsace was only conquered by Louis XIV. and contains a German population. This restitution would be facilitated if Germany were to receive as compensation the German provinces on the Baltic." (At this point, nothing had been said about Colonies.) (*free of all charges*) " Does that mean with no contribution

[1] This is another instance of the Entente's disposing of a small nation—Montenegro—before it had been allowed to express its own views. The same had been done with Albania on June 3.

to the national debt ? " (It was agreed that the precise application of this clause might be left to further discussion.) " We, too, in Galicia, have been pillaged by the Russians ; they have removed the inhabitants, and we claim nothing from them." (Count Revertera was given some details, proving the methodical savagery of the Germans, such as the destruction of fruit-trees, of the Church of Saint Quentin, the devastated areas, etc. He made some observation as to the difficulty of assessing individual losses, and was given to understand that this might be discussed further.)

(*Heligoland*) " Lloyd George is showing his claws. The Germans would never agree to that, even with compensation."

RUMANIA.—" With the Hohenzollern Dynasty still in power ? We may perhaps come to an agreement on that point."

SERBIA.—" Yes, but not if they are to keep that abominable Karageorgevitch Dynasty ; they are a race of assassins. You don't know all the harm they have done us. We should have favoured a reconstitution of Serbia with Montenegro under the Njegosh Dynasty. Then, we should like to have a common frontier with Bulgaria, but we can discuss all that."

BALKAN PENINSULA.—" There is no difficulty there. Bulgaria will, I think, be dissatisfied with the idea of an autonomous Macedonia ; she will grudge having to give up so much."

ITALY.—" What ! Trieste not even a free port. This is worse than what you told me before : we cannot agree to it. We shall be quite firm on this point : we refuse to discuss it even with the Italians." (It was suggested to Count Revertera that the principal ports, such as Constantinople, Salonika, and Trieste, might be placed on the same footing under international control, in such a way as would not hurt the pride of Austria.)

POLAND.—" As a kingdom, yes ; but those boundaries extend almost to the gates of Berlin, and we should lose

Galicia. The industrial development of Poland has involved changes which may perhaps allow us to discuss her frontiers more fully."

TURKEY.—"Now that England has no longer anything to fear from Russia, she has no objection to the freedom of the Straits, and, naturally, she is putting forward her own claim to Mesopotamia."

GERMANY.—Count Revertera asked whether Morocco might be included among the territories to be exchanged. He was told that no change could be made in North Africa, but it was suggested that Indo-China or Madagascar might be given as compensation for Alsace-Lorraine.

He agreed that this would make matters easier, and went on to say: "So it is France who, though already bled white, is to give up what little she has. Surely England might be able to spare some of what she has taken. Or possibly the Congo might be considered, in exchange for Alsace-Lorraine."

The following observations were made by Count Revertera to the Swiss agent, so that they should come to Count Armand's ears.

BELGIUM.—"Germany will not make many difficulties about restitution and restoration. But she will refuse to pay pensions or anything which might give the impression that a war-indemnity was being imposed on her. We shall always hope that she will have the courtesy to offer payment; we make a point of that, because it would prejudice France, to some extent, in her favour." (According to the Swiss agent, this remark was meant to apply also to the reparations demanded by France.)

FRANCE (*Alsace-Lorraine*). — "This will not make Germany reject the proposals, but the Chancellor cannot stand up before the German people and say: 'We have conquered and invaded the Enemy's country, and we are giving him Alsace-Lorraine.' He must be able to add, 'But on the other hand, I am securing for you the Belgian

Congo, or, better still, Indo-China, or some of the Baltic Provinces.' "

(*Heligoland*).—" On that point, the Germans will not yield."

SERBIA.—" There is matter here for discussion, but the point is not of primary importance."

BALKAN PENINSULA.—" Not of primary importance."

ITALY.—" No insurmountable objection to the cession of the Trentino. But Trieste cannot be ceded ; nor is Austria willing to see the Italians established at Valona."

POLAND.—" The reconstitution of Poland as a kingdom is accepted, but Germany will never agree to the restitution of Posen."

GERMANY.—(Count Revertera spoke of the Belgian Congo as a suitable compensation for Alsace-Lorraine.)

The following are some of the notes made by Count Armand in the course of these conversations on August 22 and 23 :

Before meeting Count Armand, Count Revertera had said to the Swiss agent : " France must not impose unduly harsh terms, for another combination is possible which would mean her destruction."

He also said : " The first Note will make a good impression on the Emperor." At several points, Count Revertera interposed the remark that the Central Empires had not been defeated in the field, and yet the Entente was using the language of a victor to the vanquished. It was pointed out to him that Germany had sustained a defeat on the Marne from which she had never recovered ; this drew from him the reflection : " Yes, the Battle of the Marne was a great victory for France, and is one of the great events in history."

With regard to Belgium, it was made plain to Count Revertera that France regarded the restitu-

tion and restoration of that country as more important, if possible, than the restitution of Alsace-Lorraine; that even if the Germans were to occupy Paris, France would go on fighting to restore one and recover the other, and would not give up although the last remnants of her Armies were driven back to the Pyrenees.

The campaign in the British Press for the dismemberment and destruction of Austria-Hungary had brought Austria to the highest pitch of exasperation with England.

Count Revertera was asked whether Austria had finally abandoned the idea of separating from Germany, and if she meant to continue the War merely to ensure the fulfilment of her Ally's most preposterous schemes of aggrandisement. To this he replied: "The Emperor cannot consent to any act of treachery, but he naturally would not support Berlin in realising any madly extravagant ambition. What we have to discover is a reasonable limit beyond which Austria would not accompany Germany in prolonging the War."

Count Revertera's last words were: "Now, in strictest confidence, and without your making any report of what I am saying, so that no erroneous interpretation may be put upon my words, what compensations or benefits are we to derive from all this? Please do not imagine that the Emperor invites you to bid for his support."

Count Armand replied: "Just remember the first Note. That gives a discreet, but the clearest possible indication of Silesia and Bavaria, with possibly the territory south of the Main."

Count Revertera: "Yes, but you are offering

us what is not yours to give away; what belongs to our Allies."

Count Armand: "There is also Poland, which would allow you to extend from the Adriatic to the Baltic. But we cannot speak in any other terms without wounding certain susceptibilities which we must respect."

Count Armand closed the report of his mission with the following Note:

Sequel to the Communication of the Peace Conditions and of the Special Note to Austria

Count Revertera proposed that the Emperor should communicate the conditions to Berlin at once, if he thought them suitable for communication.

This was refused. We ought to know, first, whether the Emperor considered that, on the whole, he could transmit the main points set forth in the Note: we could then make arrangements to guard against any disturbance of the internal harmony of the Entente; and then the Emperor might proceed. Count Revertera agreed, saying, "That is, anyhow, the method which the Emperor would prefer to adopt. Before the outlines you have given me can be transmitted to Berlin, it is necessary, first that the Emperor should find them to be transmissible, and secondly that the official representatives should be able to meet in complete secrecy." Count Revertera held that, if an English as well as a French representative was sent to meet the Austrian, Austria would be obliged to invite a representative of Germany also. But he held at the same time that all the main outlines could be discussed and fixed by representatives of Austria and France in a secret conversation. Austria's representative would be Count Czernin.

The Emperor wished this meeting to take place on neutral territory, and specially suggested Vaduz, as the

Prince of Liechtenstein would be obliged, by his hatred of Germany and his intimacy with the Court of Vienna, to ensure perfect secrecy and to provide every facility. If, however, the police measures adopted by the Swiss authorities made the journey to Liechtenstein impracticable for the French representative, then he was prepared to admit that Fribourg would be comparatively safe.

Count Revertera said to the Swiss agent : " We should very much like to be able to treat with M. Painlevé. He offers us every security, from the breadth and statesmanship of his vision, in the matter of an objective discussion, and also by his own energetic nature. If M. Painlevé were to come, and were to grant some of the concessions which have been adumbrated, we should have made good headway."

This last speech was indeed a handsome bouquet, which Count Armand must have enjoyed taking home to his master.

It is impossible to question the accuracy of these two Notes of August 22. They can be verified from the reports made to the Ministry of War, which have lately been published in Paris, and also from the copies supplied to the Emperor of Austria by Count Czernin. There is not an iota of difference between these two versions, which corroborate one another. The Emperor received his copies on August 27, from Count Polzer, the Chief of his Chancellery. If it is true that M. Painlevé gave instructions to Count Armand not to transmit, nor to allow the transcription of a single word in writing, it is difficult to believe that Count Armand could have authorised Count Revertera to take away copies of the Notes he read to him. It is even more difficult to believe that any one could have been found in the whole

of France willing to undertake the responsibility of opening negotiations, and moreover willing to negotiate, even indirectly, in an official or semi-official manner, for Peace, at such a time and on such terms, with the still invading and ever tenacious Germany of Ludendorff. It is quite certain that Prince Sixte would never have done so.

Had not M. Alexandre Ribot himself just said in the Chamber, on August 2: "Who could, at this moment, contemplate any conclusion of Peace with Germany?"

And yet it cannot possibly have been Count Armand who undertook the responsibility of drafting this Note of August 22, directly contemplating Peace between the Entente and Germany. He has stated that he did no more than "transmit" the Note of August 7, and "communicate" the two Notes of August 22. Who then can have been the responsible author of these three documents? Count Armand inserted them as they stood in his report to the War Ministry, and did not, it seems, feel obliged to give any explanation of how they came to exist: it follows that they were already known to his superiors. The earliest Note, that of August 7, arises quite naturally from the Note written by the General Staff on August 4; its substance was therefore compiled by the personnel of the General Staff, who were responsible to General Foch. It represents the views of General Foch and of the War Ministry. The second Note, that "reserved for Austria," is similarly inspired, but is drafted in fresh terms, and has not a military tone. The third Note, that offering conditions of

Peace to Germany, does not in any way conform to General Foch's instructions; in some details it points to an inspiration which may well have come from M. Ribot. The precise enumeration of financial and economic conditions, which had not hitherto appeared, suggests the hand of a President of the Council who had for many years been Minister of Finance, far more strongly than that of a War Minister. This supposition is confirmed by the small point that, in the list of countries to be considered, Rumania precedes Serbia. This reminds us of M. Ribot's personal (and quite reasonable) conviction that the Entente owed more to Rumania than to Serbia, because it was at the request of the Entente that Rumania had come into the War.[1] Her prolonged neutrality had made Rumania rank rather lower in popular esteem than Serbia. On the other hand it is difficult to see why Italy should be placed between the Balkan Peninsula and Poland, unless it is that Italy was put in the place which Rumania should actually have filled. The author of the Note did not make up his mind to include Germany until he had completed his draft.[2]

[1] On May 20, 1917, M. Ribot wrote to Mr. Lloyd George: "It comes to this, that we cannot sacrifice Serbia, and still less Rumania, who only came into the War at our request." See above, p. 170, *note*.

[2] In a report dated April 15, 1918, Colonel Goubet, the Controller of the Second Class of the Army, who had, in 1917, been Chief of the 2nd Bureau of the General Staff, definitely states, with regard to this last Note of August 22, that "M. Painlevé made Major Armand draw up the proposals. . . . The rough copy was corrected in pencil by Colonel Goubet, on the lines indicated by M. Painlevé, who amplified it in certain passages; these were duly noted and inserted in the complementary Note which served Major Armand as a basis for the conversation. Once the conditions had been established, the Minister kept the document. It does not appear, therefore, that these proposals were submitted to M. Ribot." This is all quite possible, but it is

It is important to remark here that, to the author of this Anglo-French Note of August 22, Peace between Austria and Italy seemed possible on no terms beyond the cession, pure and simple, of the Italian-speaking Trentino and Trieste. The author of the Italian offer of April 12 had been satisfied with the Trentino. The source of Frau Grebner's inspiration, in May or June, and M. Painlevé, in the Note of August 7, had demanded, in addition to the Trentino, that Trieste should be transformed into a free city: and on this basis, had it been left unchanged, Count Revertera had hinted that an agreement might be reached. But now the Entente was claiming Trieste absolutely, with the reservation of certain privileges by Austria: so that the Entente's claim had grown between August 7 and 22. Austria did not appreciate the fact that they would continue to grow, and that she ought to come to terms as soon as possible, and to act independently of Germany, so long as she was under Ludendorff's dictation. Count Czernin had every reason to feel triumphant when he received a note from the Entente specifying the eventual bases of a general Peace with Austria and Germany, and one which included, besides, some truly remarkable clauses about Germany's colonies. This unexpected triumph, attended by no unpleasant consequences, did all the more to strengthen him in his adherence to the plan of a general Peace.

Count Armand returned to Paris and made his

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extremely probable that M. Painlevé introduced, among his amplifications of the Note, the instructions which he must have received from his chief, the President of the Council.

report, from which M. Painlevé drew the following deductions, or so, at least, they are to be found in his Memoir of March 7, 1920.

(1) Austria, although she agrees to the cession of the Trentino, is more intractable than ever on the question of Trieste, since Count Revertera actually speaks of a rectification of frontier in Austria's favour, to protect her from Italian aggression in that quarter.

(2) Although Austria seems prepared to admit our claim to Alsace-Lorraine, she has no real desire to separate from Germany, should Germany refuse to accept the conditions which Austria may consider equitable.

If these private deductions correspond nearly enough to the realities of the situation, always so elusive, it was none the less certain, said M. Painlevé, that "the Armand-Revertera conversations must end in the same deadlock as was mentioned to me by M. Ribot in June, with the added disadvantage that the agents then were, in M. Ribot's words, 'persons better qualified,' and that Austria now seems more than ever exasperated by Italy. I therefore consider," he ended, "that the negotiations have not succeeded."

In the last week of August, M. Painlevé reported to M. Ribot that "the conversations authorised on the initiative of the Second Bureau have had no better result than those of which you spoke to me in June; Trieste is still the stumbling-block."

In Vienna, meanwhile, the Emperor, after consultation with Prince Hohenlohe, decided that he could not transmit to Berlin the conditions brought to his notice by the Entente for a general Peace with Austria and Germany; on the grounds

that Germany was still as blindly led as ever by Ludendorff, who would refuse to accept the conditions, in spite of any inducement that Austria, who considered them "equitable," might be able to offer.

The second Italian offensive had begun on August 19, and was followed on September 1 by the second German counter-offensive, this time in the North, against Russia.

On August 31, M. Malvy, the Minister of the Interior, who had been attacked with increasing vigour, handed in his resignation. On August 2, M. Ribot had parted, not very reluctantly, with his Minister of Marine, Admiral Lacaze: M. Malvy's departure was a more vital blow, and led to his own resignation on September 7. At first MM. Albert Thomas and Paul Painlevé agreed openly to assist M. Ribot in the formation of a fresh Ministry; but at the moment when this Ministry seemed complete, they withdrew their support, at three and at eight o'clock respectively on the afternoon of September 9: and this secession brought to a definite conclusion the Government of France by M. Alexandre Ribot.

He had been in office for nearly six months, and these months, whether viewed from a military or a political standpoint, had been among the most disastrous in the long history of France. No period in the War was more critical, no period was less satisfactory.

CHAPTER VII

THE LAST OFFER BY AUSTRIA, AND M. RIBOT'S DEFINITE REFUSAL

(October 2–12, 1917)

M. Paul Painlevé's Cabinet came into power on September 12 : M. Ribot remained at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, so that no essential change was made in the Government of France.

On September 16, Princes Sixte and Xavier de Bourbon were promoted Lieutenants of Artillery, on the Belgian Front.

On September 19 it was stated, in Paris, " that M. Ribot had let slip diplomatic opportunities of the first importance."

All this time the King of Italy had continued to decline the invitation to France, which he had received in May from Paris and London : now, on September 26, 27, and 28, he accompanied the President of the Republic on a tour of the French Front.

On September 30 at Geneva, a personage who must be believed was authorised to say that the Austrian Emperor's intentions had not altered, and that he would still abide by the proposals he had made in May.

The Emperor is able to say to Germany: "These are the terms of Peace which are open to me; they are reasonable, and so far as I am concerned I accept them, as I do not wish to prolong the war: my subjects are exhausted." In Germany, the "Fight to a finish" Party is no longer the Emperor's, nor even the Crown Prince's, who has quite altered his views; but those two are no longer in absolute power. The supreme power is now concentrated in Hindenburg and Ludendorff. Ludendorff recently had a long audience of the Emperor Charles; he came out wiping his forehead, and said to the courtiers outside: "Mit ihrem Kaiser ist nicht gut Kirschen essen."[1] Count Czernin's position remains unshaken. The Emperor has decided to be crowned King of Bohemia. Count Armand, a French officer, came during the first fortnight of August, as representative of MM. Ribot and Painlevé, to Switzerland, and saw M. Revertera, a retired diplomat, by whom he sent the Emperor a message that, if he would send a Plenipotentiary to Switzerland, France would send one also. He made the condition that Germany should be kept in complete ignorance. Count Revertera replied that such a condition was impossible, and that Germany must be kept informed. He was not aware of the previous negotiations, and it appears that his chief anxiety was to satisfy himself that Count Armand was qualified to speak for France. Count Armand began by stating that without this condition of secrecy nothing more could be done; he would, however, obtain further instructions. Twenty-four hours (*sic*) later he returned to the charge, saying that if it was necessary he would agree to Germany's being informed, as he did not wish to break the thread on which the negotiations hung. Since then there has been no sign of progress. The Emperor has said that, if a fresh attempt should be made by France, he would not care to receive any agent other than Prince Sixte.

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[1] *I.e.* "When you sup with *your* Emperor, you need a long spoon!"

The person to whom this statement was addressed replied that:

The feeling in France with regard to Germany is unalterable. No one there would consent to any negotiation with Germany under cover of conversations with Austria. The few persons who were privileged to see the Emperor's letter of March read it as an offer of separate Peace.

On October 2, Count Czernin, speaking at Budapest in the house of M. Wekerle, the Prime Minister of Hungary, made an open offer of Peace to the Entente:

They cannot bend, they cannot break us. . . . From the first we have announced our war-aims, and these have not altered . . . but let there be no illusion about this: our programme of peace and moderation cannot remain in force for ever. If our Enemies constrain us to prolong the war, we shall be compelled to revise it and to put in a claim for compensation to ourselves.

I speak of the possibilities of the present hour; for I am convinced that the Peace of the World can now be established upon the bases I have set forth: but, should the war continue, our hands are not and shall not be tied.

I am absolutely confident that, in a year from now, our situation will be incomparably better than it is to-day, but *I should consider it a crime to prolong this war for a single day more than may be necessary to preserve the integrity of the Monarchy, with guarantees for the future*, merely in order to obtain territorial or other material concessions. *It is solely for this reason that I have been, and still am to-day, in favour of a Peace by agreement*; but, if our Enemies refuse to listen to us, if they force us to continue this murderous fighting, then we reserve the right to reconsider the terms of our programme.[1]

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[1] *Journal des Débats*, Friday, October 5, 1917, p. 1, col. 5-6.

If we discount the optimistic and threatening references to the future, which are indeed hardly convincing, we must infer from this speech that Count Czernin was still asking the Entente for Peace. At the same time, he sent a telegram through Count Revertera, in Switzerland, which brought his mission there to an end. The terms of this message were :

> Things are now going better. The terms transmitted by the Entente on August 22 are too severe (upon Germany) for anything to come of them. Had they been less harsh, we might have discussed them.[1]

This telegram made it plain in Paris that the idea of Peace between the Entente and Germany must be abandoned. There remained only the reconstruction of the bases of a separate Peace with the Monarchy.

A week later, on October 9, Herr von Kuhlmann, the German Foreign Minister, made in his turn a statement of the views prevailing in Berlin. He no longer asked for Peace, but rather emphasised the fact that Peace was still distant, since the Entente demanded Alsace-Lorraine for France, and to that Germany could never consent !

> Our efforts to bring about an exchange of opinions have proved ineffective. . . . We have information, from a trustworthy source, that England is pledged, diplomatically, to political and military intervention on behalf of

[1] This telegram was delayed for about three weeks by the closing of the Austro-Swiss frontier ; and it was not until mid-day on October 23 that it was delivered to the gentleman who was acting as intermediary between Count Revertera and the French General Staff in Switzerland.

Alsace-Lorraine, so long as France herself persists in her claim.

It therefore seems to me to be clearly indicated that we too should state calmly and plainly, but with determination, the attitude which Germany must adopt towards this question. . . .

