

Blavatsky on the doomed destiny of the Romanovs



Letter 1.

Since Peter the Great, not one of the Romanovs has died of natural causes.

From a Correspondent, *The Pioneer*, Allāhābād, April 9th, 1881.

This article is pasted in H.P. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. XI, p. 67, now in the Adyar Archives. Though unsigned, it is most likely from her own pen. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.

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The great voice of the Giant Bell of the Kremlin at Moscow, called "Ivan Velikiy," whose heavy tongue has uttered no sound for the last twenty-six years, was heard once more on the morning of March 22nd (14th). It appears [122] from the *Moscow Gazette* and other papers that the masses of the people had heard of the attempted assassination, but were not yet aware of the Emperor's death. They were accordingly thrown into great panic upon hearing the first of the bell's three long and solemn peals; and thick crowds at once began to gather round the eminence, in the heart of the ancient metropolis where the Kremlin stands. Before the third and last stroke — immediately echoed by the four hundred gold-domed churches of the "holy, white-walled mother city," as Moscow is called by the patriots — had died out in the air, there had collected a compact mass of bareheaded, haggard, "black people," as the peasants and poorer classes are called, which surged to and fro, completely blocking the adjacent streets and squares. The voice of Ivan Velikiy (the great) had resounded three times, and it meant the death of the Emperor. The Czar-kolokol (Czarbell) speaks only to announce imperial deaths and coronations.

It is in the midst of such large and spontaneous popular gatherings that the national pulse of Russia can be best felt. Here, there is no premeditation, no organized loyalty, no forcible assembling by the police. A crowd of fifty thousand men can never act a part. The descriptions given below are not taken from official papers, but are extracts from letters written by private individuals and very moderate patriots as regards the Imperial family, as almost all the ruined Russian nobility now are. One of these writers says:

Never did I witness such a sincere, unanimous grief. Never did I think that a ragged crowd, 50,000 men strong, composed mostly of our working factory heads, peasants, and beggars, vicious and half-starved as the Moscow populace now are, could stand for two long hours, suffocating each other around the many Kremlin churches and weep, as I have seen them weep today. . . . It

seemed as if their hearts were breaking. . . . It was a terrible strain upon one's nerves. "We are orphans, orphans! . . . Our father has left us!" were the exclamations most heard. "To whom hast thou abandoned us!" was the cry of a thousand voices in simple forgetfulness of their traditional duty to shout *le Roi est mort — vive le Roi!* . . . There was hardly a street beggar in Moscow today while the solemn Liturgy for the Dead was chanting but dragged out a long-hidden copper to buy a wax taper with, and placed it lighted with tearful prayers before the image of St. Alexander Nevsky, the patron saint of the dead Emperor — "for the eternal rest of Father Czar's soul."

Whatever, then, the secret feelings of the better classes — and the sympathy of even those, we are sure, was in most cases sincere — the grief of the millions of serfs liberated by the late unhappy reformer was profoundly sincere. It is already evident that Alexander II is destined to figure in the calendar of Russian Saints. The elements are not wanting. He is certainly followed to the tomb by a loving popular adoration, which will speedily make his weaknesses of character to be forgotten. The term "martyr" is already applied to him. He has fallen a victim to his kindness of heart. Instead of seeking safety in the shelter of his closed carriage as supplicated, his chief thought was for the mangled guards and other victims that strewn the pavement. An officer of the guards, who was an eyewitness, reports the following conversation with Count Gendrikoff, who was in attendance on the Emperor. After the explosion of the first bomb, the Count rushed to the Czar, and finding upon inquiry that he was uninjured, he exclaimed, "Sire, Sire! don't leave the carriage!" The Emperor replied, "Don't disturb yourself about me. I am safe. I *must* get out to see the wounded: it is my duty!"

A sinister fate seems to have pursued the Romanovs, of whom not one, as alleged, has met a natural death, since Peter the Great. Peter II died in youth, poisoned. Anna, his successor, died under very suspicious circumstances. Ivan VII, a child of only a few months, was dethroned by Elizabeth and — disappeared. Elizabeth Petrovna, Peter the Great's daughter, died very suddenly, and was succeeded by Peter III, her sister's son, who, after a reign of only a few months, lost his life by a court revolution headed by his own daughter Catherine II. That Empress, as public rumour — always restrained in Russia — gives it, though not altogether a Romanov by blood, died of slow poison. Her son, the Emperor Paul, was strangled in his bed. Alexander I died [124] poisoned, in 1825, at Taganrog.¹ Nicholas I forced his confidential physician, Dr.