When we are asked whether Germany can make any concessions to France in the region of Alsace-Lorraine, there is only one answer we can make, and that is : " No, never ! " (*A storm of prolonged applause.*)

So long as a German hand can hold a rifle, the integrity of the soil of our Empire, as we have inherited it from our glorious ancestors, shall never be made a matter for negotiation or for concessions of any kind. Alsace-Lorraine is the shield and buckler of Germany, and the symbol of her Unity. (*Loud applause.*)

The cause for which we fight, and for which we shall go on fighting until the last drop of German blood is shed, is no fantastic vision of conquest, but the integrity of the German Empire. (*Applause*).[1]

At this point it seems that there would have been no difficulty in separating Vienna from Berlin. All that was required was to listen to Vienna's fresh proposals for a separate Peace, and to leave Berlin where she stood. But M. Alexandre Ribot let it be clearly seen that he was still Minister for Foreign Affairs : he preferred to regard both the Central Powers as a single Party, although one had now very decidedly shown her intention of separating from the other.

On October 12 he made a definite statement before the Chamber : this was the first occasion on which he mentioned Austria ; but it was also the last.

[1] *Journal des Débats,* Thursday, October 11, 1917, p. 4, col. 2-3.

Gentlemen, my task is now quite simple. (*Laughter.*) . . . This is the diplomatic position ; this is the pass to which Germany has been brought.

Now that she can no longer conquer by force of arms, she has but one thing to hope for : that is to separate the Allies, by making them the dupes of the intrigues in which she has involved herself.

A little time since, it was Austria who declared herself ready to make Peace with us, and to satisfy our desires ; but she deliberately left Italy out of account, knowing that, were we now to listen to these counsels of deceit, Italy would soon recover her independence and would become the Enemy of a France that had forgotten and betrayed her.

WE DID NOT CONSENT TO THIS.

A little time again, and it was Germany who spread the rumour that if the French Government were to engage in conversations, directly or indirectly, we might hope to have Alsace-Lorraine restored to us. (*Interruptions.*)

That snare was set too openly for us to let ourselves be caught in it. Whereupon Germany, left to herself, threw aside the mask and declared, in the resounding words of Herr von Kuhlmann : " Concessions in Alsace-Lorraine ? No, never ! "

I prefer such words to those she used before, for they have at least the merit of frankness and lucidity. For us they have this great virtue, that they prevent any misunderstanding. There could be nothing more dangerous at a time like this than the vacillation and instability of mind, which it is Germany's policy to create and develop amongst us, so that she can say to our soldiers, and, gentlemen, to yourselves : " Peace is in the hands of the French Government : if they want Peace they can make it."

No, gentlemen, no. To-day everything is clear, everything is definite. We shall have the Victory, and we shall have Alsace-Lorraine (*loud applause*) despite all these polemics of the platform, which in themselves prove that

at any rate the question is now put for Germany to answer; that she can no longer misunderstand our claim, disregard it or refuse it.

. . . Gentlemen, we have pledged ourselves to listen to no proposals for Peace without immediately communicating them to our Allies; we shall reject no overture unheard, but we are not disposed to receive any treacherous suggestion that we shall separate from those who are fighting by our side. We shall be loyal, and, being loyal and determined, we shall very soon, I hope, prove victorious over the force and guile that have combined against us. (*Loud and prolonged applause.*)[1]

If we allow, as we must, that the Notes of August 7 and 22 counted, in M. Ribot's estimation, for nothing, this speech must be taken as the reply, for which the Emperor had waited five months, to his second letter. We must add that his affirmation of loyalty to Italy has an air of unreality.

With this the work of M. Ribot was ended. On October 22 he walked out from a Secret Committee, and was no more seen.

Austria's continual changes and evasions resulted, at the moment when she herself abandoned them, and in spite of her own inclinations, in binding her destiny inseparably to that of Germany.

On October 24 another answer was given, this too after a delay of six months: the rout of Italy at Caporetto.

[1] *Journal officiel*, October 13, 1917, p. 2696, col 3.

CHAPTER VIII

M. CLEMENCEAU'S IGNORANCE OF THE SITUATION: COUNT CZERNIN'S DOWNFALL

(November 16, 1917–April 18, 1918)

After the crushing disaster of Caporetto, France and England hastened to the relief of Italy. Generals Foch and Robertson were first on the scene; they were joined on November 4 by M. Painlevé and Mr. Lloyd George, and the decision to give the necessary support was reached on November 10.

The Italian Government, meanwhile, was much exercised by the political consequences which might ensue from this defeat, and felt compelled to put out feelers again in the direction of Austria. Accordingly, Frau Grebner made a fresh appearance at Zurich, and approached the Swiss politician whom she had already interviewed on two occasions, in February and June. She begged him to come to Rome, where the Government was anxious to discuss the chances of an honourable Peace with Austria. He replied that it would be impossible for himself, as a Swiss citizen, to go to Rome with any such object, as the Federal Government would certainly object. From this refusal the semi-official representative of the Italian

Government turned to Herr von Simson, Secretary of the German Imperial Legation, who pointed out that her business was with Austria rather than with his country. He consented, however, to allow the question to be discussed by one of his subordinates, Herr Heinrich (?), who had an interview with the Italian Consul General at Zurich, in the house of the Swiss politician whom Frau Grebner had originally consulted. This interview lasted an hour and a half. Two days later a fresh interview took place, between the same parties, at the Headquarters of the Società Italiana Cattolica in Zurich. For the time being no fresh developments arose in Switzerland from this exchange of views between Italy and Germany. After the Piave retreat Frau Grebner was to pay a final visit to Zurich, with the message that Italy was still prepared to open a discussion with Austria, but this time, as was only fair, Italy made further demands, while, in the end, the collapse of the Monarchy rendered any diplomatic action superfluous.

As for Austria, the French General Staff were informed on November 10 by the Swiss agent whom they employed at Fribourg, that he had received a message from Count Revertera, to the effect that "The Emperor of Austria thinks he may be able, shortly, to renew the conversations he had to abandon in September. The Count inquires whether this would be practicable." On November 15 the General Intelligence Section of the Second Bureau of the General Staff submitted the following remarks on this fresh overture by Austria.

OBSERVATIONS

(1) Count Revertera previously (August 22) spoke openly of Austria's hostility to Italy and of her desire to "inflict severe punishment." The recent operations in Friuli and Venezia should satisfy this desire for violence, and should, for Austria, remove any question of admitting Italy's claim to Trieste.

(2) In the two conversations in August Count Revertera gave a clear indication of Austria's desire to form an Alliance with France, after Peace had been signed, for the purpose of resisting Germany (Prussia). He added that the state of war existing between Austria and France was "purely formal," seeing that no hostility to France existed in Austria.

Our information from Switzerland is dated November 10. Count Revertera's request must, surely, have been made since November 1, when the fact that France had despatched troops to Italy was known. This "formal" war is now becoming a reality. Must not the meeting of French and Austrian troops in the field put an insuperable objection in the way of the proposed Alliance? And is there not a more immediate danger, that Austria must now risk a serious defeat? (She has never yet undergone the test of our warfare on the Western Front.)

It is possible that the Emperor of Austria might, after a success in the field which satisfied Austria's pride, and faced at the same time with the necessity of making Peace, be willing to separate his Empire from Germany.

It would be interesting to have definite information on this point.

Meanwhile, M. Paul Painlevé's Cabinet resigned on November 13, and was succeeded on the 16th by the Government formed by M. Georges Clemenceau. On that day, General Alby, Major-General of the Army, said, in reply to the "Obser-

vations," which had reached him the day before: "*In any event, proceed with extreme caution, so as to keep the intermediaries in contact.*" On November 18 the General made a report to the new President of the Council, based on a Note which had just come to him from the Second Bureau. He asked whether the conversations should be carried on or abandoned.

General Staff of the Army.
Second Bureau.

Paris, *November* 18, 1917.

Note on the I. V.—I. S. Negotiations

The General Staff of the Army has been brought in contact, by the agency of a Swiss personage (I. S.), with a personage in the immediate entourage of the Emperor of Austria (I. V.)

The Minister of War has entered into direct relations with I. V., with the object of securing the separation of Austria from Germany. The result of these negotiations has been two meetings, the more recent of which took place in Switzerland, in the house of I. S., on August 22 and 23 of this year.

The Emperor of Austria inquired what conditions the Entente considered necessary for Peace, and promised, if he found these acceptable, to inform the German Emperor that he would withdraw from the Alliance unless Germany accepted the same conditions.

The conditions notified by M. Painlevé were very harsh, or seemed too harsh to the Emperor of Austria, from whom nothing more has been heard until the last few days.

In the attached Note it will be seen that I. S. is transmitting a fresh demand for the renewal of relations.

M. Clemenceau knew nothing of these negotia-

tions beyond what he learned from this Note; he saw in them a source of information which the General Staff did not wish to see stopped, and therefore he did not stop it, but repeated the General's advice to observe "extreme caution." His actual endorsement was: "*Listen, but say nothing.*"

On November 20, Count Armand's reply to the invitation was sent to Count Revertera from Paris: it may be summed up as follows:

> Revertera's friend (Charles) is most undecided. He let slip, three months ago, an excellent opportunity of improving his position. Circumstances are now less favourable for him.
>
> If he finally decides to act with a determination befitting the interests involved, my friends will not turn a deaf ear. I myself shall be very glad to come and listen to I. V. We can meet in the same way as we have met hitherto. . . . A[RMAND].

Count Revertera showed no anxiety to hasten the maturing of his plans, but replied at the end of November:

> I shall come to Switzerland a little later, unless your friends give me cause to come earlier.
>
> We certainly ought to act with common sense on both sides, for it would be deplorable if this link between us were not to hold at the right moment, and the results were to be sacrificed.

And here we must leave Count Revertera, coiled in the chain of procrastination which the ever-increasing vacillations of Count Czernin had wound about him.

Revolutionary Russia was not long in abandon-

ing the Entente. On November 28 a circular telegram was sent out by the Council of Commissaries of the Russian people, in which the Soviet Government declared itself ready to begin negotiations for an Armistice and a General Peace.[1]

On December 4 the Emperor Charles took note of this overture in an address which he delivered to the two Delegations of the Monarchy:

> We are still prepared, as We have ever been, to conclude at any time an honourable Peace which shall guarantee the vital needs of the Monarchy. Inspired by this sentiment, to which We have been steadfastly loyal, in conformity with Our deliberate policy since Our accession to the Throne, We have greeted with joy and satisfaction the overtures made by the Pope, in an attempt to bring about a future reconciliation of the belligerents.
>
> Moreover, We shall lose no opportunity in the exercise of Our constitutional prerogative, to bring this bloody War, and the miseries of every kind which it has engendered, to an end as soon as may be. . . .
>
> The Russian people, who have been sorely tried, and who have been the first to reply to Our appeal for Peace, may be assured that We are genuinely anxious to renew the amicable and neighbourly relations which existed between us in former times. But . . . We intend to remain masters in Our own house.[2]

On the same day, however, President Wilson, yielding at last to the continuous pressure of M. Masaryk, addressed to the Congress of the United States a Message in which he proposed to declare war on the Monarchy, now become the mere vassal of Germany:

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[1] *Journal des Débats*, Sunday, December 2, 1917, p. 2, col. 2.
[2] *Ibid.*, Thursday, December 6, 1917, p. 2, col. 4-5.

We are at war with Germany, but not with her allies. I therefore very earnestly recommend that the Congress immediately declare the United States in a state of war with Austria-Hungary. . . . Austria-Hungary is for the time being not her own mistress, but simply the vassal of the German Government. . . . The Government of Austria-Hungary is not acting upon its own initiative, or in response to the wishes and feelings of its own peoples, but as the instrument of another nation. We must . . . regard the Central Powers as but one. The War can be successfully conducted in no other way. The same logic would lead also to a declaration of war against Turkey and Bulgaria. They also are the tools of Germany. But they are mere tools and do not yet stand in the direct path of our necessary action.[1]

The Declaration of War was thereupon voted, and proclaimed on December 7. It condemned the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, but spared Turkey and Bulgaria.

Whereas the Imperial and Royal Austria-Hungarian Government has committed repeated acts of war against the Government and the people of the United States of America; therefore be it resolved by the Senate and the House of Representatives of the United States of America, in Congress assembled, that a state of war is hereby declared to exist between the United States of America and the Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Government. . . .[2]

And so the chains of the Austro-German Alliance were still more closely riveted, while on December 6, in an address to the Committee on Foreign Affairs of the Hungarian Delegation,

[1] *Times*, December 5, 1917.
[2] *New York Times*, December 8, 1917.

Count Czernin, by now as much a German as an Austrian, made public a fresh aspect of the situation, in clear and unmistakable terms, which, unlike the majority of his speeches, closely reflected the actual state of affairs.

> We are united to Germany. . . . We are fighting as much in defence of Germany as for our own national frontiers. We are fighting for Alsace-Lorraine, as Germany is fighting for us, and has fought for Lemberg and Trieste. I draw no distinction between Trieste and Strasbourg.[1]

From this time onwards the Government of Vienna became a mere County Council, under the central authority of Berlin, with Count Czernin as its first Chairman. He could always count upon finding some Pan-Germanist or other to succeed him in this office.

On December 6 one of Prince Sixte's friends met M. William Martin, and said to him:

> I do not understand our policy at all. Nor can I think without the keenest regret of all the possibilities in store for us last spring. I cannot understand a policy which consists in following up the overtures you know of by launching against Austria first an Italian, then a Russian offensive, and now the declaration of war by America. It was a mistake, if I may say so, to discount the possibility of action by the Emperor Charles, his unmistakable honesty of purpose, and also the advantages to ourselves of his action. The Emperor is an honest man; he wanted first to come to an understanding upon the conditions which he might consider acceptable, and then to notify Germany that he could obtain Peace upon

[1] *Journal des Débats*, Sunday, December 9, 1917, p. 2, col. 1-2.

these conditions, that he found them acceptable, and that he and his subjects wanted a Peace of this sort.

"Yes," replied M. William Martin, "but M. Ribot is incapable of trusting any one: he has always suspected the Emperor of being in a conspiracy with Germany. M. Poincaré is very busy: do you suppose Prince Sixte . . . ? The President has often spoken to me about him."

"Prince Sixte," answered his friend, "has had every reason to be annoyed; he will do nothing on his own initiative. If he is to be got to do anything, he must first be invited by M. Poincaré and M. Clemenceau. Remember the tone M. Ribot adopted. Remember the inaccuracies about Serbia in his letter to Lloyd George. Those were remarked at the time. Remember his address to the Chamber, also filled with inaccuracies about Italy. Why, you have had Count Czernin's note in your hands!"

M. Martin thought that M. Clemenceau was not aware of Prince Sixte's mission, but promised that he should be told everything.

On December 21 the same friend met M. Martin again, and learned from him that M. Pichon, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, was engaged in studying the papers connected with Prince Sixte's mission in the previous spring, which had been brought to his notice; he was preparing a report on them for M. Clemenceau, but this was not yet ready. M. Martin also mentioned M. Poincaré's wish that the Prince's friend should see M. Clemenceau.

The Friend. "Certainly; if he sends for me, I shall go and see him."

M. Martin. "No, no: you must ask to see him. You will be admitted. It is your duty as a patriot to give him what information you can."

The Friend. "I do not decline to do so, but he must invite me first. He is the head of the Government; one cannot break in upon him uninvited."

M. Martin. "Very well: I will arrange it through M. Jules Cambon."

A few days later, on December 30, M. William Martin sent the Prince his best wishes for the new year. "In common with yourself and the whole of France," he wrote, "I have nursed a wish this year which I shall carry on into 1918. It is no fault of Your Highness that its fulfilment has been delayed, and I should like to believe that it is not yet too late for us to collect together again and utilise for the benefit of our country whatever may be left of certain friendly influences, which, I am afraid, we have rudely rejected. I hope so, most fervently."

As the front was comparatively calm throughout the winter, the two Princes, who had each obtained three months' leave of absence, formed the plan of going for a few weeks' holiday to Morocco, where General Lyautey had invited them to visit him as far back as October 2. M. Jules Cambon spoke of this plan on January 26 to M. Clemenceau, who raised no objection.

They were to sail from Marseilles, on the *Abda.* An announcement of the sailing of this vessel, postponed from February 5 to 8, was sent from Marseilles on the 7th to the *Petit Parisien,* which published it next day, in defiance of all the rules of censorship, and of the grave risk the vessel ran of being sunk or captured, for enemy submarines were at that time extremely active along the

coasts of Spain and Northern Africa. To avoid this danger, the Company kept the *Abda* three days longer in harbour ; she sailed on February 11, and, except for an alarm off the Moroccan coast, the crossing was undisturbed, and the Princes reached Casablanca on February 16.

Meanwhile, after a silence lasting two months, Count Revertera had decided to leave Vienna on January 20, and meet Count Armand in Switzerland, a meeting he himself had asked for in the first days of November 1917. They held two conversations at Fribourg, on February 1 and 3 respectively.

Conversation of February 1

Armand. At the end of August I communicated to you certain information, in terms that showed the most friendly feeling towards Austria. We had no answer until the beginning of November and then a bare refusal.

Revertera. This is the answer made by Count Czernin on September 19.

"(1) The Minister has not been able to transmit to Berlin the proposals communicated to himself, as they did not seem to him to be acceptable.

(2) In the present circumstances a separate Peace cannot be regarded as possible.

(3) The Minister hopes to be able to arrive at an arrangement on the following bases :

(*a*) A general disarmament to prevent war in the future, and the institution of an international court of arbitration.

(*b*) The *statu quo ante* principle, with the exception of certain exchanges of territory.

Should France be prepared to discuss matters on these bases, the Minister would be willing to send an official representative, or, if necessary, to come

himself, to negotiate with a French representative of equal rank and authority."

The Emperor wished me to bring you this note. I told him that I knew you were determined not to yield in the matter of Alsace-Lorraine, that there could, in consequence, be no common ground for discussion, and that my time would be wasted in coming here.

Armand. Anyhow, this answer has now only a historic importance. I do not need to take it back to Paris.

Revertera. Excuse me, there is still one thing of importance—I received special instructions as I left Vienna, to say that Count Czernin is prepared to come and discuss matters in secret with M. Pichon. He feels certain that they could clear up several doubtful points.

Armand. If you ask me to convey this intelligence I shall do so. But I do not see that such a meeting would be of any use, nor, indeed, would it be possible. The situation at present is this :

In Germany, Count Hertling and Herr von Kühlmann have yielded to the Ludendorff faction, and have made avowals of Pan-Germanism. They do not attempt to conceal their programme of annexation in the East ; they are still ominously silent about Belgium ; and they have not abandoned the scheme of seizing the mineral wealth of French Lorraine.

In Austria we find, first, a secret reply to England, which repudiates any idea of a separate Peace ; and, secondly, Count Czernin's public speeches, in which he does not attempt to disguise the Pan-Germanist views of the German Government, and declares his own entire solidarity with his Ally.

So that we are faced with a repetition of the German programme of 1914, which your Government supports. There is nothing for it but to let the War go on. . . .

It is unnecessary to summarise the whole of this conversation. Count Armand adopted a reasonable attitude, and showed much foresight.

Count Revertera seemed to cherish several curious illusions, especially with regard to his friend Count Czernin.

Revertera. Count Czernin is opposed to Ludendorff. . . . Besides, he is the only real Statesman in the Central Empires, and Berlin realises that. His position and his authority are steadily increasing. . . . It is he who will dictate the foreign policy of Berlin ; he is not going to follow Prussia. . . . You ought to take advantage of his position while there is still time. He may not last much longer. He has recently suffered from intestinal ulcers, which are, I am afraid, tuberculous. He may very soon exhaust his physical capacity. . . . Last September the Emperor made Hohenlohe, his Ambassador at Berlin, come to discuss your note with himself and Czernin, so as to find out how Berlin would receive it. Hohenlohe thought that Germany would read into it the tone of a conquering Power, and there was no chance of her making the concessions. Your margin was too broad. . . . You must be more reasonable ; we cannot support your claim to Alsace-Lorraine.

Armand. Then there is nothing for it but to let the War go on. Time is on our side.

Revertera. Are you not afraid of the effect of the Russian Revolution ? Think of all the scandals there have been already in Paris.

Armand. There the Germans are wrong again. They are reckoning upon a Revolution in France in March. There will be nothing of the sort : that attempt is doomed to failure. In any case France is the one country in Europe on which the Russian Revolution will have no effect. As it is, we approximate far more nearly than any other State to the social conditions of the future. The Central Empires are so near the centre of disturbance, and at the same time so remote from revolutionary ideas, that you are bound to suffer heavily. You are privileged to watch the dissolution of a world-period !

Revertera. Alas, yes! But still, why should we not stop the War? The Emperor wants Peace: I assure you that he still wants it as much as he did in August.

Armand. Until Prussia is finally defeated, we must go on.

Revertera. But, if you were to make Peace, and France were to join forces with Austria, Prussia would become harmless. Disarmament would be forced on her.

Armand. We cannot trust her to do anything. She will yield to nothing but force.

Conversation of February 3

Revertera. I have telegraphed to Vienna that we were wrong to send a bare refusal, and that through you we could always communicate directly and secretly with the President of the Council in France; and I have asked for further instructions.

I repeat that Czernin is still prepared to come himself, if he can be certain of meeting one of your Ministers. If not, we can send one of the heads of departments in our Ministry to meet one of yours.

But from what you have told me I feel that there is little likelihood that anything will come of such a conversation. England will adopt a less sentimental attitude than France. When she can gain anything by stopping the War, and has secured guarantees for Belgium, she will withdraw her support from your claim to Alsace-Lorraine. And though we detest England as much as we detest Prussia, we can come to terms with her more easily than with France.

I may remind you that the Emperor confides in me, that I am an intimate friend of Czernin, and that, if there is anything you want us to know, it is better not to use an indirect channel. At this moment M. Sauerwein, a journalist on the staff of the *Matin*, is saying that he has instructions from the President of the Council to get into touch with Austrian Diplomats. These conversations are having a bad effect.

I must again lay stress on the fact that Czernin is quite independent ; he has not to account to Berlin for any of his actions, but acts on his own authority and with the Emperor's support. I wish you would give up the idea of a trap. On our side any conversation would be kept secret.

How can we put an end to all this slaughter ! The Germans say they are quite confident. If their offensive takes place, I feel, as you do, that they will not break through. This offensive will prove as futile as the rest, and will leave us all in the same positions, with no definite gain on either side.

Early in January the Emperor had spoken to Revertera of Ludendorff : he had struck the table and exclaimed, " I cannot tell you how much I detest that man."

Count Armand came back to Paris and reported these two conversations on February 7 : he then returned to Fribourg, where he met Count Revertera, and held two final conversations on February 23 and 25.

Conversation of February 23

Armand. The Germans have played a low trick on you in Poland ; if you had separated from them last year, Poland would now be in your hands and you could block Prussia's road to the East.

Revertera. The Poles have managed things extremely badly. I still hope that some arrangement may be made.

Armand. Are you quite certain that Germany is not going to stab you in the back ? Listen ; I can give you a piece of private information. You may know that in France, England, and the United States there are to be found agitators from the different races of the Monarchy, Serbo-Croats, Czechs, and Slovaks. . . .

Revertera. Yes, you mean the revolutionaries.

Armand. As is only natural, they come to us and discuss their plans. What has always surprised us, in France at any rate, has been that they never asked for financial support, although they are not themselves men of means, and their expenses must be heavy.

Their ambition keeps on increasing : at first they stood for autonomy, but they are now planning complete independence. Well, only the other day an important German agent was arrested in France. He had come to stir up industrial strife, and organise the destruction of property. He made several interesting confessions, and so, I fancy, saved his life. Among other things, he told us he was supplying your agitators with funds, and spoke of the results Germany expected to secure. Those are briefly this. Prussia is in favour of a movement which would lead to the formation of several republics or independent states out of the fragments of the Monarchy, such as a Bohemian Republic, a Serbo-Croat State, a Slovene State. . . .

Revertera. In that case the Austrian Provinces would pass to Germany.

Armand. Precisely ; and the Bavarians will be in at the death. They are not overfond of you.

Revertera. We know that.

Armand. As a reigning dynasty the Habsburg would cease to exist. The Hohenzollern would contrive this, explaining, of course, that their downfall was due to intrigues by the Entente. You can see now that Germany is ready to stab you from behind.

Revertera. Does this money come from the German Government ?

Armand. I cannot say ; I have no details. The agent we arrested was not working for any private party.

Revertera. The Emperor has no more love for Prussia than you have. He distrusts her utterly.

Armand. You understand, of course, that I was not instructed to tell you of this incident. I am telling it to you personally, and in confidence. . . .

Revertera. I am very glad to see you here. As soon as I heard of your arrival, I telegraphed again to Vienna, to the Emperor himself, saying that it was absolutely essential that I should be allowed to transmit a message to the French Government. This morning I went to Berne, where I found his reply. What he says amounts to this: if the French Government accepts the basis of *statu quo ante bellum*, one of our Ministers is prepared to come and discuss terms with a French Minister.

Armand. And what about Alsace?

Revertera. The telegram simply says: *statu quo ante.*

Armand. Then there is not the slightest chance of success.

Revertera. All the same you are bound to transmit the message: moreover, these are the official instructions which I have received.

Armand. My duty, from the moment of your mentioning the subject, is to transmit the message; and, so that there may be no mistake, I should be glad if you would draft a note, at your leisure, which you can write out and hand to me, or which I can take down from your dictation. But you understand that there is absolutely no chance of its proving effective.

Revertera. Quite apart from the Pan-Germanists, there is not a soul in Germany who would agree to the cession of Alsace-Lorraine. It would be symbolical of defeat.

We have made inquiries about this; the Emperor made Hohenlohe come and discuss it with him. Hohenlohe made it clear that it would be impossible to propose such a thing to Berlin.

The cession of Alsace-Lorraine cannot be included among the terms of a reasonable Peace, whose rejection by Germany would give the Emperor an excuse for separating from the Alliance. He will do nothing of a criminal nature. If he must perish, he will perish honourably, with the words of Francis I. on his lips.

Besides, the whole business of Alsace-Lorraine is merely a sop to the personal pride of France.

Armand. Not at all; if the German Empire regards it as a matter of personal pride, we regard it as a vital necessity. So long as Germany stays there, there can be no security in France. Besides, why should Austria give any support to Germany's pretensions? By Article 75 of the Treaty of Westphalia and by Articles 2 and 6 of the Treaty of Lunéville the Emperor renounced, for himself and his successors, every right in these territories; and at Lunéville he made this stipulation explicitly for the whole Germanic Group.

Revertera. Then this War is to go on for years?

Armand. Give me your note. I am bound to mention it; but, once more, I must warn you not to count upon any result.

Conversation of February 25

Count Revertera told Count Armand that "from June to September 1917 the German Crown Prince was quite definitely for Peace, and it was on him that Austria relied to secure it. But then the Crown Prince yielded to Ludendorff's 'violent' remonstrances, and returned to the fold of Pan-Germanism. At present Hindenburg is in eclipse, and Ludendorff controls everything. The Germans regard the Baltic Provinces as a ripe fruit ready to drop into their hands; they would hardly look upon them as a compensation for sacrifices elsewhere."

Count Revertera handed Count Armand the following note:

"In August 1917 overtures were made with the object of inducing the French Government to offer terms to Austria which he could quote to influence the Government of Berlin. By order of H.M. the Emperor and King the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Minister stated that he was prepared to transmit the terms France should offer to Berlin, and to give them the full weight of his own authority, provided they could be deemed acceptable. This they could be only so long as they did not violate

the dictates of honour and conscience: that was, they must not, by laying down an inequitable basis for negotiations, imply the bare-faced desertion by Austria of her Ally.

"The terms proposed by the French, in agreement with the British Government, were formulated and transmitted to Vienna, where they were closely scrutinised. In the end, however, they were held to be inacceptable, in so far as they demanded that Germany, Austria's Ally, should surrender territories which she possesses by right, and which form an integral part of her Empire. The Government of Vienna considered that it would be a breach of faith to urge their Ally to concede claims for which they themselves could see so little justification. The answer was, therefore, in the negative.

"In the course of these conversations, the idea was developed of arranging a meeting in a Neutral State between the Foreign Ministers of France and Austria, or between officials nominated by those Ministers and furnished with absolute authority; at this meeting each party would hear the other's views, and both would combine to adopt a course of action likely to lead to Peace. A meeting of this sort might have been valuable in many ways, but was bound to prove ineffective unless both parties came to a preliminary understanding as to the bases of negotiations. The territorial claims preferred by France made the establishment of any basis impossible.

"In spite of this, Austria-Hungary is still prepared to begin conversations with France, provided that the French Government is willing to make a definite statement that France does not contemplate any kind of annexation, that is to say that she will accept, on her side, the principle of *statu quo ante bellum.*

"The Foreign Ministry of Austria-Hungary is of opinion that such a statement by France would be sufficient justification for conversations between the two Powers, which would almost certainly prove successful."

Count Revertera gave this note, in his own handwriting, to Count Armand, saying at the same time :

"For the present the only thing is to make preparations for an interview between the French and Austrian Plenipotentiaries, and it is with this object that I have disclosed to you my Government's proposals. Once the two representatives meet, they can begin to discuss the conditions of a general Peace, on the lines laid down in their respective instructions. When they return home each can inform the Allies of his own country of the turn things have taken, and of the points on which both parties are agreed ; and then Austria and France will be in a position to exert their influence on their Allies so as to bring about a general Peace."

Count Armand returned at once to Paris, and there, on February 27, submitted his report of this latest offer : next day, as he had warned his informant, he was compelled to bring to an abrupt conclusion a discussion which had become increasingly otiose ever since it had been under the direction of the "Heaven-sent genius" who was in power at Vienna.

February 28, 1918.

My dear ——, Excuse a line in haste. I have submitted Girardin's plan to one of the chief people in that line. Tell him that the professional attitude here has never, at any time, been more opposed to the theories he has advanced. So there is nothing to be done. Kindest regards, A[rmand].

There were a few sombre spirits amongst us during the War who found it difficult to abandon the hope that, some day, a Statesman would appear to lead the Entente : some man with a knowledge of Europe, like Venizelos, who would prove his

leadership to his fellow-men, by his instinctive handling of them; who would, indeed, lead them to the water-springs of generous principles, but who would lead them also into green pastures, by providing them with the primary necessities of life. Such a man would have had the good sense to see that no pains were spared, however trivial the object might seem. If no such Statesman has yet appeared, that is, perhaps, because we cannot have everything at once. For in France we did actually have what was most necessary to ourselves and our Allies: we furnished, at the right time, two men of genius, the calm and straightforward Joffre and the alert and brilliant Foch. When we find Revertera (who knew the facts) admitting, as he did on February 1, that the German Empire was simply Ludendorff, while his slim Czernin was the solitary Statesman in either of the Central Empires, then we can begin to feel fairly confident of how the War must end. Berlin and Vienna, with this obtuse (though powerful) and this weak and vacillating genius as their sole representatives: in sooth, an alliance of the halt and the blind! Their failure was bound to come from their not knowing when and why they should make terms. The whole federation of the German Empire was to perish by the actions of this ordinary, middle-class man, whom accident had put at the head of the German Army: whose own convictions made him urge on his princely masters along the course to which, by their criminal folly, they had committed their subjects, a course on which they would fain stay their feet lest they should fall into the abyss. Yet, when they

had disappeared, Germany was still to remain, amalgamated into a single metal, in the seething crucible of defeat. As for the Dual Monarchy, that, too, must perish, breaking asunder its never homogeneous members, and we shall see how Czernin destroyed it in his final act of self-destruction.

The German Empire had now been proved victorious on her Eastern Front, by the Russian Treaty, signed at Brest Litovsk on March 3, and by the Rumanian Treaty, signed at Buftea on March 5. She now decided to employ all her remaining forces in a desperate attempt on Paris. The two Crown Princes divided the supreme command, under Ludendorff: the Bavarian in the north, and the Prussian in Champagne. It was known that both were attacking simply in order to secure the laurels which, so far, both their brows distinctly lacked. The Bavarian Prince began: on March 21 his Armies fell upon the British lines in Picardy, which were withdrawn; on March 23 the bombardment of Paris began. But, under the stress of this crisis, the British Government agreed to M. Clemenceau's request that the Unity of Command should now be established; at Doullens, on March 26, General Foch assumed the supreme command of the Allied Armies, and from that moment the War was won: France felt that she was saved.

The fall of M. Clemenceau would, in these circumstances, have struck a fatal blow at the Entente. Count Czernin did what he could, but his arrogance was baffled by his ignorance: he did not realise with whom he had to deal. By his own

mistakes he had made enemies of the Magyars and the Poles, so that all he could do now, if he wanted to prolong his career for a few days or weeks, was to play the lackey (well or ill, but generally ill) to the Pan-Germanist party in the Monarchy.

On April 2, in a speech delivered to the Municipal Council of Vienna, after paying a few compliments to Mr. Wilson, he went on to tell the worthy citizens of the capital, who had proved so loyal to their peaceable young Emperor:

> I swear before God that we have done everything in our power to avoid a fresh offensive. The Entente would not let us.
>
> M. Clemenceau, some time before the offensive upon the Western Front began, sent some one to ask me whether I was prepared to begin negotiations, and on what bases. I replied at once, with the knowledge and consent of Berlin, that I was ready to negotiate, that I saw no obstacle to peace between France and Austria-Hungary, unless, possibly, France's aspirations in Alsace-Lorraine. The answer from Paris was that it was not possible to begin negotiations on this basis. After that, we had no option.
>
> So now the great offensive has been launched in the West. . . . Our Armies are fighting side by side for the defence of Austria-Hungary and of Germany. Our Armies shall convince the Entente that the claims of France and Italy to the possession of territories which are ours are utopian dreams which must end in a rude awakening.
>
> Loyalty here on the banks of the Danube means no less than it does in Germany.[1]

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[1] *Journal des Débats*, April 4, 1918. See also *Pages d'histoire, 1914–1918; Le Mensonge autrichien: l'incident Clemenceau-Czernin*, Paris, Berger-Levrault, 1918, 64 pp. 16mo.

And so we learn that M. Clemenceau had sued for peace under the threat of a German victory, he, our great patriot, whose whole programme was simply to "make war" as war had been forced upon France. Here was a disclosure greatly to the credit of German arms, and as little to that of France, already guilty of the crime of defending herself against the assaults of four years.

M. Georges Clemenceau was at the front on April 4, when he received a telephone message from M. Mandel, his private secretary, reporting what Count Czernin had said. His reply was brief but pointed:

"Count Czernin has lied!"

This sentence was monumental: his secretarial staff added nothing to it, but sent it, as it was, to the Press, where the diplomats could read it at their leisure.

When we examine the documents of the Armand-Revertera negotiations, we find that M. Clemenceau's condemnation of Count Czernin must be endorsed by historians. This business is naturally divided into two parts, the first lasting from July 12 to October 23, 1917, and the second from November 10, 1917, to February 28, 1918. It was Czernin who took the initiative by sending an offer to Paris on July 12; and it was Czernin who took the initiative by sending an offer to Paris on November 10. M. Clemenceau heard all this mentioned once, and once only, on November 18, when he gave a positive instruction, to *listen, but say nothing.* So much the documents prove: during the latter period, when M. Clemenceau was in office, Count Armand obeyed his instructions

and asked Count Revertera nothing. In consequence of which M. Clemenceau himself was never able to ask anything of Count Czernin through this channel. And to assert the contrary indicates either a feeble and resourceless mentality, incapable of recognising the simplest facts, or, if you like it better, a deceitful mentality which tells what is diametrically opposed to the truth from some imagined interest in so doing. In his heart and soul Czernin would own that a diplomat ought to err with the fox rather than with the crow. Talleyrand is supposed to have regretted that he had not the appearance of a simpleton, but for him the appearance would have been enough; any more would have prevented him from being what he was. But we may assume that Czernin, like Talleyrand, had seen the alternatives and made his choice.

On the evening of April 4, when M. Clemenceau returned to Paris, he found on his table in the Rue Saint-Dominique, not the file of the Armand-Revertera negotiations, of whose existence the General Staff had informed him, but which he had dismissed from his mind, but the whole account of Prince Sixte's mission from the Entente to the Emperor Charles, of which, up to that time, he had not had the remotest idea. The Foreign Minister had finally made up his mind to disclose this secret to his Chief, on the principle of "Better late than never." The file was, however, incomplete. It included copies of the Emperor's two letters, but the copy of Count Czernin's Note, which had been attached to the second of those letters, was missing. Its place was indicated in

the index to the file, where it was numbered 13, so that its absence must be ascribed to neglect of duty, deliberate or accidental.

At a quarter past nine the next morning, April 5, M. William Martin telephoned to the officer who had accompanied the two Princes on their last journey to Switzerland, and said to him: "Do you know where your friends are? What are they doing? . . . Things are happening just now which are rather difficult; we must have your friends back here, as we may need their services."

On the same day Count Czernin published an official reply to the correction of his speech by M. Clemenceau. He revealed the secret negotiations between Counts Armand and Revertera, taking care not to admit that they had been begun on his own initiative.

On the same evening the French Government replied to Count Czernin in a Note which set out the true facts of the Armand-Revertera affair. This Note was printed in the morning newspapers dated April 6. M. Clemenceau had decided to stop the mouth of the braggart Minister at Vienna, and so ended his Note with a threat which should certainly have put any sensible man to silence. But it could not silence Count Czernin. "Is there not somewhere in Count Czernin's memory a record of an earlier attempt of the same kind, addressed to Paris and London, only two months before the Revertera enterprise began, and addressed by a personage of far higher rank? Of this, too, an authentic and much more significant proof exists."

Now M. Clemenceau was not aware that the

President of the Republic had given his word of honour that no reference should be made to the Emperor's personal mediation and that his two letters should be kept secret. Nor did he know that M. Ribot had betrayed this secret to Signor Sonnino in July, three months after making Mr. Lloyd George promise to keep it. M. Poincaré received a copy of this threatening Note from M. Clemenceau, and allowed him to publish it, but sent M. William Martin, the same evening, to make him promise not to publish the Emperor's two letters. It was generally felt that Count Czernin, unless he were really mad, would now keep silent. Until this date M. Poincaré had not heard of the Armand-Revertera conversations. MM. Ribot, Painlevé, and Clemenceau knew of these, but thought them of too little importance to need to be referred to the President. What was really surprising was that M. Clemenceau should only then have learned for the first time of Prince Sixte's mission. His predecessor, M. Painlevé, knew nothing of it either. M. Ribot had kept the secret as his own property, and had not handed it on to his successor in office; though he had told Mr. Lloyd George and Signor Sonnino, and is said to have told part, but only a part, to M. Albert Thomas.

M. William Martin was now anxious that M. Clemenceau should learn the whole of Prince Sixte's story, of which he knew only what was in the incomplete file sent him by the Foreign Ministry; so, after meeting one of the Prince's friends, he wrote on April 6 to ask M. Poincaré whether he agreed that "in the absence of Prince

Sixte, it would be as well to ask M. Clemenceau to send, as soon as possible, for the two gentlemen who had followed the negotiations, and could tell him the whole story."

The President gave his consent that evening, and, on the morning of April 7, M. Clemenceau sent word to these two gentlemen, asking them to call upon him that afternoon, at 3 and 4 o'clock. The line taken in these conversations by M. Clemenceau (who had been told that the letters must be kept secret) was:

> The Emperor is responsible for what his Minister says. The Germans want to get me out of the way. Czernin is helping them when he circulates this lie. I am attacked: I find a weapon with which to defend myself, and I show them what my weapon is. I am entitled to use it. I give the Emperor a warning, and if he does not make his Minister keep silence . . . then I use it. Besides there is nothing more to be done with Austria now. A few months since, there were still possibilities, and I understand it was a separate Peace that was being discussed. . . . But now, either we shall prove victorious or we shall be crushed. . . . But (*with great determination*) they are not going to break through. . . . We shall still have to face four or five hard knocks; but, for all that, they will not break through.
>
> "Yes, sir," was the comment on this, "I am certain you have saved France by making our Allies accept the Unity of Command." It was impossible to meet M. Clemenceau face to face without being struck by his whole appearance: his gestures, his words, everything in him surprised one by its freshness and youth.

Count Czernin felt impelled to issue a second Note on April 8, in which he still harped on the Revertera affair. He still went against the facts,

and insisted that the two envoys had been brought in contact by French initiative. In this Note he said :

> If M. Clemenceau asks the Austrian Foreign Minister whether he remembers that before Count Revertera's overture (that is, about a year ago) another similar attempt was made by a personage of far higher rank, Count Czernin will unhesitatingly reply in the affirmative, but will be bound to add, so as to complete the story, that this earlier attempt proved as unsuccessful as the later.

In other words, Count Czernin wanted to imply that the first attempt had failed, as, according to him, the second attempt had failed, because France had declined to abandon her claim to Alsace-Lorraine. It is quite plain from this Note that Count Czernin, with a full measure of the simpleton appearance which Talleyrand had never managed to assume, was actually urging M. Clemenceau on to the threatened revelations, though those revelations were more to be dreaded in Vienna than anywhere else.

This imbecility M. Clemenceau did not fail to underline in his reply, which, written the same evening, appeared in the morning newspapers dated April 9. He showed the world Count Czernin's approaching realisation of his desire to commend himself to his masters in Berlin, who wished to see the Emperor Charles destroyed, or at least definitely subordinated to themselves.