¹ [This is most unlikely. It is not at all certain that Alexander I did actually die at Taganrog on November 30th, 1825, as has been alleged. Did he die or did he disappear, with the connivance of his wife and a few close friends, after arranging that some other body should be placed in his alleged coffin and buried as his? Was he the hermit Feodor Kusmitch, who died in Siberia in 1864, as many persons, including several members of the Imperial Family, believed? When the Soviet Government opened the sarcophagus in the Cathedral of the Peter and Paul Fortress in St. Petersburg, where the Emperors lay buried, it was found that the coffin was empty. Rumour has it that Alexander III had had the previous coffin removed (with whatever body was in it), and another coffin substituted.

As to Feodor Kusmitch, after some years of wandering in various localities, like the Province of Perm, for instance, he later settled in the vicinity of Tomsk, and was visited on many occasions by very influential people with whom he is reported to have talked in some foreign language.

There exists considerable evidence to the effect that Alexander I was very tired of his responsibilities and greatly discouraged; he also experienced deep-seated remorse for having indirectly contributed to the assassination of his own father, Emperor Paul I, an event which he could have forestalled. It would appear that he had decided to withdraw from the outer world and devote the rest of his life to religious contemplation and self-study. See in this connection the following works: *Le Mystère d'Alexandre I*, by Prince Vladimir Baryatinsky (Paris 1925; 2nd

Mandt, to give him the poison he needed, and committed suicide, sacrificing his life to Russia, that his son and heir might end the disastrous Crimean war, which his sense of dignity and pride prevented him from doing himself. And now the tragic event of March 1st (13th) closes the dreary list of Imperial catastrophes. There is a superstition in Russia that none of the family can survive his sixty-fifth year. The late Czar, it is known, lived under perpetual apprehension from this idea — one now seen to be too well-founded.

Among the sympathetic telegrams that came pouring in, from all parts of the world, was one, couched in very eloquent terms, from Mr. Blaine, the present American Secretary [125] of State. With good taste and tact, Mr. Blaine made it a condolence from “the millions of free American citizens to the Russian millions made free, in their great bereavement for the loss of their liberator.” Those who love to study coincidences must be deeply impressed by the fact that both Lincoln and Alexander, the liberators of the enslaved, died the same wretched death at the hands of assassins.



ed., 1929; there exist also two Russian editions: St. Petersburg, 1912 & 1913); and *Emperor and Mystic*, by Francis Gribble (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1931). — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

Letter 2.

He who so loved his people, perished by the hand of one of his children.

From a Correspondent, *The Pioneer*, Allāhābād, May 4th, 1881.

[In H.P. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. XI, pp. 81-83, now in the Adyar Archives, there is a pen-and-ink notation at the end of this article which says: "H.P.B.'s article."]

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Heaven save us from beholding a Russian insurrection, senseless and merciless. Those who in our country would bring about all manner of violent revolutions, are either very young men who do not know our people, or they are hard-hearted men who value their own necks at a *gros*h (pie), and other people's at less.

So wrote the great poet Alexander Pushkin fifty years ago, though the words are new, being taken from a fragment of a novel, lately discovered among his unpublished papers.

Letters from the most widely separated regions of Russia, dated during the last days of March, show that a period of three weeks had done but little towards even blunting the impression of March 1st (13th). The national wound gapes as wide, and the feelings of horror and consternation are as acute as on the very day of the crime. If public opinion as to the socialists was divided before, it has now become unanimous, and the Nihilists¹ are doomed by their own people. Thus one correspondent writes:

Russia is hit to the very depths of her soul. To this day we are unable to familiarize ourselves with the terrible reality! The Czar is killed!! and by whom, great God! By the lowest and the meanest of his empire, by the most dishonourable set of ruffians that ever trod [156] the earth, and in comparison with whom the bloodthirsty Robespierre and Marat appear as the noblest knights, the souls of honour. . . . Never before did Russia groan under such opprobrium and infamy. There have been "palace regicides" before now — as in the case Peter III and Paul — committed secretly and within the four walls. But the killing of a Czar in full daylight, in his own metropolis, amidst his guards and under the very eyes of a population entirely devoted to him, is a crime hitherto unknown in the annals of Russian history — a crime which covers the whole land with disgrace. Had he died his natural death, then perhaps but few would have sincerely regretted him; for immense as were his benefactions to Russia, great also were his wrongs before his people. . . . It is to his weakness and misplaced indulgence that Russia owes the origin and development of that band of madmen. . . . Instead of destroying them as venomous reptiles, he encouraged them, and forgave them as if they were so many mischievous schoolboys, who had to be brought to repentance by kindness and caresses instead of by severe punishment. And when these favoured children began to murder right and left and