> What is all this disturbance about ? To establish the fact that every successive Government of France has been, like France herself, immovable upon the question of Alsace-Lorraine ? Who on earth would have supposed

that it would be necessary to enlist the services of Count Revertera to enlighten Count Czernin upon this question, after the Emperor of Austria himself had said the last word ? For it was actually the Emperor Charles who, in an autograph letter of March 1917, gave his definite support to THE JUST CLAIMS OF FRANCE RELATIVE TO ALSACE-LORRAINE. A later letter establishes the fact that the Emperor was IN AGREEMENT WITH HIS MINISTER.

The only thing left for Count Czernin is to make a full admission of his error.

Whatever thoughts lurked in the depths of Count Czernin's mind, these two sentences which ended the Note from Paris must have been unpleasant reading. Although their truth was beyond dispute he hoped that their "manifest absurdity" would be apparent at Berlin.

It must be admitted, evidently, that the files of documents stored in the Chancellories of Europe are seldom complete. In the file kept at Paris we have seen that the copy of Count Czernin's Note of May 9 was missing ; but at Vienna things were better still, for it seems that neither of the Emperor's letters (of March 24 and May 9) had been preserved there, nor, of course, was there any record of Count Czernin's Note of May 9. An excellent method of preserving archives. And so it was that, after the lapse of a year, neither Emperor nor Minister could be quite certain of what they themselves had actually written, while the circumstances were considerably altered. Their intentions had, no doubt, been excellent, for it had been understood that these letters were to be kept secret, and so, if they should have been published without their object's having been attained, the

writers would still be in a position to deny all knowledge of them. But all human combinations are short-lived when brought face to face with realities. The Emperor remembered no more than this, that he had done and written nothing without his Minister's knowledge, and in this impression of their unanimity he was entirely justified. But the Minister remembered absolutely nothing of what the Emperor *and himself* had written a year earlier. This sounds improbable, but is proved by a conversation which took place on April 9 between the Minister, at Bucharest, and the Emperor, who was then at Baden.

Count Czernin joined the Emperor at Baden next day, and on April 11 issued a further Note, in which the effect of his persistent contradiction, based on the evident failure of his memory, was to drive M. Clemenceau still further towards the publication of the damaging facts.

> M. Clemenceau claims that he (the Emperor) supports the just claims of France to the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine, and adds that his Foreign Minister entirely agrees with him. The absurdity of such an assertion is self-evident. It is completely contradicted by all the public speeches which the responsible Minister for Foreign Affairs has ever delivered (*sic!*). It must be stated in plain terms that the conclusions derived by M. Clemenceau from the terms which the Emperor is said to have employed in a letter are false from beginning to end. . . .[1]

While this Note was being drafted, Count Czernin obtained his master's signature to a

[1] The text of this Note has been published by Count Czernin (August Demblin, *Czernin und die Sixtus-Affaire*, Drei Masken Verlag, München, 1920, pp. 95, 96).

telegram, which was sent to the Emperor William, with the object of binding Austria and Germany in a still closer alliance.

Nothing remained but for the thunderbolt to fall. In Paris, on the evening of April 12, the crash came.

"This," said M. Clemenceau, "is the text of the autograph letter communicated on March 31, 1917, by Prince Sixte de Bourbon, brother-in-law of the Austrian Emperor, to M. Poincaré, President of the French Republic, and communicated immediately after, with the Prince's consent, to the President of the Council of France. (Here came the text of the letter.) . . . The Government of Austria is now called upon for an explanation of the overtures which, it admits, have been made, and for the details of its Envoy's conversations."

Next day, April 13, a denial came from Vienna: in the circumstances in which they were then placed neither the Emperor nor his Minister could imagine that he had ever written, or allowed to be written, words which could have so disastrous an effect in Germany, whose yoke was growing daily more unbearable. Besides, whatever they might remember, they were bound to conceal the truth. And so, on April 13, Count Czernin simply said:

It is officially stated that the letter from His Majesty, published by the President of the Council of French Ministers in his communiqué of April 12, is a fabrication. . . . This letter made no mention of the Belgian question, and on that of Alsace-Lorraine said merely:

> "I SHOULD HAVE BROUGHT ALL MY PERSONAL INFLUENCE TO BEAR IN SUPPORT OF THE PRETENSIONS AND CLAIMS OF FRANCE WITH REGARD TO ALSACE-LORRAINE, HAD THOSE CLAIMS BEEN JUST: BUT THEY ARE NOT JUST."

It is significant that the French communiqué makes no mention of another letter from the Emperor, . . . in which His Majesty announced that IT HAD THE FULL APPROVAL OF HIS MINISTER.

In truth, Count Czernin was insatiable; for we now see him compelling M. Clemenceau to publish the Emperor's second letter, that of May 9, and, then, why not also his own Note of the same date, just to complete the picture? The sole reason why M. Clemenceau was unable to publish Count Czernin's Note, forecasting a separate Peace at an early date, was, undoubtedly, that he had not a copy of it. As for the Emperor's letter of May 9, the reason which prevented its publication in Paris was the fear of displeasing Italy by an untimely revelation.

But where did the erroneous version of the letter of March 24 come from, which Count Czernin published on April 13 to give the lie to the version already published in Paris? By dint of ransacking empty archives the Minister brought to light (from the obscurity in which it should have been left) a rough and doubtful sketch of the authentic letter, the sole copy, apparently, which had survived at Vienna: whether this dated from the period before the claims of France were first admitted by Count Czernin, or from that when he had ceased to admit them, we cannot tell; for Count Czernin alone, as the man responsible for the policy of the Monarchy, was in a position to say whether this curious draft was written before or after the genuine letter. Only he could solve the problem; but, whatever be the solution, the

plan of point-blank denial to which this Note conforms, a plan for which Count Czernin must bear the burden of responsibility, and in which the workings of his mind are clearly revealed, is too inconsistent with the known facts of the case to take in any person, of however little intelligence.

If, as we were assured, Count Czernin was in possession of a certificate which might, in the last extremity, be used to authenticate this unaccountable version of the Emperor's autograph letter, such a certificate could have come only from his own hand: well, every one plays his own part.[1]

M. Clemenceau's rejoinder to this was a cruel thrust at Czernin's Imperial victim:

> . . . And so we find him reduced to charging his own brother-in-law with forgery, with having by his own hand fabricated a false and misleading text!
>
> The original of the document published by the French Government was communicated to the President of the Republic in the presence of M. Jules Cambon, General Secretary of the Ministry, and representing the Minister for Foreign Affairs; and the President, with the Prince's consent, sent a copy of the letter to the President of the Council. . . .
>
> As we have said above, the Emperor's letter was shown to the heads of the State by Prince Sixte himself. In addition to this, there are two friends of Prince Sixte who can testify to the authenticity of our version, especi-

[1] Herr August Demblin, in *Czernin und die Sixtus-Affaire*, p. 38, mentions but does not quote this document; evidently Count Czernin, who obtained his victim's signature to it after writing it himself, is reluctant to publish it in facsimile. For that would betray his handiwork. But the Note of May 9, 1917, which he had forgotten, and could not reproduce from his own files, is taken here (pp. 97-98) from the version in *L'Illustration* of January 3, 1920. We are fortunate, in Paris, to have been able to do this slight service to the historians of Austrian diplomacy.

ally one of them to whom the Prince gave the letter to copy.[1]

This discussion had lasted too long, as Count Czernin himself came to realise, for on April 13, the day when he produced this notorious draft, he sent in his resignation to the master he had served so ill.

But, before he left, the innate integrity of the Emperor's character obliged him to write a fresh note, very different in tone. For the accusation launched so unconvincingly at France on the 13th was now watered down to nothing.

The latest explanations which have emanated from M. Clemenceau do not in the least affect the veracity of the official announcements already made public by the Imperial and Royal Minister for Foreign Affairs. Prince Sixte de Bourbon's personal character, which is well known to the Emperor, renders any supposition of forgery quite untenable. Neither he nor any one else has, so far, been accused. As it is impossible for the Minister for Foreign Affairs to furnish proof of the circumstances in which the false was substituted for the authentic letter, he is obliged to regard the incident as closed.

And his own career as closed with it.

On April 18, Count Czernin was definitely replaced by Baron Burian. It is surprising to learn that, on his departure, he received a Rescript couched in the most flattering terms and, into the bargain, the Grand Cross, in brilliants, of the

[1] These two friends, one of whom accompanied the Princes on their first, and the other on their last journey to Switzerland, were, as it happened, the two gentlemen whose advice M. Clemenceau had sought on April 7.

Order of Saint Stephen. On April 24 the Emperor William sent him his "warmest thanks," with the insignia of the Iron Cross of the First Class. The latter was probably the sole reward this creature could have merited, who had always served his country ill, and had perhaps even betrayed his master. For was it not tantamount to treason that this man should, on April 12, on hearing of the publication (which he himself had obliged France to make) of the letter of March 24, enter his Sovereign's study and say, with a frigidity calculated to wound, that Prince Sixte, the Emperor's favourite brother-in-law, had just been shot by Clemenceau's (ye gods, *Clemenceau's*!) orders, and that the Emperor and himself had nothing left but flight: the Emperor must abdicate at once, while his faithful servant could do naught else but blow his brains out. Upon which, before the Emperor's eyes, Count Czernin pulled a pistol from his pocket. The Emperor ordered him to put it down, and to calm himself: he absolutely declined to abdicate. The mere fact that Count Czernin was able to escape unscathed from this audience shows that the Emperor was most lenient in the use of his arbitrary powers. What Count Czernin deserved was to be hanged as high as Haman, at the end of the Grand Chain of the Order of the Sacred Crown of Hungary, far rather than to be given its Grand Cross in brilliants. But I think that he did indeed deserve the Iron Cross awarded by the King of Prussia.

Before he was obliged by Count Czernin, against his own inclinations, to make public the text of

the Emperor's secret letter of March 24 to Prince Sixte, M. Clemenceau felt it to be eminently desirable that he himself should be brought in direct contact with the Prince, who had not yet returned to the Front, but was still in Morocco, and far from well.

The following telegrams passed between them, and between the Prince and M. Poincaré: first, a telegram sent in clear from Paris by M. Clemenceau to Rabat, and there ciphered and forwarded to Marrakech, where the Prince was:

Official. Handed in at Rabat, 11.15 A.M., April 12.

From the Resident Commissioner General to General de Lamothe, Marrakech. Urgent Priority. Strictly personal.

Please transmit to Prince Sixte de Bourbon the following telegram, which I have received from M. Clemenceau, addressed to him, and handed in at Paris, 5.40 P.M., April 11.

"President of the Council to His Highness Prince Sixte de Bourbon, care of the Resident General.

"The contradiction issued by the Emperor Charles has obliged me to furnish proofs of a series of negotiations in which you were intermediary: these would have remained secret had not Count Czernin disclosed the conversations which arose out of them. I have had to involve you personally by publishing the Emperor's letter which you on March 31, 1917, communicated to the President of the Republic. I must apologise to you for this action, for which the Austrian Government is solely responsible.

"CLEMENCEAU."

Certified true copy,

M. de Lamothe,

General Officer Commanding
Marrakech Subdivision.

To this the Prince replied as follows:

RABAT, *April* 13, 1918.

Resident Commissioner General to President of Council, Minister for War, Paris. Personal. From Prince Sixte de Bourbon. (Marrakech.)

The Resident General has forwarded your telegram of April 11. I yield to the necessity of the case, although this sacrifice, which I make for France, is particularly painful to me, as I had given my word of honour and received that of the French Government that in no circumstances would the Emperor's letter be made public. You can readily understand the awkward situation in which I myself am placed by this publication.

Permit me, therefore, to appeal to you most strongly that no further reference be made to the mission which I thought it my duty to undertake in view of the supreme interests involved in these negotiations: and please regard this appeal as strictly confidential.

SIXTE DE BOURBON.

This telegram was sent in clear by the Casablanca-Brest cable, and the same day the Prince wrote to M. William Martin:

April 13, 1918.

M. LE MINISTRE—

While . . . convalescing at Marrakech, I have received a telegram in which M. Clemenceau expresses his regret for having made use of my name in publishing the Austrian Emperor's letter. I have replied with an urgent request that he will do nothing further, explaining the painful situation in which I am placed by this publication. I had given my word of honour to the Emperor, assuring him that the document would be kept absolutely secret. This was secured by the formal promises given me by the President of the Republic, M. Ribot (then President of the Council), and Mr. Lloyd George. M. Clemenceau has

found it necessary to publish the letter. As I have said in my telegram to him, I yield to the necessity of the case, although this sacrifice, which I make for France, is particularly painful to me. The Emperor of Austria, hoping to bring the war to an end, communicated with me in strict confidence; he now finds his action made public before the eyes of Germany. He will be bound to believe either that I have broken my word, or at least that I have been guilty of a degree of negligence unpardonable in the circumstances. I do not now dwell—as I explained it quite frankly at the Élysée during the negotiations—on the risk to the Empress, a Princess of the House of France, whom the Germans have always suspected. But I must insist that they be informed that I am in no way responsible for the publication of this letter. So much my honour demands.

For this reason I enclose a letter . . . which . . . may convey to the Emperor Charles a justification of my conduct.

I ask you to be so good as to forward this letter in the French diplomatic bag, as I am certain that the French Government will not refuse me the opportunity to justify myself and defend my honour.

I thank you, Sir, in anticipation, and beg to remain, etc., etc. SIXTE DE BOURBON.

This letter reached Paris on April 23, and was shown the same day to the President of the Republic. On May 9 this letter and its enclosure were handed to M. Clemenceau by the Foreign Minister and M. William Martin. M. Clemenceau agreed to forward, through Spain, the letter intended to explain the part played by the Prince to the Emperor.

This very painful surprise, which came to the Prince in the deserts of Africa where no other news reached him, was not, however, the last or

the most painful surprise he was to receive. A further telegram came from M. Clemenceau :

Official. Rabat, 13.4.18. From Paris 7 78-13, 8.40 P.M.

President of the Council, Minister for War, to the Prince Sixte de Bourbon, care of the Resident Commissioner General of France in Morocco, Rabat.

Your brother-in-law, the Emperor Charles, accuses you of having falsified the text of his letter, which you communicated to us, by substituting a passage relative to Alsace-Lorraine absolutely contrary to the original text. Your reply is awaited. CLEMENCEAU.

On April 14, M. William Martin wrote to one of the Prince's friends :

I understand that when he decided to publish the Emperor's letter, M. Clemenceau telegraphed at the same time to Prince Sixte to explain why such publication was necessary. The Prince replied in terms which the President of the Republic and M. Pichon have described as perfect, while M. Clemenceau, also full of praise, felt obliged to show the Prince some mark of his appreciation : he has therefore thanked the Prince for the way in which he has acted in these critical circumstances. As I told you this morning, a further telegram was sent to Rabat yesterday.

P.S. 15.4.18.

I understand that telegrams were exchanged yesterday between the President of the Republic, the President of the Council, and Prince Sixte, and that all were in terms which could not have been better expressed.

The story of these telegrams is as follows :

First of all, under the shock of the telegram in which M. Clemenceau called upon him to take his part in the dispute, the Prince chose to address

himself to the President of the Republic, and to ask him to respect the vow of silence by which, for the present at least, he felt himself bound.

Handed in at Rabat, April 14. Sent at about 1 P.M. in clear, by the Casablanca-Brest cable.

To Monsieur Raymond Poincaré, President of the French Republic, Paris.

I have received a telegram from the President of the Council asking me to reply to Count Czernin's statement relative to the passage in the letter which deals with Alsace-Lorraine. This letter I entrusted to you personally : it is to you therefore that I must appeal. I do not see how any affirmation on my part can introduce a fresh element into the debate, seeing that I did no more than hand to you a document which had been given to me by a third party. You are aware, Sir, of the conditions which bound me, and which you accepted, when I gave you the document in question : and how deeply I was pledged to ensure that it should not be made public, in accordance with the promise I myself had given. I make the most urgent appeal to your own feelings when I beg you (as I telegraphed yesterday to M. Clemenceau) that I may no longer be made a party to this dispute simply because, in my ardent love for France, I undertook a certain mission ; my part was merely an agent's, and, besides, I have long since ceased to play it.

SIXTE DE BOURBON.

While the Prince was sending this appeal to M. Poincaré, M. Clemenceau was replying from Paris :

Paris, April 14, 11 A.M. (forwarded from Casablanca by telephone about 6 P.M.).

President of the Council to Prince Sixte de Bourbon, care of the Resident General.

I am most deeply touched by the nobility of the sentiments you have expressed : none of us here can ever forget

the absolute loyalty to France underlying all your motives. It behoves the French Government to give you a proof of its esteem, during this universal martyrdom of men and nations, great and small. A calumnious contradiction obliged me to produce the authentic text of the autograph letter which you undertook to convey to Paris: my telegram of yesterday will have shown you what answer this provoked. I must be excused for applying a further test, which can but enhance your dignity.

CLEMENCEAU.

Touched by this manifestation of M. Clemenceau's sympathy, the Prince replied:

Prince Sixte de Bourbon to the President of the Council.
Casablanca, April 14, 6 P.M.

I have just received your telegram of April 14. I am particularly grateful to you for your kindness in recognising, in the name of the French Government, and in such unambiguous terms, the loyalty to France underlying my motives, for I have at all times been guided solely by the love of France. I am deeply touched by these expressions, which close what has been to me a most painful incident.

SIXTE DE BOURBON.

But the Government had not yet given up hope of seeing Prince Sixte combine with M. Clemenceau to frame an answer to Count Czernin's lies. And so the President of the Republic replied in the following terms:

Nature of Telegram: SSS. Destination: Rabat. Origin: Paris. Number: 11. Number of words: 242. Date, 14th. Handed in at 9.50 P.M. Urgent.

His Highness Prince Sixte de Bourbon-Parma, Rabat.

I have shown your telegram to the President of the Council, who tells me that he has explained to you how

these circumstances arose. It is perfectly true that you asked me to keep your communication secret, and both then and now I have warned the heads of the Government to that effect: but you must surely remember that I told you then that I could not keep either the documents or their contents to myself, and that I would at once give a full report to the President of the Council and Minister for Foreign Affairs. You were so good as to accept my conditions, and you yourself carried on conversations with M. Ribot and with Mr. Lloyd George. It follows that, to-day, the Government has every right to make use of the documents which are in the archives of the Quai d'Orsay, which, moreover, the contradictions issued from Vienna oblige them now to publish. You will undoubtedly be the first to recognise and to attest that the published text is a true copy of that which you originally handed to me. The Government have no doubt that your reply on this point will be in the affirmative. The President of the Council has expressed his regret to you: I would add an expression of mine. I am aware that you yourself have acted solely in the interests of France and of her Allies; and the President of the Council is as convinced of this as I am. I beg that you will accept my kindest remembrances.

RAYMOND POINCARÉ.

This is hardly the answer Prince Sixte expected. Next day a fresh telegram from M. Clemenceau was forwarded to him by General Lyautey:

To be deciphered personally by General de Lamothe.

I have received the following telegram from Paris, on the 15th, at 5 P.M.

"Priority: Extremely urgent.

"President of the Council to Prince Sixte de Bourbon, care of the Resident General of France in Morocco, Rabat.

"The incident is virtually closed for the French Govern-

ment. No one has doubted your good faith: but, for all that, you remain under the grave accusation, brought by the Government of Austria, of having allowed one letter to be substituted for another, so as entirely to change the character of your undertaking.

"CLEMENCEAU."

The Prince felt that M. Clemenceau was strong enough to annihilate Count Czernin by himself, and so closed the discussion abruptly with a telegram.

MARRAKECH, *April* 15, 6 P.M. Clear.

Monsieur Clemenceau, President of the Council, Minister for War, Paris.

I have received your telegram of April 15. My complete isolation here and my want of information prevent me from obtaining a clear view of the situation. This view I can only form in France, where I am returning as soon as possible. SIXTE DE BOURBON.

On the same day, as it happened, the Emperor compelled Count Czernin, before leaving his service, to absolve the Prince personally from the charge of falsifying the text of the letter of March 24, which he had lodged against him.

On April 11 the Government had decided to lay before the united Committees for Foreign Affairs and for War, all those documents at the Foreign Ministry which related to Prince Sixte, with those at the War Ministry relating to Count Armand.

This account of M. Clemenceau's appearance before the Committees on April 17 was given by a former Minister next day.

He did not read them the documents, but he did read the telegrams exchanged by himself and the Prince. In the first of these, M. Clemenceau excused himself for having been obliged to publish the first letter. In his reply the Prince showed a certain bitterness. In his second telegram, M. Clemenceau said that the Emperor's contradiction put the Prince in an awkward position: he asked him to protest against this contradiction. The Prince begged to decline, saying that he knew nothing of the situation and was returning to Paris. M. Clemenceau insisted: the Prince maintained his attitude. The impression formed by the Committees was that the Prince's attitude was perfect. "He is a 'Monsieur,'" the old statesman added picturesquely, "and it would be a good thing if all our diplomatic telegrams were as well phrased as his." The line taken by the Government was that the Emperor's duplicity was beyond a doubt, but that the Prince had acted in entire good faith and that no fault could be found with him for having acted as intermediary in these negotiations. The Socialist Party discussed the question. The "All or Nothing" policy was inadmissible. This affair had miscarried, and he agreed with M. Clemenceau that it was impossible to take it up again.

"On the other hand," it was urged, "to go back upon what has been done is an admission of defeat by France: and that is a serious matter."

The old Minister regretted the "personal policy of the Heads of States."

"And yet," he was reminded, "each of them (Poincaré, George V., Victor-Emmanuel, and Charles), has shown himself vastly superior in foresight and common sense to their Ministers (Ribot, Lloyd George, Sonnino, and Czernin)."

The Minister agreed; he agreed also that Prince Sixte could not in any way have added to the indiscretions of the Government, so deeply-rooted were they and so far-reaching.

On April 21 the two Princes crossed the Straits on a French man-of-war and landed at Gibraltar. On the 23rd, M. William Martin telephoned to one of their friends for news of them, as none had yet reached him. He asked to be informed of their arrival. "One wants to see them: in fact, several people do."

The Princes reached Paris from Madrid on May 3 at 8 P.M. When told that several people wanted to see him, Prince Sixte replied that he did not want to see any one: he admitted spontaneously that M. Clemenceau was "honest, and had a good heart," but, had he been left to himself, he would not have sent more than a single word in reply to his telegrams: it was General Lyautey who had persuaded him to answer. He himself wished only to return to the Front, and that as early as possible.

On May 3 an intimate friend of M. Ribot gave details of the attitude he had adopted before the Joint Committee.

He said he must pay a tribute to the loyalty of the Princes, and that he deplored the publication of the letter, but there were three obstacles to the consummation of a separate Peace.

(1) Our engagements to Italy by the treaty of April 15, 1915.

(2) The fact that Czernin was, at the same time, offering a separate Peace to Russia.

(3) The fact that the Emperor was incapable of putting his intentions into practice.

The fortunes of war had altered the circumstances. M. Ribot had now come to hold that the evil effects of the breach between France and Austria should be restricted to a minimum. If Austria refrained from sending troops

to France, that would be placed to her credit. The Princes could still act as agents. He had more influence than any one over the President of the Republic. M. Clemenceau was not France : no one knew where we were tending.

On May 5, M. William Martin went to see one of the friends of the Princes, who said to him : "Is the copy of Czernin's Note in the file, or is it not ?"

He answered : "No."

"And yet," remarked the friend, "the President of the Republic has read the Note. The official Minute of May 20 proves that. Therefore, I suppose, the Note has been lost."

Next day, May 6, M. William Martin asked the same friend to be good enough to call upon him between 11 and 11.30 at the Foreign Office, where he dictated the following note upon a plain sheet of white paper :

(1) The text of Count Czernin's Note cannot be found. The President does not recollect having read it, or even having received it.

He considers that its discovery, or that of a duplicate, would be of great importance.

(2) The President is prepared to repeat to the Prince, personally, his regret for what has happened.

(3) All the Deputies who have come to see the President since the debate have been unanimous and unrestrained in their praise of the Prince's attitude. The President feels bound to make known to the Prince with what cordiality M. Clemenceau has praised him.

The Prince's friend handed him this note: there were now two courses which he might adopt: either he might provide the Foreign Ministry

with a fresh copy of the lost document—or he might not. He preferred the latter course. He no longer remembered the circumstances in which the Emperor's second letter and, with it, Count Czernin's Note had been handed over to the French Government, but he was positive that his copy of the two documents had been so handed over after he had himself read their contents to the President.

The two Princes left the Saint Lazare station at 4.45 for Le Havre, to rejoin their regiment.

The same day, a Central News telegram reached the Agence Fournier from London: it stated that the Dutch Minister Collin had been sent to London with the following proposals from Herr von Kühlmann:

(1) Germany renounces all claims in the West.

(2) Belgium shall be restored as a Sovereign State, but with simple autonomy in relation to Germany.

(3) Alsace-Lorraine shall be constituted an autonomous State, under the Empire.

(4) The situation in the East shall remain unchanged.

(5) Austria shall make concessions to Italy in the Trentino.

(6) The future of the African Colonies shall be left to the decision of the Peace Congress.

(7) Germany renounces all claims to Kiao-Cheou, but demands economic concessions from China.

But this was not yet the general overture to Peace which was to bring the great conflict to an end.

On May 8 the Committee for Foreign Affairs, most of whom knew and said nothing, met in the Chamber, with M. Franklin-Bouillon in the Chair, and brought its deliberations to an end. It

passed by 14 votes to 5, 11 members being absent and 6 of the 25 present abstaining from voting, the following resolution:

> The Committee for Foreign Affairs, after examining the documents and collecting the evidence relative to the Peace Conversations begun and carried on by Austria-Hungary in 1917 and 1918, considers that these conversations did not, at any point, offer such terms of Peace as France and her Allies could accept.[1]

In the situation in which France was then placed, it is difficult to see what other decision could have been made. It was for the guns to speak, and all such retrospective discussions must prove futile, where they were not actually dangerous.

[1] *L'Humanité*, a socialist newspaper, No. 5135, Thursday, May 9, 1918, p. 1, col. 2.

CHAPTER IX

VICTORY

(May 27–November 11, 1918)

THE offensive in Picardy, from March 21 to April 4, brought the enemy as far as Montdidier: the offensive on the Lys, April 9 to 29, gave him Mont Kemmel. The Allied reserves, massed in the north, awaited a further attempt by the Armies of the Bavarian Crown Prince. While they were waiting, an attack on the Chemin des Dames on May 27 surprised the world by reminding it of the Prussian Crown Prince's existence, which it had made the mistake of forgetting. He recovered the Marne as far as Château-Thierry, faced the Ourcq, and began to threaten Paris. The fall of the Lassigny massif on June 10 gave this threat an air of reality. The enemy was now within seventy kilometres of Paris: by advancing thirty more he would be able to bombard the capital very effectively with his heavy artillery.

While discussing the situation with a diplomat in Paris on June 10, Marshal Joffre said: "We ought to have made terms last year with Austria: our Armies could have advanced to the Meuse. Then Germany would have had to give in. . . .

General Foch was speaking to me the other day. I should be most miserable if I had to take command again, and yet I was never miserable in 1914. Things may settle down on the Front: still, we have not a moment to lose. We must make a solid barricade in the centre, from Montdidier to Noyon, and deploy our reserves, by railway and in lorries, to each side of the central position. In 1914 we could have borne the loss of Paris: now we cannot. It would mean losing the war. The Americans are late in coming in. . . ."

Happily, however, on June 11, the little "*chars d'assaut*," combined with Mangin's black troops, made a flank attack which paralysed von Hutier. On June 18 Rheims was secure. The enemy was definitely checked, and the Americans began to arrive.

In Italy, the Austrian offensive of June 15 to 23 on the Piave brought Austria no advantage, and ended in a retreat which the sudden flooding of the river gravely imperilled.

Germany meanwhile was convinced that a revolution would break out in Paris on July 14, and that the conquest of France would then be easy.

On June 20 the best informed military authorities in Paris calculated the fighting strength of the French and British Armies to be reduced to—

French . . .	600,000	bayonets.
British . . .	300,000	,,
Total . .	900,000	,,

The Germans were thought to have suffered in

proportion: in fact, all the European countries were more or less exhausted. It was only the arrival of a fresh army, such as the American, that could start the pendulum swinging. But statistics do not take all the factors into account, and, as it happened, it was not disparity of numbers that was to make the pendulum swing to the side of France. At the beginning of the war France had withstood the assaults of troops more numerous and better armed than her own: she had even driven them back. All through the war she had found ample occupation for two-thirds of the German hordes, while the remaining third was enough to exhaust the vast resources of Russia. But in time of war the rule of obedience to a single and supreme command is one that cannot be indefinitely disregarded without grave, even fatal risk:[1] the Entente had now chosen, and had chosen well, their Supreme Commander. For the last three months the controlling brain had been making its decisions, and in a very short time, despite the meagre strength of his exhausted Armies, the lightning flashes of his genius were to drive gradually away and scatter the still dense Germanic clouds.

On July 15, 16, and 17, Ludendorff made a final attempt to cross the Marne. Germany could go no farther: she had lost her freedom of action, and for the next three months there was not one day on which the fiery breath of Foch did not drive her nearer to the Rhine. During those three months of imperishable glory it seemed as though

[1] Quodque rarissimum nec nisi Romanae disciplinae concessum; plus reponere in duce quam in exercitu.—TACITUS, *Germania*, xxx.

the vision and the judgment of Napoleon had been reborn in France. Victory followed victory: on the Marne (July 18-August 4), in Santerre (August 8-22), on the Ailette (August 20), on the Ancre (August 21-23). The general withdrawal of the German line, from August 28 to September 10, was at once followed up by further victories, at Saint Mihiel (September 12-15), in the Argonne (September 26), and at Ypres, Cambrai, and St. Quentin (September 27 and 28). On September 21 the Belgians were able to launch their offensive.

On October 1, Prince Sixte wrote to one of his friends:

It has been the most amazing success. The weather is vile, but we keep on advancing. We can see, over the horizon, big fires where the enemy is retiring. He is leaving us his guns actually loaded, and all kinds of stores. I have questioned our prisoners: our attack took them all by surprise. How different from the Battle of Flanders last year. Foch certainly is a great general. It is now half-past two in the morning: beside me are two signallers, asleep over their telephones: but at this hour everything is quiet, except for a few bursts of fire which I have to keep an eye on, and, if necessary, respond to. After torrents of rain in the last twenty-four hours, the sky is now clear. It ought to be a fine day. I shall turn in in another two hours, when the General comes to relieve me. I think we should have rather an interesting day to-morrow. . . .

October 4. Still advancing. We are having the devil of a business with a filthy marsh which has to be crossed. Otherwise everything is all right: the moral of the men is amazing. Yesterday I did a six-mile tour of our advanced posts, and not a shot was fired at me. For all their spectacles, these fat Teutons can't see a thing: but they smell pretty strong once their souls have retired to

Valhalla. . . . We had a fine day yesterday. The field of battle is still teeming with pheasants and partridges! What has induced them to stay here?

October 12.—I am radiantly happy, in spite of this vile autumn weather: everything goes well, and is going to go better. The Boche is coming unstuck all along the line. There is no doubt Foch is the greatest general living. You can follow his plan on the map. The Boches are laughing on the wrong side of their mouths now. I only hope we manage to get into their country. I am gloriously happy now, to be making war as I always dreamed of doing. It is not a cavalry war yet in this sector, of course, as at Le Cateau or Vouziers: but perhaps their turn will come before long. That is, after all, the gentlemanly way of doing it; to go forward on your horse. Even we are using them now far more than the cars. You set out all dressed up like a Crusader making for the Holy Land. My horse is very good and stout: the dogs go with me everywhere: a complete family party, in fact.

When the offensive began the two Princes were detailed as artillery observers, a duty which General Moraine, in a letter of October 22, rightly described as of primary importance: later on they were succeeded by Lieutenant Deltourt, and the General gave them the task of forming a central intelligence service for his artillery group.

On October 23, the Prince wrote again to the same friend in Paris:

Just a hasty line, while I have time: all goes well. My present existence, in liaison with the Infantry, suits me down to the ground. We have witnessed the most astounding developments. We have only the Boche machine-gunners to face now: his Infantry doesn't count. Those fellows are utterly broken down: the prisoners we bring in are literally starving. At the same

time, they can still make a pretty solid resistance: the country lends itself to that, with all these infernal canals and rivers. I am filthily dirty, but very pleased with life. The only drawback is the rain. Who the devil invented rain? My dog is a fine chap: he goes everywhere with me. He is sleeping just now beside me. . . .

On October 29, Major-General C. Moraine, commanding the Artillery of the Fourth Belgian Division, recommended the two Princes for the Belgian Croix de Guerre.

The friend to whom the Prince had addressed these letters replied from Paris on November 1:

Sir—The latest news I have had of Your Royal Highness was dated October 23. Like your earlier letters, it has given me the keenest pleasure. After all the doubts and disappointments of the Spring, we are at last tasting the joys of victory; and I can see that, where you are, you are tasting them in full measure.

I share your admiration for the military genius of Marshal Foch. M. Clemenceau has saved France by setting him over our Allies.

Peace is coming soon, for Bulgaria and Turkey are out of it already. As for the Monarchy, it has ceased to exist. The tone of the Press here showed, a short time ago, that we would have consented to minimise this great shipwreck, as far as possible, in the interests of the Dynasty and for our own sake. But Wilson's reply, which was inspired by Masaryk, has made a general break-up inevitable. . . .

The Emperor ascended the Throne with a clear vision, but he allowed his Minister to betray him. . . .

These Professors are always ready to start Revolutions, but it is not the Professors who finish them. The people have to pay the price. There are already three candidates for the Presidential Chair of Bohemia: M. Denis, in France, M. Kramar, in Switzerland, and M. Masaryk in America.

And America will have the casting vote. The Germans in the Monarchy threaten to join Bavaria. We may live to see a Catholic Bavarian Empire succeeding both the Hohenzollern and the Habsburg. Of course, William's downfall is most satisfactory ; but I cannot see what we expect to gain by the amalgamation of Austria with Germany more than by the old state of things. So far as I can see, there is nothing but the life of the Emperor Charles which can prevent such an amalgamation. On the other hand if Germany breaks up, as Austria has done (but it is unlikely), into more or less friendly Republics, we shall no longer be able to make them pay the cost of the war, which will have to be met by some one. And, if this happens, the one thing which is quite obvious is this, that the Russian Revolution, by which I mean the headlong rush from order to chaos, stands a chance of spreading right through Europe. The only thing which can save us from that is victory, but it comes rather late in the day. Last year it would have been all right ; if Austria had broken away then, we should not have had to pay so dear for our victory, and we should not be faced now with such grave social problems.

On September 29 the Bulgarian Army had been compelled to sue for an Armistice, which was followed, on October 3, by the Tsar Ferdinand's abdication.

The offensive launched on October 27 by France, England, and Italy, under General Diaz, obliged the Austro-Hungarian Army to sue, on the 29th, for an Armistice which was signed on November 3.

The Emperor Charles, reduced to the last extremity, decided to send a telegram to his Ally at Berlin, and to show him that he was compelled to give up the struggle.

It is my duty to warn you, at all costs, that my peoples

can no longer support the burdens of this war, and have no wish to continue. I have no moral right to oppose their wishes, for there is no longer any hope of a favourable outcome. All material and moral means of carrying on the war have failed. By prolonging my resistance, I should only be shedding useless blood, and at that my conscience revolts. The internal order of my dominions, and the Principle of Monarchy itself are seriously threatened, if we do not succeed in bringing the war to an end at a very early date. Loyalty to our Alliance, and the ties of friendship must be sacrificed to the supreme duty of saving the peoples of my States. For this reason I now communicate to you my decision, which henceforth is unalterable, to demand, during the next forty-eight hours, a separate Peace, with an immediate Armistice. This my conscience as a Sovereign commands.

In sincere friendship, CHARLES.[1]

Had this act, instead of being postponed until it was no longer of any value, been performed eighteen months earlier, in May 1917, when Prince Sixte so advised the Emperor, and when Count Czernin himself admitted its eventual necessity, sooner or later, the Monarchy would most certainly have survived in some form of Federation which would have preserved the essential principles on which it was based. But now it was too late: far too late. Count Andrassy and Baron Burian had shown themselves as impotent as Count Czernin to resist the fatal weaknesses of evasion and change of front.

After October 25 the Belgian Army ceased to advance. Its line rested on the Ghent Canal, while, on its right, the French Army under General

[1] *Le Temps*, Friday, May 28, 1920, No. 21486, p. 6, col. 3, "L'Autriche et la Paix Séparée en Octobre 1918."

Degoutte forced its way through at Deinze. An infectious influenza ravaged the Belgian troops, and claimed thousands of victims. The two Princes succumbed on October 27, when they were removed to the Military Hospital of Saint Michael at Bruges.

And then, on the recommendation of General Moraine, submitted on October 29, they were mentioned in the Order of the Day of the Belgian Army on November 13, and decorated with the Belgian Croix de Guerre, which the King himself gave them at his General Headquarters at Lophem-lez-Bruges, on the 12th. Two days later they were sent to complete their recovery at the Belgian Military Hospital at Cannes, in the south of France.[1]

Passing through Paris on the 14th, on their way south, they found an unexpected letter from the Empress, dated early in October, which had been lying there for over a month. She implored them once more, and very earnestly, to bring about

[1] The text of this Order of November 13 is printed in Appendix XVI. After the two Princes had completed their convalescence, they ended their effective military service. From the beginning of February to April 16, 1919, they were attached to General Moraine's Staff at Crefeld, in Rhenish Prussia, where the Fourth and Fifth Divisions composed the Belgian Army of Occupation on the Rhine. This Army Corps, under General Michel, occupied Rhenish Prussia from the Dutch frontier to the neighbourhood of Cologne. At the beginning of April, the Fourth Division, to which they belonged, returned to Belgium, and made a formal entry into Brussels on April 8.

Later on, by a Royal Decree dated at Brussels on June 14, 1919, the two Princes were awarded the Grand Cross of the Order of Leopold, with the Military Decoration and the Gold Palm. By a further Decree of July 28, 1919, they were promoted Captains, and seconded to the Artillery Reserve. The Allies' Victory Medal was awarded them on August 5. Finally, they were given indefinite leave of absence, with effect from September 1, 1919. See Appendices XVII.–XXI.

that separate Peace with the Monarchy, which the Emperor and his Ministers, now that they saw the abyss yawning at their feet, wished to consummate immediately. It was impossible—on November 14—to read without keen emotion this final appeal, uttered so recently (and delayed by such mere chance from reaching them in time), in a voice which already seemed to sound from the irrecoverable past.

At eight o'clock on the evening of November 24 the Princes left for Cannes. They did not wish to pass through Paris, in that month of glory, without making a personal expression to the liberator of Alsace and Lorraine of the "sentiments of joy and pride" which they shared with all the rest of France.

CONCLUSION

Such are the facts which, one after another, from August 29, 1914, to November 24, 1918, came to be inscribed upon this page of history.

The name of Count Ottokar Czernin is to be found there, side by side with those of Baron Sidney Sonnino and M. Alexandre Ribot; but, apart from these statesmen, each of whom was more or less inspired by the problems he was called upon to face, stand the Emperor Charles, M. Raymond Poincaré, and Mr. Lloyd George. The two last, we may say, responded immediately, with foresight and understanding, to the sincere and far-sighted efforts of the Emperor to reduce both the duration and the extent of the European disaster.

So far as concerns a separate Peace, which might have preserved the existence of the Monarchy by drawing her from the side of Germany towards friendly relations with the Entente, these four years fall naturally into three periods:

In the first, that is until November 21, 1916, while Francis Joseph still occupied the throne, the time for action had not arrived.

In the last, after October 12, 1917, it was too late. The Monarchy was already doomed.

So that the period from November 22, 1916, to October 12, 1917, alone justified the pacificatory efforts of a practically-minded man, holding moderate and sensible views on European policy; because only in this period was there a chance of his activity being rewarded with the realisation of such views.

The initiative was taken on December 5, 1916, by the Emperor, his Minister, Count Czernin, coming to his assistance on February 17 following. Prince Sixte and the French Government responded to his appeal, but with no idea, from the first, of anything but a separate Peace with the Monarchy.[1] There, however, until March 23, 1917, the hope of a general Peace was still cherished. From that

[1] M. Aristide Briand recently had an opportunity of stating his own views on these overtures, which reached France while he was in office, and which he, as President of the Council, received and put together. In addressing the Senate assembled as a Court of Justice, he said: "About the end of 1916 I became aware that conversations were to be held and were being held in Switzerland by the Emperor of Austria and certain of his relatives, with the object of bringing the war to an early conclusion. Not only was I aware of these conversations: I gave them my approval, and my encouragement. And when, in March 1917, I left the Government of this country, these conversations were still continuing, and I still entertained the hope that they might, by dislocating the Central Empires, facilitate and hasten the end of the war.