¹ [Look up "Not a single tear of hallowed love is fruitless," in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series, where introductory notes on the character of Evgenii Vasilitch Bazarov, the Russian paradigm of Nihilism, and protagonist in Ivan Sergeyevich Turgenev's acclaimed *Fathers and Sons*, 1862, are given. — ED. PHIL.]

ended by stealthily approaching his own person then, hoping that the example of a few would prove a sufficient and a salutary warning to all others, these few were hanged, and everyone around the Emperor rested on his laurels. Even those of the Nihilists who had been sentenced to Siberia, were nearly all pardoned and allowed to return, for which act of *mercy* Europe sent us her high approval. Well, it is they who have now thanked the Czar. Grinevitsky, who threw the second bomb which killed him, and Zhelyabov are both ex-convicts, who, upon being pardoned, had returned but recently from Siberia. Luckily for him the Emperor did not suffer. The nervous system was entirely killed by the shock of the explosion, and he bled to death before they had even reached the palace. But if so happily saved from physical torture, what must have been his mental agony, if but for a few seconds! . . . Two witnesses are there to tell the story. One, Colonel Dvorzhitzky, who was at his heels when he approached Risakoff, and one of the cadets who lifted up his shattered body into the sleigh. Looking the murderer between the eyes, the Emperor was heard to pronounce in a half-audible whisper . . . “A *Russian*. . . . Oh God! Again a Russian!” . . . And repeated the words to the Grand Duke Michael when expressing his desire to be taken to die in his own palace.¹ [157]

Did the poor victim think at that moment of the terrible secret divulged during the last trial of the sixteen Nihilists — November 6th (October 25th, 1880), known as the Kropotkine murder trial? There was a Pole, one Kobilyansky, among the young criminals; and he had been baffled by his brother conspirators in his ambition to be chosen as the one who would lay low the exalted Imperial head — his nationality alone having been judged a sufficient objection, as the Nihilists did not wish the crime to be attributed to national animosity. And there was the Jew — Goldenberg — Kropotkine’s murderer, who had vainly offered himself as a substitute for Solovioff. But they would not have him on account of his Hebrew nationality and religion. They feared that so desperate a deed might throw too great an odium upon his whole race, which had been held by Christians but too often responsible for crimes committed by individual members belonging to it.

None but a Russian hand should be raised against the head of the Russian people, that the world, well aware how deeply the almost religious feeling of loyalty is rooted in every Russian heart, might, from the enormity of the deed, judge of the magnitude of the provocation and the deadliness of the resolve.

And so he who so loved his people perished by the hand of one of his children.

The other letter is from a high military official attached to the Emperor’s staff. He writes:

Dreadful and ignominious for all Russia was the end of the defunct Sovereign, yet it seems like one marked by destiny itself, and bears evident signs of fatality upon its face. Those near the late Czar have been quite struck by it, as it is one of those events which impresses a forcible conviction on one’s mind, that each

¹ [The individuals referred to in this excerpt are: Nikolay Ivanovich Rissakov (1861–1881) who threw the first bomb; I.I. Grinevizky (1856–1881), who threw the second bomb; and Andrey Ivanovich Zhelyabov (1850–1881). The latter and Rissakov were executed, while Grinevizky died as a result of the explosion. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