"Consequently I now rise up to make an emphatic protest against any insinuation that the Government of France in time of war had any care but for the welfare of the State, or that it was at any time prepared to sacrifice hundreds of thousands of human lives to vague ideals of Imperialism. Nay, I am conscious—and it relieves my conscience to say so—that at every moment of the war I was watching the course of events, ready to take advantage of the first fissure in the enemy alliance to introduce favourable terms of Peace." (*Numerous signs of approbation.*) *Revue des causes célèbres politiques et criminelles: compte-rendu des Débats judiciaires d'après la sténographie, avec croquis pris à l'audience, paraissant au moins deux fois par mois: redacteur en chef, Edgard Troimaux, 3e année, No. 64, dimanche 2 mai, 1920. Paris, 14 rue de Rome, in-4o. L'Affaire Caillaux.* (Fascicule VI. p. 332, col. 2, *audience du 17 mars 1920.*)

date onwards the Emperor and Count Czernin were obliged by Prince Sixte to admit that the Monarchy ought to conclude Peace separately from Germany, since Germany would not agree to negotiate upon a reasonable basis, in conformity with the just and necessary claims of the Entente. The Monarchy thereupon agreed to accept this explicit basis so far as France, Belgium, and Serbia were involved, and accepted the arrangement to negotiate, *via* Paris and London, so as to define the not yet explicit basis which the three Powers, Austria, France, and England, should agree to regard as reasonable for Italy, Montenegro, Rumania, Poland, and Russia.

On April 3 the Monarchy made an attempt to induce the German Empire to negotiate on the explicit basis laid down by France as necessary, and accepted on March 24 by the Monarchy; but Berlin refused to follow Vienna. On April 13 the Emperor and Count Czernin announced that the Alliance with Germany would end by November 11 at the latest, and on May 8 they appeared to believe that their separate Peace with the Entente might be signed by June 15, should the Entente guarantee the Monarchy against an eventual (but scarcely probable) attack by Germany. Such a Peace must inevitably lead to the submission of Bulgaria and Turkey to the Entente.

On May 13, as a result of the Austrian announcement a month earlier, the German Chancellor agreed to contemplate a partial cession of Alsace-Lorraine to France; but this cession was inadequate in itself, while the opposition of Germany's military dictators led to the Chancellor's own

downfall on July 13. From that date a separate Peace with the Monarchy was the only form of Peace which the Entente could consider.

On the Entente side, France and England had agreed in principle to this separate Peace with the Monarchy; while, unknown to them, Italy had lent support to their views by making a secret, but semi-official, offer of Peace on April 12, in which her claims were reduced to the cession of the Italian-speaking Trentino. But Italy was prevented from making Peace on such terms by Baron Sonnino, who refused to abandon any of his claims, and gave a public and official veto to the offer on April 19. On May 9 the Monarchy accepted the basis contained in the secret offer (subject to some Colonial compensation, which Italy would doubtless have been able to find), and accordingly informed the other Entente Powers, whom she wished to undertake the conclusion of Peace between herself and Italy. The latter, when required to explain the contradiction between her secret policy on April 12 and her open policy declared a week later, maintained an obstinate silence: from May 23 to September 26 King Victor Emmanuel steadfastly refused to visit France.

When no answer came to the Emperor's letter of May 9, or to his own Note of the same day, in which as in the letter a separate Peace with the Entente was under consideration, Count Czernin made a fresh attempt on July 12—on the eve, that is, of the German Chancellor's downfall—to establish communication between Vienna and Paris through Count Nicolas Revertera. This gentleman was doubly fortunate in being a diplomat by

profession, and in having a friend in Paris in the person of Count Armand. France and England, despite their procrastination in replying to the previous overtures, were ready to accept these, and all the more readily since the failure of the Italian offensive of May 14–30 and the Russian of July 6–20, on which they had reckoned to hamper and disorganise the Monarchy. On August 6 Mr. Lloyd George concurred in the decision made two days earlier, by M. Ribot, to send Count Armand to meet Count Revertera with a definite proposal of a separate Peace between the Entente and the Monarchy. The basis now adopted consisted in an offer to restore Silesia as one of the Hereditary States, and to add the whole of the kingdom of Poland, as it existed in 1772, with the whole of the existing kingdom of Bavaria, as Federated States under the Imperial Sceptre. In return for these concessions, the Monarchy need only surrender the Trentino to Italy and transform the status of Trieste at least to that of a Free Port. We can see that this basis, which France and England adopted on behalf of Italy on August 7 as a means of securing a separate Peace between the Entente and Austria, was identical with the terms of the offer made secretly by Italy on April 12, and ignored the programme laid down by Baron Sonnino, with his formal veto, on April 19. Instead of at once accepting so tempting an offer, Austrian diplomacy endeavoured to obtain from the Entente the terms of a general Peace which the Emperor, if he deemed them acceptable by Germany, was to forward to Berlin. When this had been done, if Germany considered the terms

inacceptable, the Emperor would sever his relations with her, and conclude his own separate Peace. The Entente Powers were foolish enough to enter upon this slow and labyrinthine course, instead of maintaining their simple offer of a separate Peace, on the understanding that all negotiations would cease if the offer were not immediately accepted. Accordingly, Count Armand took to Switzerland on August 22 the terms of a general Peace which the Emperor, if he found them acceptable, was to forward to Berlin as from the Entente. With these went an alteration in the terms of the eventual separate Peace with Austria, for the Entente, no longer satisfied with the transformation of Trieste into a Free Port, now demanded the cession of Trieste with the Trentino to Italy.[1] After consulting Prince von Hohenlohe-Schillingsfurth, his Ambassador at Berlin, and his Minister Count Czernin, the Emperor decided on September 19 that the terms of a general Peace, offered by the Entente on August 22, could not be forwarded to Berlin, as his advisers did not consider them acceptable. Further, the Monarchy, which had

[1] No one knew better than Baron Sonnino the imperative reasons which made it impossible for Austria, so long as she maintained her own existence, to contemplate a cession of Trieste pure and simple. For it was he who wrote, nearly forty years ago: "The possession of Trieste is of the utmost importance to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, as at present constituted, and the Empire would fight to the death rather than give up the town. Besides, Trieste is better situated than any other port for handling the trade of the whole Germanic race. Its population is mixed, like that of all towns on our eastern frontier. To claim Trieste as lawfully our own would be seriously to strain the principle of Nationality" (*Rassegna Settimanale*, May 29, 1881).

And so, on August 7, Baron Sonnino rendered a separate Peace possible, by consenting to the transformation of Trieste into a Free Port. On August 22, by demanding its cession, pure and simple, he made Peace impossible.

consented on August 7 to the cession of the Trentino and the transformation of Trieste, now refused to consider the cession of Trieste to Italy. Consequently, not only was a general Peace now out of the question—which in itself was a good thing—but the separate Peace with the Monarchy was made equally impossible. This was no doubt due to the excellent work which had been done in the realm of diplomacy, on which M. Ribot, by his speech of October 12, set his sign-manual.

And so, during this middle period, from November 22, 1916, to October 12, 1917, two opportunities occurred for the conclusion of a separate Peace. The first was when Prince Sixte conveyed the offer made by the Emperor and Count Czernin to Paris (on May 20) and to London (on May 23). Baron Sonnino's veto on April 19, and his obstinate refusal from May 23 to July 24 to throw any light on the reasonable offer which Italy had secretly made on April 12, compelled the Entente to leave Austria's appeal unanswered. It is, therefore, Baron Sidney Sonnino who must bear the blame for this failure, despite the manifest goodwill of Mr. Lloyd George, and the genuine inclinations of the Italian people as a whole, who would gladly have ended the War at that time on being promised the *parecchio* consisting of the Trentino and Aquilea.[1]

[1] The letter to Signor Peano may be recalled, in which Signor Giolitti wrote : "I look upon this War as a piece not of good but of bad fortune, which we must meet only so long as it is necessary to satisfy the demands of honour, or the fundamental needs of our country. I do not consider it permissible to engage our country in war through a sentimental regard for other nations. . . . Perhaps, it is not altogether impossible, in the present state of Europe we might obtain some little *parecchio* without going to war" (*Tribuna*, February 1, 1915).

Italy's fortunes during the rest of the War were such that her ultimate conquests did not compensate her for the losses she had to suffer. The saving of the lives lost and the money squandered between Caporetto and the Armistice would have justified her in maintaining that moderation which distinguished her offer of April 12. And, since the Armistice, it would seem that Italy, judging the situation in its true light, has also judged and condemned Baron Sonnino. It is true that, if he had not been in a position to prevent the conclusion of a separate Peace, M. Alexandre Ribot would have spared no exertion in obstructing a Peace which was being prepared without his own personal approval. Of this there is ample evidence. This fluent and argumentative leader of modern France, who, in his own younger days, had been privileged to serve the Empire as it fell, would not, in his old age, allow France to be indebted to a Prince of the House of Bourbon [1] for the promise of Peace: an antiquated prejudice and unpardonable when, almost every minute for the last three years, a citizen of France had fallen dead at the hands of that enemy whom the separate Peace would so vitally injure.

The second opportunity for concluding a separate Peace occurred on August 7 at Fribourg, when Count Armand presented to Count Revertera the offer made by M. Alexandre Ribot and Mr. Lloyd George, doubtless with the knowledge and approval of Baron Sonnino: this offer the drifting

[1] At the time when M. Ribot took office, the King of Spain had been as little fortunate as Prince Sixte in obtaining a hearing. See *Le Matin*, Nos. 13285 to 13289, Tuesday, August 3, to Saturday, August 7, 1920.

and tortuous mind of Count Czernin prevented the Monarchy's accepting, despite the goodwill and foresight of the Emperor Charles. It is on Count Czernin, therefore, that the responsibility for this second and final failure must fall.

A fortnight later, on August 22, we find that Baron Sonnino was no longer content with Trieste as a Free Port, but wanted it entirely for himself. Consequently there was no ground left for an understanding. Should these two diplomats, Count Czernin and Baron Sonnino, ever meet they may well shake hands. Each of them has worked hard and well for the welfare of his country: both have worked well for the future peace of Europe!

From that date the European situation became more and more complicated, and we had to wait a year and more for liberation through victory and a general Peace. In that time France lost three hundred thousand more of her men, and fifty or a hundred thousand million francs.[1]

[1] The statistical department of the War Ministry has estimated the losses of the French Army at 1,358,872 killed (*Le Matin*, Thursday, June 17, 1920, No. 13238, p. 1, col. 4). Meanwhile, on December 31, 1919, the total debt of France amounted to 238,474,133,950 francs. The Bank of France notes in circulation on July 30, 1914, amounted to 6,683,200,000 francs, as against a gold reserve of 4,141,300,000 and a silver reserve of 625,300,000. Loans to the State amounted to 200,000,000. On March 22, 1917, the notes in circulation amounted to 18,450,800,000, as against a gold reserve of 5,184,500,000, and a silver reserve of 265,300,000. Loans to the State amounted to 9,700,000,000. On March 21, 1918, the notes had risen to 24,825,000,000, as against a gold reserve of 5,372,800,000 and a silver reserve of 255,800,000. Loans to the State amounted to 13,900,000,000. On March 20, 1919, the notes were 33,262,300,000, the gold reserve 5,540,000,000, and the silver reserve 314,200,000. Loans to the State were 21,550,000,000. On March 18, 1920, the notes were 38,160,000,000, the gold reserve 5,583,100,000, and the silver reserve 248,100,000. Loans to the State were 26,500,000 millions.

As for the foreign exchanges, the franc stood until May 15, 1917, at a

Mr. Woodrow Wilson hastened the end of the War by a few days, and has delayed the inauguration of a general Peace by many months. The fact is that the immediate restoration of Peace to an exhausted Europe[1] is of far more importance than any future Federation of the Universe, and yet Mr. Wilson has chosen to reorganise the future before grappling with the present. We are beginning to see the results of this lack of method. It is true that God brought the world out of chaos in seven days, but that is perhaps because He was acting single-handed. Messrs. Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau, after seven months of effort, often in different directions, seem to have brought the world back into a relatively chaotic state.

When we examine the terms of the Treaties of Versailles (June 28, 1919), of Saint Germain en Laye (September 10, 1919), and of Trianon (June 4, 1920), we cannot help being struck by the changes

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discount of about 10 per cent at Geneva. Since then it has steadily fallen. In May 1918 it stood at 30 per cent; later it fell to 67 per cent, and finally rose to about 50 per cent, where it now stands.

It follows that France maintained her economic position until about the Spring of 1917, and that it was not seriously affected until after that date. What has happened since is, to a great extent, the price we have had to pay for guaranteeing Trieste to Italy and for making Prague independent, since a separate Peace with Austria would undoubtedly have shortened the duration of the War.

[1] If the reader desires to make a comparative estimate of the total Entente casualties with those of France, which are in a far higher ratio to her population, he should study the statement made on July 3, 1920, by M. Joseph Imbart de la Tour to the Academy of Moral and Political Science. He estimated that Russia had lost 6,000,000 killed, the British Empire 750,000, Italy 460,000, Serbia 320,000, Rumania 150,000, Belgium 76,000, and the United States 36,000. On the other side, Germany appeared to have lost 2,050,000 men, Austria 840,000, Turkey 317,000, and Bulgaria 89,000. (*Journal Officiel*, Monday, July 5, 1920, p. 9492, col. 2.)

in the way of repartition which these Treaties have made in the state of Europe.

There can be no question that the dominant and unjustly aggressive kingdom of Prussia was the enemy we had to invade and conquer, and to render incapable of ever undertaking further hostilities. Prussia has, indeed, been conquered, but the remarkable feature of the conquest is that it is not she who has been most severely punished. Her troops have not even been disarmed and demobilised by their conquerors.

It is strange, too, to note how slowly the most obvious truths seem to penetrate the minds of those men who direct public opinion, and who themselves are directed principally by their own prejudices. It seems to be quite exceptional for them to grasp realities.

It is quite evident that any nation has always something to fear from its neighbours, especially from its most powerful neighbour. When Vienna controlled two of the frontiers of France, through Spain and the Netherlands, from 1476 to 1555, then Vienna was of necessity our chief potential enemy. For the same reason Madrid, being allied dynastically with Vienna, was our principal enemy from 1555 to 1700. Vienna was again first, throughout the eighteenth century, through her control of Belgium. From 1792 to 1814 our enemies were London and Vienna. Vienna relinquished Belgium by the Treaty of Campo Formio in 1797, and on December 5, 1805, three days after Austerlitz, Talleyrand wrote from Vienna to Napoleon:

Your Majesty is now free to destroy or to restore the Austrian Monarchy. Once destroyed, it would not be

even in Your Majesty's power to reassemble the scattered fragments and consolidate them into a single mass. But the existence of such a mass is necessary, and even indispensable to the future safety of the civilised world. Austria forms an adequate barrier, and is a necessary barrier against the Barbarians.[1]

That is to say, Austria had no longer a common boundary with France; and Talleyrand, in this letter, furnished a striking and rare example of his swift and clear insight. Before Prussia had begun to develop all her latent potentialities, Louis XV. had proved himself a better judge than Voltaire of the dangerous character of Frederick the Great. On February 26, 1763, he wrote: "The peace we have just concluded is neither good nor glorious . . . but it could not have been made better, and . . . next year we should have had to make one still worse. So long as I am alive I shall never abandon my alliance with the Empress and I shall form no intimate relations with this King of Prussia. Let us take every precaution that we be not swallowed up by our real enemies." [2] From 1815 onwards, there existed on the French frontier between Luxembourg and the Palatinate the new Province of Rhenish Prussia which had taken the place of the old Archbishopric of Trèves, in the departments of the Sarre and the Rhine-and-Moselle: consequently, Berlin now took the place of Vienna as the chief potential enemy of

[1] Pierre Bertrand, "M. de Talleyrand, l'Autriche et la question d'Orient en 1805," *Revue Historique*, 14th year, vol. 39, January to April 1889, Paris, Alcan, pp. 74, 75. Jehan de Witte, "La France entre la Prusse et l'Autriche," *Le Correspondant*, vol. 279, No. 1386, June 25, 1920, p. 964.

[2] E. Boubaric, *Correspondance secrète inédite de Louis XV sur la politique étrangère avec le Comte de Broglie, Tercier, etc.*, vol. i. p. 289.

France. And yet I cannot find that any one in France observed this fact, except Louis XVIII. It was Talleyrand himself who allowed the Rhine to pass into Prussian hands. The question was how to save the kingdom of Saxony, which had remained loyal to France, and, sooner than see the whole of Saxony merged in Prussia, France did not hesitate to establish Prussia within a few miles of Metz, in return for which Dresden was restored to its monarch, with half of his kingdom. That Luxembourg and Mayence should be saved from Prussia when Saarbrück and Sarrelouis were surrendered, sufficed to calm the quite reasonable apprehensions of Louis XVIII. On January 15, 1815, he wrote to Talleyrand: "One point with which I have . . . great pleasure in letting you know my satisfaction; and that is that Prussia is not to have Luxembourg or Mayence. Their proximity there would disturb the peace of France in years to come."[1] Forty years later, in 1854, when Napoleon III. received Prince Anton von Hohenzollern, he said quite frankly that he hoped to see a strong Prussia, with sound geographical and military frontiers. He hoped that she would seize the opportunity "to strengthen her position in Germany and to round off her frontiers. Prussia ought to settle down in Germany at her ease, while Austria solved the problem of the Danube on which your interest is at present centred."[2]

[1] G. Pallain, *Correspondance inédite de Talleyrand et de Louis XVIII pendant le Congrès de Vienne.* Paris, 1881, p. 227.

[2] Jehan de Witte, "La France entre la Prusse et l'Autriche," *Le Correspondant, ut sup.* p. 969. G. Rothan, *La Prusse et son roi pendant la guerre de Crimée* (Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1883, p. 272), quoting from F. Heinrich Geffcken, *Zur Geschichte des orientalischen Krieges, 1853–56* (Berlin, Paetel, 1881, pp. 83, 86).

Nor were men of intelligence wanting in support of these surprising opinions of their Emperor.

Edmond About, for instance, wrote :[1]

Very well : let Germany be united. France has no dearer nor more fervent wish, for she loves the Germanic nation with a disinterested affection. . . . Divided States are more difficult[2] to invade than united Nations. . . . So let Germany be united : let her form a solid mass compact enough to defy any attempt to disintegrate her. France sees without alarm the formation of an Italy of 26 million inhabitants in the South : she would feel no alarm at the sight of 32 million Germans founding a mighty nation on her Eastern frontier. As for ourselves, we are not afraid to assert that Lorraine and Alsace are French, for they have themselves given proof of that to the Germans. We are keeping what is ours, and we ask for nothing more. We hold that no natural frontier, nor any of the great waterways of Europe can prove so effective for the defence of our soil as a bayonet charge of Zouaves or Chasseurs-à-pied.

Working with great effect for the King of Prussia, Napoleon III. assured him, on April 8, 1866, the support of the King of Italy, and even consented to keep his own forces in reserve.[3] He

[1] Edmond About, *La Prusse en 1860*, Paris, E. Dentu, 1860, pp. 32, 8vo. pp. 10, 24. Jehan de Witte, *ut sup.* pp. 970-971.

[2] The word used by About is *difficiles*, but apparently *faciles* is intended.

[3] The Emperor wrote a letter to his Minister, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, on June 11, 1866, which was read to the Corps Législatif next day ; and in which his policy is apparent :

" So far as we are concerned we should have wished for the secondary States of the Confederation a closer union, a stronger organisation, a position of greater importance (*applause*) ; for Prussia, a greater homogeneity and more strength in the north ; for Austria, the maintenance of her great position in Germany. (*Hear, hear.*) We could also have wished that Austria, in return for some reasonable compensation, had found herself able to cede Venezia to Italy (*hear, hear*) . . ." *Journal des Débats*, Wednesday, June 13, 1866, p. 2 col. 6, p. 3 col. 1.

learned of the brilliant victory won by his "dear brother" at Sadowa, on July 3, with distinct surprise, but without perceiving its full import. Paris was hung with flags and illuminated. M. Thiers alone had grasped the situation; unless, perhaps, M. Drouyn de Lhuys and Marshal Randon. The two last deserve even more credit than M. Thiers, since they did not, like him, remain in irreconcilable opposition, politically, to the Imperial regime.

On May 3, before Sadowa, M. Thiers had said to the Corps Législatif what he thought of the policy of Nationalities, and of the unforeseen consequences it might have for Napoleon III. and his successors:

"And then . . . there will come to pass a great phenomenon, towards which we have been tending for more than a century; the world will see once again a German Empire, that Empire of Charles V. which was established at Vienna in days of old, which will now be established at Berlin, which will be very near our borders, which will press us hard; and, to complete the analogy, this Empire of Charles V., as in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries it drew support from Spain, will now draw support from Italy.

"Such, gentlemen, is the political future in store for Europe and for France; a future easily foretold.

"This is the fault I have always found with a United Italy, that it must inevitably lead to a United Germany. Italy and Germany were bound to join hands across the Alps; and you may see to-day the fulfilment of the prophecy I announced to you, as infallible, two years ago.

"Gentlemen, what I say may be displeasing to certain minds to whom Italy is dear. That I know; but there

is a country more dear to me than Italy. France is far more dear!"[1]

Prince Jerome-Napoleon loved the King of Prussia more than any one in France since Voltaire. "Austria," he said, "is the stronghold of Catholicism and Feudalism. She must be destroyed. This task was begun in 1859: it must be completed now. Imperial France must ever be the enemy of Austria, and the friend and supporter of Prussia, fatherland of the great Luther. She must support Italy, whose mission it is to destroy Catholicism in Rome, as it is Germany's mission to destroy it in Vienna."[2]

Another curious thing is that the Queen of the Netherlands, who was of German birth, had a clearer insight into the situation than the majority of Frenchmen of that day. She wrote to Napoleon III.: "When Venetia was surrendered, you ought to have assisted Austria to have marched to the Rhine, and imposed terms! To allow Austria to be crushed is worse than a crime, it is a mistake."[3]

His answer to this advice was given on July 19, when, despite the warnings of his Minister, M. Drouyn de Lhuys, Napoleon III. encouraged Prussia to annex Hanover, Hesse, and Frankfurt.[4]

[1] *Moniteur Universel*, May 4, 1866 (G. Rothan, *La Politique française en 1866*, Paris, Calmann-Levy, 1883, pp. 411-418).

[2] Jehan de Witte, *ut sup.* p. 973, *note* 1. [3] *Ibidem*, pp. 973-974.

[4] G. Rothan, *ut sup.* pp. 272-5. In a letter to the Emperor, dated July 14, 1866, Prince Napoleon expressed the same sentiments: "Those who imagine the Emperor in the rôle of Representative of the Reactionaries and Clericals of Europe . . . must be dreaming of an alliance with the corpse of Austria and of a war against Germany, Prussia, and Italy. Those who see in Napoleon III. not the suppressor of the Revolution, but its enlightened leader, will never abandon the great principles of Nationality and Liberty" (*ibid.* pp. 454-6).

In short, the omnipotence of Prussia was directly due to the action of France, and that long before Sedan. France slowly created Germany, from 1815 to 1866, in defiance of her own obvious interests, to satisfy the misleading principle of Nationality. 1870 and 1914 came, in due course, to develop and strengthen the foundations laid by France in Germany for the benefit of Prussia. Fortunately the democracy of France, laying aside for once her temporary prejudices, yielded in 1891 to the force of circumstances and formed a defensive alliance with the Russian autocracy against a possible attack from Berlin. M. Alexandre Ribot owes his great reputation to having made this Alliance possible. So, in days gone by, the Most Christian King was obliged to ally his Catholic France with the Islamic Crescent of the Grand Turk, against his chief enemy, the Holy Roman Empire.

Napoleon III. had time to put into practice the dogma of Nationalities, and the programme which he understood it to dictate, so far as Prussia, but not so far as the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy was concerned. Fate sometimes indulges in irony, and so it befell that, after a lapse of fifty or sixty years, we were to see M. Georges Clemenceau carrying out to the letter the dogmatic programme drawn up by Prince Jerome-Napoleon. M. Clemenceau's work had not, of course, such ghastly results, in the diplomatic sense, for France as had Napoleon III.'s. But he followed the same principles, yielded to the same prejudices, and it is incontrovertible that the effect of his policy in Europe has been to complete the task which the Emperor undertook. Berlin remains on the

pedestal where he installed her, while Vienna, who was tending towards an escape from Germany's domination, lies ground into dust. All the work done by M. Ribot is now undone. Russia, at last "Mistress of her destiny," is now threatening the whole world with the contagion of her madness. The British Empire, after applying the dogma of Nationalities with the utmost rigour to the Monarchy of the Danube, is beginning to feel a vague suspicion that this dogma may perhaps deprive Britain herself of India, Egypt, Canada, and Ireland. So much for the sheer force of logic, which is sometimes apt to react unpleasantly on those who handle it without discernment in the affairs of others.

Analysis of the three Treaties of Versailles, Saint-Germain, and Trianon reveals a system of dislocation which extends and increases from west to east, and from north to south. Inadequate in the north-west, it appears excessive in the south-east. So far as the German Empire is affected, France recovers in the west what was taken from her in 1871, that is to say Alsace and Lorraine; in the north, Denmark recovers barely half of the Duchy of Slesvig which she lost in 1866. In the east, Poland has been restored more or less within the boundaries of 1772, with the exception of Danzig.

In South Germany, Saxony has not recovered the territory taken from her by Prussia in 1814. In the west, a part of the Sarre Basin is temporarily entrusted to the League of Nations, but France has not recovered Landau or Sarrelouis, or Saarbrück, which she lost in 1815 with Marienburg and Philippeville. The Treaties have allowed to

remain on the French frontier, between the Rhine, Belgium, Luxembourg, and the Palatinate, that province of Rhenish Prussia which was created in 1815; whereas they should have established there a neutral German State independent of Prussia, as has been done at Danzig. Belgium has received no territorial reparations to speak of. In the north, England has abandoned all claim to Heligoland, but has not thought of restoring it to Denmark. So much for our treatment of the principal enemy.

Turning to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, we find, first of all, that the Emperor's banishment has led to the separation of Hungary, which had been united to Austria since 1526, and also that of Bohemia. The Czechs who found it insupportable to be governed by Germans from Vienna, seem to find no difficulty in the idea of governing the more or less compact masses of Germans within their own borders. In addition to Galicia and Lodomeria (which the Empire acquired only in 1772, when they were taken from Poland), and to Bukowina, which she conquered in 1775, Hungary has lost the Banat, which she had delivered from the Turkish yoke in 1718, and Transylvania, which had belonged to the Emperors since 1691.

Hungary had, further, to lose the Venetian inheritance which she had held since 1797, namely, Cattaro, Dalmatia, the Adriatic Islands, Istria, and the former Republic of Ragusa. Venice had won all this territory piecemeal, from the dawn of the Middle Ages, that is to say from May 9, 1000, when she shook off her allegiance to Croatia, and extended on to the Eastern shore, until, much

later, she won Istria, with the Dalmatian country lying inland from Spalato, from Hungary and Turkey in 1420, 1635, 1699, and 1719. It was only natural that Italy should claim all this territory so soon as she had a chance of recovering it. But Hungary forfeited, at the same time, Croatia and Slavonia, which had been hers since 1102 and 1165, with Fiume, the port of Hungary, which is in no sense part of the hereditary estates of Venice.[1]

Austria lost the county of Gorizia and Gradisca, which the Emperors had held since 1500. Trieste had been theirs since, on September 30, 1382, it had thrown off the "Venetian yoke."[2] In claiming Trieste, the rival and successor of the commercial port of Venice, Italy was claiming as the heir not really of Venice but of Napoleon I. She wished to make an end of the Freedom of the Adriatic, which Venice had confiscated in the past, and which the Emperor Charles VI. had restored in 1717, with the consequence that Maria Theresa in 1748 endowed Trieste with the status of a Free Port, thereby making its fortune and ruining that of Venice. Finally, Austria lost part of the Tyrol, which her sovereigns had held since 1363.

In a word, Austria was reduced to her frontiers of the early fourteenth century, and Hungary to those of the twelfth century. All that the present Peace allows the Austrians is to remain where they

[1] Comte L. de Voinovitch, *La Dalmatie, l'Italie et l'unité yougoslave, 1797–1917*, Geneva, Georg, 1917, pp. xix-cix, Introduction historique.

[2] Angelo Vivante, *L'irrédentisme adriatique, traduction française par Tergestinus*, Geneva, 1917 (Imprimerie Commerciale), p. 4. (The original work appeared in 1912, as *Irredentismo adriatico.*)

Giuseppe Prezzolini, *La Dalmazia*, Florence, 1915 (translated by Ljubo Radić, *La Dalmatie*, Geneva, 1917, 8vo).

are, within the narrow Germanic borders which they founded from Bamberg in Franconia, in the Slav country, shortly after the defeat of the Huns by the Emperor Otto I. on August 10, 955. After all, from the point of view of strict logic, there is no reason why we should not request these Bavarians or Franconians to-day to retire to Bavaria or Franconia, so as to restore the country round Vienna to the autochthonous Slavs of Moravia and Styria, whom, for twenty centuries, they and the Romans have deprived of access to the Danube.[1]

And the present Peace allows the Magyars of Hungary to remain in that Hungary which they won from the Slavs and bulgarised Rumanians between 886 and 897, with Arpad. Those Ougrians came out of Asia, where the Rumanians and Slavs might, with the same strict logic, suggest that they now return. Siberia is a large country.

But no doubt these two hypotheses seemed somewhat to strain the limits of logic, and that may be why Messrs. Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau omitted them from their scheme of reconstruction. They have left Vienna to the Austrians and Budapest to the Hungarians. It

[1] The Germanic garrison which mounted guard against the Powers of the East at Vienna in the tenth century, did no more than relieve the garrisons of Rome. For, throughout the invasions of the fifth and sixth centuries, by Goths, Lombards and the rest, Vienna (*Vindobona*) remained the Headquarters on the Danube of the Xth Legion (*gemina*). Marcus Aurelius died there on March 17, 180, while subduing the Dacians and Vandals. Before him, in A.D. 73, Vespasian had enlarged this military outpost which Augustus himself had made Tiberius fortify and had sanctified with the name of the divine Julius (*Iuliobona*) as the port of the Roman fleet on the Danube at the meeting-place of the Celtic, Germanic, Illyrian, and Slavonic countries, in the year 11 B.C.

seemed sufficient to go back to the fourteenth century for the delimitation of Austria, and to the twelfth for that of Hungary. A similar application of historical logic to England would take from her not only Ireland, Scotland, and the adjacent islands, but actually Wales itself, which she conquered in 1284, and Mr. Lloyd George, if he stayed in London, would stay there as a foreigner.

However, if we look at the Levant, we must admit that there the three Authors of the World's Peace went even farther back into history. Jerusalem was conquered by Titus on September 3, A.D. 70. Jesus Christ died there on the Friday before Easter, that is on April 3, A.D. 33. For nineteen centuries Rome and Byzantium, the Arab Khalifs, Christian Princes and Turkish Khans have reigned there in succession. To-day it is restored to the Children of Israel. The prophecy of Isaiah is at last fulfilled.

A handsome gift indeed to this sour race of Jews, the forerunners of Asia, who swarm as devouring aliens over the plains of Poland and Galicia. For it is of no value to the present Lords of Russia who aim at becoming Lords of the World. It is of no value to the Israelites of Western Europe, who have settled long since in Portugal, Spain, France, Italy, and England, and have founded prosperous homes where they live happy and content. *Ubi bene, ibi patria illorum.* For if these must be torn from the wealth of Ophir and restored, willy nilly, to the poverty of Sion, why should not all the Franks return to Franconia, all the Anglo-Saxons to Saxony, all

the Normans to Normandy . . . and all the Americans to Europe ?

Such is the handiwork of Messrs. Wilson, Lloyd George, and Clemenceau. Will it last ? These three weird sisters, these ephemeral immortals leave in their wake many threads which must be unravelled by others than themselves.

What is certain is that this is a time of far-reaching changes. The World-Empire of Europe, which passed from Greece to Rome, from Rome to France, then to Germany and to England, seems to have come to an end. For more than twenty centuries the civilisation of Europe has come from the West. Rome, Paris, and London precede Vienna and Berlin in civilisation ; Vienna precedes Berlin, Warsaw, and Prague, as Berlin precedes Petrograd.

Since the Empire passed from Greece to Rome, the West has always had predominance over the East. Rome, from the south-west, has governed Europe as Byzantium never could do from the south-east. It was the France of Charlemagne which spread civilisation eastwards over Saxon Germany. And, later, it was Germany which subdued by assimilating the Slavonic tribes eastwards between the Elbe and the Vistula. It was the Germanic civilisation of Vienna which, spreading eastwards, subdued, though without being able quite to assimilate, the Slavonic tribes between Istria and Poland. This Peace, for the first time since the days of Charlemagne, has set all the Slavonic peoples free ; but are they yet ripe for freedom ? Are they yet civilised enough to stand for all that is good in the civilisation

of Europe ? No one can say. Paris and London know the enormities of which Berlin is capable. Not Paris nor London nor even Berlin know the enormities which the East has in store. Is a Carthage to be reborn upon the ruins of Rome ? Is an Attila to come again out of Asia ? Is the gleaming sceptre that, long since, came out of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and, for a thousand years, has moved westward through Europe, is it now to pass for ever out of Europe, across the ocean, into the New World ?

However that may be, France has never, throughout the long years of her history, proved so great as she has shown herself to be when threatened with extinction by an attack she had not foreseen. The names of Joffre and Foch resound, like short blasts of an echoing trumpet from the rock of Verdun ; from the Marne to the Rhine we hear again the note of the horn of Bouvines, whose echoes seemed to have died away : just as, more than a thousand years since, rang out again at Poitiers an echo from the Catalaunian Fields.

June 28, 1920.

APPENDICES

I

Paris, 25 *janvier* 1917.

TÉLÉGRAMME ENVOYÉ A NEUCHÂTEL PAR M. WILLIAM MARTIN POUR ANNONCER L'ARRIVÉE DES PRINCES

Telegramm — TÉLÉGRAMME — Telegramma

Bureau des télégraphes
25/1/17
Neuchâtel.

de Paris n° 357298
Consigné le 25/1/1917, à 11 h. 30.
Reçu le 25/1/1917, à 7 h. 35 m. Contrôle n° 579.

Boy de la Tour,
7, rue Pommier,
Neuchâtel (Suisse).

Charles Salomon me charge vous prévenir que arrivera lundi matin avec ses deux amis auxquels cédera sa chambre et logera rez-de-chaussée. Prière envoyer automobile.

William Martin.

II

PARIS, 25 *janvier* 1917.

PASSEPORTS DIPLOMATIQUES
DÉLIVRÉS AUX DEUX PRINCES [1]

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

[Photographie.]
[Timbre du ministère
des Affaires étrangères.]

Nous, Ministre secrétaire d'État au département des Affaires étrangères, requérons les officiers civils et militaires chargés de maintenir l'ordre en France et prions les autorités investies de la même mission dans les pays alliés ou amis de la République française, de laisser librement passer S. A. R. le prince Sixte de Bourbon se rendant en Suisse et en Italie et devant en revenir prochainement et de lui donner aide et protection en cas de besoin.

A Paris, le 25 janvier 1917.
Pour le ministre des Affaires étrangères,
BERTHELOT.

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Signature du porteur,
Prince SIXTE DE BOURBON.
N° 228.

Entré en France
par Pontarlier, le 21/2/17.
Vu pour se rendre
à Paris.
Le Commissaire spécial :
N...

Vu à l'Ambassade royale d'Italie.
Bon pour l'Italie, Neufchâtel (Svizzera)
Milano, Le Pianore.
Paris, le 27 janvier 1917.
Pour l'ambassadeur :
Le Secrétaire de l'Ambassade,
GUARIGLIA,
Ambasciata di S. M. il rè d' Italia,
Parigi.

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[1] Un passeport identique a été délivré le même jour, sous le n° 229, au prince Xavier de Bourbon.

Vu à l'entrée.
Gare Bellegarde,
29 mars 1917.
LE COMMISSAIRE SPÉCIAL.

Vu pour la Suisse.
Paris, le 21 avril 1917.
Le Chancelier de Légation :
F. CREUILLARD.

Légation de Suisse
en France.

Les Verrières-gare,
15/5/1917 pour Paris.

Entré en France
par Pontarlier le 15/5/17.
Vu pour se rendre
à Paris.
Le Commissaire spécial,
N...
Commissariat spécial
de police,
Gare de Pontarlier.

Ministère de l'Intérieur.
Commissariat spécial
Gare Bellegarde,
Sûreté générale.

Vu pour la Suisse,
Paris, le 27 janvier 1917.
Le Secrétaire de Légation :
M. JAEGER.

Légation de Suisse
en France.

Les Verrières-gare,
29/1/1917 pour Neuchâtel.
Iselle, Entrata,
1 feb. 1917.

Vu pour la Suisse
Paris, le 12 février 1917.
Le Chancelier
de la Légation de Suisse :
F. CREUILLARD.
Légation de Suisse
en France.

Les Verrières-gare,
le 22/2/1917 pour Paris.

Vu pour la Suisse.
Paris, le 17 mars 1917.
Le Chancelier de la Légation
de Suisse :
F. CREUILLARD.

Légation de Suisse
en France.

III

Paris, 25 *janvier* 1917.

PASSEPORT DIPLOMATIQUE

DÉLIVRÉ À M. CHARLES SALOMON, POUR LA SUISSE

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

[Photographie.]
[Timbre du ministère
des Affaires étrangères.]

Nous, Ministre secrétaire d'État au département des Affaires étrangères, requérons les officiers civils et militaires chargés de maintenir l'ordre en France et prions les autorités investies de la même mission dans les pays alliés ou amis de la République française, de laisser librement passer M. Charles Salomon, se rendant en Suisse et en Italie, et devant en revenir prochainement, et de lui donner aide et protection en cas de besoin.

A Paris, le 25 janvier 1917.
Pour le ministre des Affaires étrangères,
BERTHELOT.

[Timbre du ministère
des Affaires étrangères.]
Signature du porteur,
A.-C. SALOMON.
N° 230.

Vu à l'Ambassade Royale d'Italie,
Neuchâtel (Suisse).
Bon pour l'Italie, Milano-Le Pianore.
Paris, le 27 janvier 1917.
Pour l'ambassadeur :
Le Secrétaire de l'Ambassade,
GUARIGLIA.

[Timbre
de l'Ambassade
d'Italie.]

[Timbre de
la Légation Suisse.]

Vu pour la Suisse,
Paris, le 27 janvier 1917.
Le Secrétaire de légation :
M. JAEGER.

Les Verrières-gare,
le 29-1-1917, pour Neuchâtel.

Visa diplomatique :

[Timbre
de l'Ambassade
française.]

Berne, le 4 février 1917.
Vu à l'Ambassade de France.
Pour l'ambassadeur :
Le Conseiller d'Ambassade délégué,
N...

[Timbre du
ministère de l'Intérieur,
Sûreté générale,
Commissariat spécial,
Gare Bellegarde.]

Vu à l'entrée
Gare Bellegarde,
5 février 1917.
Le Commissaire spécial,
N...

[Timbre de
la Légation de
Suisse en France.]

Vu pour la Suisse.
Paris, le 12 février 1917.
Le Chancelier
de la Légation de Suisse.
F. CREUILLARD.

IV

PARIS, 27 *janvier* 1917.

LETTRE

ADRESSÉE AUX AUTORITÉS DE LA FRONTIÈRE

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Aux autorités de Pontarlier
et de la frontière d'Italie.
27 *janvier* 1917.

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Protocole.

Valable pour l'aller et le retour.
A remettre aux autorités de la frontière
à la rentrée en France.

Le président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires étrangères, a l'honneur de recommander aux autorités de Pontarlier et de la frontière d'Italie LL. AA. RR. les princes Sixte et Xavier de Bourbon, qui se rendent en Suisse et en Italie et en reviendront prochainement : ils sont accompagnés de M. Charles Salomon.

Pour le ministre et par autorisation,
Le ministre plénipotentiaire, chef du service
du Protocole,
R. WILLIAM MARTIN.

Timbre du ministère
des Affaires étrangères.

V

PARIS, 29 *janvier* 1917.

BILLET

ADRESSÉ À L'AMBASSADE DE FRANCE

R. WILLIAM MARTIN,
Ministre plénipotentiaire,
Introducteur des ambassadeurs,

serait reconnaissant à l'ambassade de France à Berne et au Consulat général de France à Genève, de lui envoyer par la valise les lettres que M. Charles Salomon pourrait leur remettre à son adresse.

WILLIAM MARTIN.

VI

PARIS, 12 *février* 1917.

LETTRE

ADRESSÉE AUX AUTORITÉS DE LA FRONTIÈRE

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Aux autorités
de Pontarlier.

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Protocole.

12 *février* 1917.

Valable pour l'aller et le retour.
A remettre aux autorités de la frontière
à la rentrée en France.

Le président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires étrangères, a l'honneur de recommander aux autorités de Pontarlier LL. AA. RR. les princes Sixte et Xavier de Bourbon, qui se rendent en Suisse et en reviendront prochainement.

Pour le ministre et par autorisation :
Le ministre plénipotentiaire,
chef du service du protocole,
WILLIAM MARTIN.

Timbre du
ministère des Affaires
étrangères.

VII

Paris, 17 *mars* 1917.

LETTRE

ADRESSÉE AUX AUTORITÉS DE LA FRONTIÈRE

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Aux autorités
de Bellegarde et de Pontarlier.

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Protocole.

17 *mars* 1917.

Valable pour l'aller et le retour,
A remettre aux autorités de la frontière
à la rentrée en France.

Le président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires étrangères, recommande aux autorités de Bellegarde et de Pontarlier LL. AA. RR. les princes Sixte et Xavier de Bourbon, qui se rendent en Suisse et en reviendront prochainement.

Pour le ministre et par autorisation :
Le ministre plénipotentiaire,
chef du service du protocole,
R. William Martin.

VIII

Paris, 17 *mars* 1917.

LETTRE

de M. William Martin
à M. Beau, ambassadeur de France à Berne

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Son Excellence Monsieur Beau,
ambassadeur de France,
à Berne.

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Protocole.

17 *mars* 1917.

Mon cher ami—Permettez-moi de recommander à votre aimable accueil LL. AA. RR. les princes Sixte et Xavier de Bourbon, qui comptent se rendre à Berne.

Croyez, mon cher ami, à mon cordial dévouement.

R. William Martin.

IX

Paris, 17 *mars* 1917.

LETTRE
de M. William Martin
à M. Beau, ambassadeur de France à Berne

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Son Excellence Monsieur Beau,
ambassadeur de France,
Berne.

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Protocole.

17 *mars* 1917.

Mon cher ami—Permettez-moi de recommander à votre aimable accueil M. Boy de la Tour, qui désirerait recourir à votre obligeance pour me faire parvenir par la valise une lettre que j'ai intérêt à recevoir rapidement.

En vous remerciant d'avance, je vous prie de croire à mon cordial dévouement.

R. William Martin.

X

PARIS, 14 *avril* 1917.

TÉLÉGRAMME

ENVOYÉ PAR M. WILLIAM MARTIN, D'ACCORD AVEC M. RIBOT, SUR LA DEMANDE DU PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON, À M. MAURICE BOY DE LA TOUR.

Maurice Boy de la Tour,
7, rue du Pommier,
Neuchâtel.

Vous attend mardi 24 avril.

MARTIN.

XI

Paris, 21 *avril* 1917.

LETTRE

adressée aux autorités
de Delle et de Pontarlier

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Aux autorités de
Delle et de Pontarlier.

AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES
Protocole.

21 *avril* 1917.

Valable pour l'aller et le retour.
A remettre aux autorités de la frontière
à la rentrée en France.

Le président du Conseil, ministre des Affaires étrangères, recommande aux autorités de Delle et de Pontarlier LL. AA. RR. les princes Sixte et Xavier de Bourbon, qui se rendent en Suisse et en reviendront prochainement.

Pour le ministre et par autorisation :
Le ministre plénipotentiaire, chef du service du protocole,

R. William Martin.

Cachet.

XII

Paris, 21 *avril* 1917.

PASSEPORT DIPLOMATIQUE
DÉLIVRÉ À M. DE MANTEYER, CHARGÉ DE MISSION EN SUISSE

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

[Photographie.]
[Timbre du ministère des Affaires étrangères.]

Nous, Ministre secrétaire d'État au département des Affaires étrangères, requérons les officiers civils et militaires chargés de maintenir l'ordre en France et prions les autorités investies de la même mission dans les pays alliés ou amis de la République française, de laisser librement passer M. de Manteyer se rendant en Suisse, chargé de mission, et de lui donner aide et protection en cas de besoin.

A Paris, le 21 avril 1917.
Pour le ministre des Affaires étrangères,
André d'Ormesson.

[Timbre du ministère des Affaires étrangères.]
Signature du porteur,
Manteyer.
N° 768.

[Timbre de la légation suisse en France.]

Vu pour la Suisse,
Paris, le 21 avril 1917.
Le Chancelier de Légation,
F. Creuillard.

[Timbre du commissariat spécial de police Gare de Pontarlier.

Sorti de France
par Pontarlier, le 11-5-17.
Le Commissaire spécial,
N...

Les Verrières-route
pour Neuchâtel, le 11-5-1917.
Les Verrières-gare
pour Paris, le 15-5-1917.

XIII

Paris, 9 *mai* 1917.

LETTRE

de M. William Martin
à M. Beau, ambassadeur de France à Berne

MINISTÈRE
DES
AFFAIRES ÉTRANGÈRES

Son Excellence Monsieur Beau,
ambassadeur de France,
Berne.

R. WILLIAM MARTIN,
Ministre plénipotentiaire,
Introducteur des ambassadeurs.

2, rue Léonce-Reynaud.

9. 5. 17.

Mon cher ami—Je recommande à votre bienveillant accueil M. de Manteyer que vous avez déjà rencontré et qui voudrait confier à votre courrier une lettre à mon adresse.

Merci vivement et cordialement à vous.

R. William Martin.

XIV

21 *avril* 1917.

PERMISSION MILITAIRE

ACCORDÉE À M. DE MANTEYER, CHARGÉ DE MISSION EN SUISSE

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE DE LA GUERRE.

DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE
DES RELATIONS AVEC LA PRESSE.
110 rue de Grenelle,
Bureau.

Le ministre de la Guerre accorde à M. le lieutenant Pinet de Manteyer une permission de quatorze jours (délais de route en sus), à dater du 23 avril, pour en jouir à Delle (territoire de Belfort).

A l'expiration de sa permission cet officier devra rentrer à son poste.

Paris, le 21 avril 1917.
Pour le ministre et par son ordre,
le ministre plénipotentiaire
chargé de la direction générale des relations avec la presse,

P. MARUÉJOULS.

XV

Paris, 9 *mai* 1917.

PERMISSION MILITAIRE

ACCORDÉE À M. LE LIEUTENANT DE MANTEYER

RÉPUBLIQUE FRANÇAISE

MINISTÈRE DE LA GUERRE

Direction générale
des relations avec la presse.
110 rue de Grenelle.

(N° 81.)

Le ministre de la Guerre accorde à Monsieur le lieutenant Pinet de Manteyer une permission de sept jours (délais de route en sus) pour en jouir à Pontarlier (Doubs).

A l'expiration de cette permission, cet officier devra rentrer à son poste.

Paris, le 9 mai 1917.
Pour le ministre et par son ordre,
le ministre plénipotentiaire
chargé de la direction générale des relations avec la presse
P. Maruéjouls.

XVI

13 *novembre* 1918.

CITATION A L'ORDRE DU JOUR

DE L'ARMÉE BELGE DE LL. AA. RR. LES PRINCES SIXTE ET XAVIER BOURBON-PARME, LIEUTENANTS DE RÉSERVE POUR LA DURÉE DE LA GUERRE, ADJOINTS AU COMMANDEMENT DE L'ARTILLERIE DE LA 4e DIVISION DE L'ARMÉE, LEUR DÉCERNANT LA CROIX DE GUERRE.

AU G.Q.G., *le* 13 *novembre* 1918.

ARMÉE BELGE
GRAND QUARTIER GÉNÉRAL.
ÉTAT-MAJOR.
IIIe SECTION.
No 1560.

ORDRE JOURNALIER DE L'ARMÉE

1. Distinctions honorifiques.

Sont cités à l'*Ordre du Jour de l'Armée* et décorés de la *Croix de Guerre*:

S. A. R. LE PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON-PARME, lieutenant de réserve p.d.g., commandement de l'artillerie, 4e D. A. Épousant la cause du droit et de la justice, a pris du service à l'armée belge dès le début de la guerre. Belle incarnation du courage le plus noble et le plus fier, ayant une conception très élevée du sentiment du devoir, s'est constamment dépensé en vue de fournir à la cause des Alliés le rendement le plus grand. A sollicité, aux premiers jours de l'offensive, la faveur d'être employé au service d'observation et de renseignements aux avant-lignes et n'a cessé d'accompagner l'infanterie dans sa progression.

S. A. R. le Prince Xavier de Bourbon-Parme, lieutenant de réserve p.d.g., commandement de l'artillerie, 4e D. A. Épousant la cause du droit et de la justice, a pris du service à l'armée belge dès le début de la guerre. Belle incarnation du courage le plus noble et le plus fier, ayant une conception très élevée du sentiment du devoir, s'est constamment dépensé en vue de fournir à la cause des Alliés le rendement le plus grand. A sollicité, aux premiers jours de l'offensive, la faveur d'être employé au service d'observation et de renseignements aux avant-lignes et n'a cessé d'accompagner l'infanterie dans sa progression.

Le Chef d'État Major Général
Gillain.

XVII

BRUXELLES, 14 *juin* 1919.

ARRÊTÉ DE S. M. LE ROI DES BELGES DÉCERNANT À S. A. R. LE PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON LA DIGNITÉ DE GRAND CROIX DE L'ORDRE DE LÉOPOLD COMPORTANT LA DÉCORATION MILITAIRE AVEC PALME.[1]

ALBERT ROI DES BELGES
à tous présents et à venir, SALUT.

Voulant donner à Son Altesse Royale le Prince SIXTE DE BOURBON un témoignage de Notre affection et de Notre gratitude pour les vaillants services qu'il a rendus à l'armée belge et le courage qu'il a montré devant l'ennemi,

Sur la proposition de Notre ministre des Affaires étrangères et de Notre ministre de la Guerre,

NOUS AVONS ARRÊTÉ ET ARRÊTONS

Article 1er.—Son Altesse Royale le Prince SIXTE DE BOURBON est nommé Grand Cordon de l'Ordre de Léopold.

Il portera la décoration militaire avec palme.

Article 2.—Il prendra rang dans l'Ordre à dater de ce jour.

Article 3.—Notre ministre des Affaires étrangères, ayant l'administration de l'Ordre, est chargé de l'exécution du présent arrêté.

Donné à Bruxelles, le 14 juin 1919.

ALBERT.

PAR LE ROI :

Le ministre des Affaires étrangères, HYMANS.

Le ministre de la Guerre, MASSON.

Pour copie conforme :
Le directeur général du secrétariat général
au ministère des Affaires étrangères,
N. COSTERMANS.

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[1] Un autre arrêté identique, du même jour, a été pris pour décerner la même dignité à S. A. R. le prince Xavier de Bourbon.

XVIII

Bruxelles, 28 *juillet* 1919.

LETTRE

DU MINISTRE DE LA GUERRE DE BELGIQUE INFORMANT LE PRINCE SIXTE DE BOURBON QUE, PAR ARRÊTÉ ROYAL DE CE JOUR, IL EST PROMU CAPITAINE EN SECOND DE RÉSERVE D'ARTILLERIE POUR LA DURÉE DE LA GUERRE.[1]

ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE

MINISTÈRE DE LA GUERRE
1° DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE.
Personnel.
N° .
N° 7662.
de la matricule générale.

LETTRE

DE COMMISSIONNEMENT TENANT LIEU DE BREVET

Le ministre de la Guerre a l'honneur d'informer Son Altesse Royale le Prince Sixte de Bourbon de Parme, commissionné au grade de lieutenant de réserve d'artillerie pour la durée de la guerre, que Sa Majesté par arrêté du 28 juillet 1919 N° 5961, l'a commissionné au grade de capitaine en second de réserve d'artillerie pour la durée de la guerre.

Bruxelles, *le* 28 *juillet* 1919,

F. Masson.

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[1] Une lettre identique, du même jour, N° 7663, a été adressée a S. A. R. le Prince Xavier de Bourbon-Parme.

XIX

BRUXELLES, 5 *août* 1919.

BREVET

DÉ LA MÉDAILLE INTÉRALLIÉE DE LA VICTOIRE[1]

ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE

BREVET,

En exécution de l'arrêté royal du 14 juillet 1919, instituant un insigne distinctif interallié, destiné à entretenir et à conserver les sentiments d'étroite camaraderie qui, après avoir fait sur les champs de bataille la force des armées du droit, assureront dans la paix la grandeur des nations alliées par l'union dans le souvenir,

Le général major commandant l'artillerie de la 4e D. A. a l'honneur de faire savoir au capitaine en second de réserve Son Altesse Royale le Prince SIXTE DE BOURBON-PARME adjoint au commandant de l'artillerie de la 4e D. A. que la médaille de la Victoire lui est accordée.

Le 5 *août* 1919.

C. MORAINE.

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[1] Un brevet identique, du même jour, a été adressée à S. A. R. le Prince Xavier de Bourbon-Parme.

XX

Bruxelles, 27 *août* 1919.

DÉCISION

DU MINISTRE DE LA GUERRE DE BELGIQUE PLAÇANT EN CONGÉ SANS SOLDE, À LA DATE DU Ier SEPTEMBRE, S. A. R. MONSEIGNEUR SIXTE DE BOURBON, PRINCE DE PARME, CAPITAINE EN SECOND DE RÉSERVE D'ARTILLERIE POUR LA DURÉE DE LA GUERRE, ET LUI EXPRIMANT LA HAUTE GRATITUDE DE L'ARMÉE POUR SES ÉMINENTS SERVICES.[1]

ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE
[Armes du Royaume]

MINISTÈRE DE LA GUERRE.

1° DIRECTION GÉNÉRALE.

Personnel.

N D. 3/364.

Le ministre de la Guerre a l'honneur de faire savoir à Son Altesse Royale Monseigneur le Prince Sixte de Bourbon de Parme, capitaine en second de réserve pour la durée de la guerre, qu'il est placé, sur sa demande, en congé sans solde à la date du 1er septembre 1919.

Il est heureux de saisir le moment du départ de Son Altesse Royale pour la prier de lui permettre de rendre hommage à son dévouement chevaleresque à la Belgique et pour lui exprimer la haute gratitude de notre armée et de notre pays pour les éminents services qu'il leur a rendus.

Bruxelles, *le* 27 *août* 1919.

F. Masson.

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[1] Une lettre identique, de même date, a été adressée à Son Altesse Royale Monseigneur le Prince Xavier de Bourbon de Parme.

XXI

BRUXELLES, 2 *septembre* 1919.

LETTRE DU GÉNÉRAL MORAINE
TRANSMETTANT LA DÉPÊCHE PRÉCÉDENTE

4e DIVISION D'ARMÉE.
COMMANDEMENT DE L'ARTILLERIE.

Annexes .
N° .
Réponse au N° du 19 .

BRUXELLES, *le* 2 *septembre* 1919.

MESSEIGNEURS—Je suis heureux et fier de Vous transmettre le bel hommage de reconnaissance que Monsieur le ministre de la Guerre Vous présente en vous accordant votre mise en congé sans solde.

Je me permets, Messeigneurs, de m'associer de tout cœur à cette expression de haute gratitude que la Belgique et son armée ont contractée à votre égard et je Vous prie de croire à l'assurance de mes sentiments d'inaltérable et respectueux dévouement.

J'éprouverai un grand bonheur, Vous n'en doutez pas, à Vous revoir bientôt.

Le Commandant de l'A/D. A., Général Major,
C. MORAINE.

Printed in Great Britain by R. & R. CLARK, LIMITED, *Edinburgh.*

Mon cher Sixte,

La fin de la troisième année de cette guerre qui a apporté tant de deuils et douleurs dans le monde approche. Tous les peuples de mon Empire sont unis plus étroitement que jamais dans la volonté commune de sauvegarder l'intégrité de la Monarchie au prix même des plus lourds sacrifices. Grâce à leur union au concours généreux de tous les nationalités de mon Empire, la Monarchie a pu résister pendant bientôt 3 ans aux plus graves assauts. Personne ne pourra contester les avantages militaires remportés par mes troupes, en particulier sur le théâtre de guerre balcanique.

La France a montré de son côté une force de résistance et un élan magnifique. Nous admirons tous sans réserves l'admirable

bravoure traditionnelle de son armée et l'esprit de sacrifice de tout le peuple français.

Aussi m'est il particulièrement agréable de voir que bien que momentanément adversaires, aucune véritable divergence de vues ou d'aspirations ne sépare mon Empire de la France, et que je suis en droit de pouvoir espérer que mes vives sympathies pour la France jointes à celles qui régnent dans toute la Monarchie, éviteront à tout jamais le retour d'un état de guerre pour lequel aucune responsabilité ne peut m'incomber. A cet effet, et pour manifester d'une façon précise la réalité de ces sentiments, je me pose de transmettre secrètement et officiellement à M. Poincaré, Président de la République française, que j'appuierai par tous les moyens et en usant de toute mon influence personnelle auprès de mes alliés les justes revendications françaises relatives à l'Alsace-Lorraine.

Quant à la Belgique, elle doit être rétablie entièrement dans sa souveraineté, en gardant l'ensemble de ses possessions africaines, sans préjudice des dédommagements qu'elle pourra recevoir pour les pertes

qu'elle a subies. Quant à la Serbie elle sera rétablie dans sa souveraineté et en gage de notre bonne volonté nous sommes disposés à lui assurer un accès égal et naturel à la mer adriatique, ainsi que de larges concessions économiques. De son côté l'Autriche Hongrie demandera comme condition primordiale et absolue que le royaume de Serbie cesse à l'avenir toute relation et qu'il supprime toute société ou groupement dont le but politique tend vers une désagrégation de la Monarchie, en particulier la Narodna Obrana; qu'il empêche loyalement et par tous les moyens en son pouvoir toute sorte d'agitation politique soit en Serbie, soit en dehors de ses frontières dans ce sens, et qu'il en donne l'assurance sous la garantie des puissances de l'Entente.

Les événements qui se sont produits en Russie m'obligent de réserver mes idées à ce sujet jusqu'au jour où un gouvernement légal et définitif y sera établi.

Après t'avoir ainsi exposé mes idées je te demanderai de m'exposer à ton tour après en avoir référé avec

ces deux puissances l'opinion tout d'abord de la France et de l'Angleterre, à l'effet de préparer ainsi un terrain d'entente sur la base duquel des pourparlers officiels pourraient être engagés et aboutir à la satisfaction de tous.

Espérant qu'ainsi nous pourrons bientôt d'un part et d'autre mettre un terme aux souffrances de tant de milliers d'hommes et de tant de familles qui sont dans la tristesse et l'angoisse

je te prie de croire à ma tendresse et paternelle affection

Charles

9 Mai 1917

Mon cher Sixte,

Je constate avec satisfaction que la France et l'Angleterre partagent mes vues sur ce que je crois être les bases essentielles de la paix de l'Europe. Cependant elles m'opposent leur volonté de ne point réaliser la paix sans que l'Italie y participe précisément, l'Italie vient de me demander de conclure la paix avec la Monarchie en abandonnant toutes les prétentions inadmissibles de conquête qu'elle avait manifestées jusqu'ici sur les pays slaves de l'Adriatique. Elle réduit ses demandes à la partie du Tyrol de langue italienne. J'ai ajourné l'examen de cette

demande jusqu'à ce que je connaisse, par toi la réponse de la France et de l'Angleterre à mes ouvertures de paix. Le comte Eudoxy te communiquera mes vues et celles de mon ministre sur ces différents points.

La bonne entente entre la Monarchie et la France et l'Angleterre sur un si grand nombre de points essentiels permettra, nous en sommes convaincus, de surmonter les dernières difficultés qui se présentent pour aboutir à une paix honorable.

Je te remercie du concours que tu me prête maintenant pour cette œuvre de paix conçue par moi dans l'intérêt commun de nos pays. Cette guerre t'a imposé comme tu me le dis en me quittant le devoir de rester fidèle à ton

nom et au grand passé de ta Maison dévoué en secourant les héros blessés sur le champ de bataille et ensuite en combattant pour la France. J'ai compris ta conduite, et, quoique nous fussions séparés par des événements dont je ne porte en rien la responsabilité personnelle mon affection t'est restée fidèle. Je tiens à me réserver, si tu le veux bien, la possibilité de faire connaître sans autre intermédiaire que toi à la France et à l'Angleterre, ma pensée directe et personnelle. Je te prie encore de croire à ma vive et profonde affection

Charles

I. Eine einseitige Gebietsabtretung
Ö.U. ist ausgeschlossen; bei
einer Compensation durch
anderes Gebiet wäre der Gedanke
verwirklichbar, falls in Betracht
gezogen wird dass der heldenhaft
verteidigte mit dem Blute unserer
Soldaten gekräftigte Boden einen
für uns unvergleichlich höheren
Wert hat als irgend ein neues
Gebiet

II.) Welches sind die Garantien die
uns geboten werden dass bei
einer Friedensconferenz der
Integrität der Monarchie (mit der
ausnahmslos jetzt beschlossenen

Grenzrectificationen) bestehen bleibt?

III.) Eine definitive Antwort kann erst nach Beantwortung der vorstehenden zwei Punkte gegeben werden, da Öst. erst dann mit seinen Verbündeten in Besprechungen eintreten kann

IV.) Immerhin wird Öst. bereit die Besprechungen fortzusetzen und nach wie vor geneigt sein einen ehrenvollen Frieden zu arbeiten um damit auch den allgemeinen Weltfrieden anzubahnen