of us has *his* last hour marked out beforehand, and that come it will, whatever we may do to avert it. . . . Three days previous to the tragic event, the chief leaders of all the previous conspiracies — those who had guided the recent attempts in the mining works and explosions on the Moscow railway and other places — had been discovered and secured, at the same time the plan of a new attempt was divulged. The arrests had led to the fear that the runaway “servant-executioners,” as they are termed, deprived of their chiefs and already armed with dynamite, might hurry on to the achievement of their nefarious object upon their own responsibility: hence it was considered absolutely necessary that the police should be allowed a few more days for the apprehension of [158] the last criminals. Loris-Melikoff supplicated the Emperor to refrain from quitting the palace for four or five days; he represented the great danger to the Princess Yurievsky (Dolgoroukov), and she in her turn conjured the Czar not to risk his life. Strange to say, even the prayers of the latter were rejected: the Emperor refused. Besides the general sketch of the danger, minute details of the Nihilists’ plan were reported by Count Loris-Melikoff to the Czar as already divulged by one of the chiefs. He learnt that it had been decided to stop his carriage by bringing on some accident which would compel him to alight from it, and then to make the last attempt to murder the Czar, the regicide giving up his own life in it of course. All that and much more he knew before leaving the palace. Aware of these details, and warned as he was, how easy, it now seems, to have avoided the catastrophe and frustrated the plot partially, if not wholly. But it so happened that the Emperor went of his own free will to meet, as it were, every step in the premeditated murderous programme; hence his fate. Not only did he drive to the Riding School, but when the first bomb exploded, injuring the carriage, though not disabling it from proceeding further, notwithstanding the supplications of the coachman and the Police Master, who had received beforehand their instructions from Loris-Melikoff to drive, in case of any accident, at full speed to the Palace, and disregarding their remarks that the conspirators were probably numerous, not only did the Czar alight, but he actually walked the distance of about 25 steps from the carriage, mixing with the crowd which had apprehended and surrounded Rissakoff. It was then that the second conspirator, who had already offered his own life in sacrifice to the terrible deed, had a chance of approaching him, and threw the second bomb at his feet. The only neglect that Loris is charged with is, that upon finding the Emperor inexorable in his determination to drive out, he should have insisted upon His Majesty taking not six, but no less than fifty Cossacks in his escort, so as to prevent anyone from approaching the carriage too close, these bombs having to be thrown at a very small distance on account of their weight. But who knew *then* anything of their nature? And fate does seem unavoidable. The greatest pressure is now being brought on the new Emperor to induce him to shift his headquarters for next Summer, if not for ever, to one of the Moscow suburb palaces. During that time, and when once the new Czar’s safety is ensured, Loris-Melikoff hopes to completely rid Russia of that troop of murderous beasts.

It is significant that the people of Moscow and the adjoining provinces, having sent through their representatives their humble supplications to Alexander III to place

himself under *their* protection, are now thronging the churches of “Moscow the Holy,” and, blessed and led by the priests, come by thousands to pledge their solemn vows before the [159] holy *ikons* of their patron saints never to rest so long as there will remain in the Empire one Socialist. And that means an inexorable chase to everyone suspected — death and immediate “Lynch Law” at the hands of the infuriated crowd. Yet the professed object of the Russian Nihilists, as constantly brought forward by the arrested leaders of the deadly secret organization called “the terrorizing faction,” is the salvation of the Russian people. “The idol we sacrifice to is not *self*, not personal passion, nor profit,” says Goldenberg in his confessions, alleged to have been written prior to his committing suicide in the Petropavlovskaya Fortress (November 1880), but “the good of society in our beloved Russia.” Often, and unjustly indeed, has the Russian populace been suspected of secret sympathy with their would-be benefactors and redeemers; whereas the truth is that these modern Sardapanali, who, prior to perishing themselves, never fail to destroy dozens of innocent victims, were ever abhorred by the lower classes. For long years have many of these educated young men and women, masqueraded in the garb of working people or peasants, and adopting the ways and language of the working classes of Russia, mixed with their “younger brethren.” By sowing dissatisfaction and filling their heads with revolutionary ideas, they hoped to bring about the much desired result — a revival of the days of terror in our own century — but with no effect. That they have signally failed to convert to, or even impress the lower classes with, their own ideas, is no fault of theirs, but is owing to reasons which Europe does not seem to have well realized yet. The mutual relations between the Czars of Russia and the people are unparalleled in history French Bretagne alone, in its undeviating loyalty and devotion to the Bourbon family throughout the great revolution — nay, even now, amidst Republican France — can afford us a point of comparison. But in neither country does that loyalty rest on the individual merits of the sovereign or the personal affection he inspires. Its cause is to be sought for in their religious fanaticism with which that feeling of loyalty is so deeply intermingled, that to weaken the one is to kill the other. Coronation was in France, and is still in Russia, one [160] of the chief Church Sacraments, and the Czar in the people’s sight is more even than any of the Kings of France ever was — “a Lord’s Elect and His Anointed”: he is thrice sacred. Religion is the Czar’s chief stronghold, without which he would have but a poor chance of security. And that perhaps is the secret of so much outward piety, but too often combined with the greatest moral depravity in the Imperial families. The Russian people were as devoted to Ivan the Terrible, the Russian Nero, and to the half-insane and cruel Paul, as they were to Alexander II, the “Blessed.” The infuriated masses sought after and demanded the life of Dr. Mandt, who, as they erroneously supposed, had poisoned Nicholas I; and in the same manner, if only permitted, they will seek now, and pitilessly take the life of every man or woman suspected of Socialism. Only, in the present case, their fury against the sacrilegious regicides is tenfold intensified by the sincere devotion and personal gratitude they feel for him who was their liberator and benefactor. There have been, Russian enthusiasts who, though shuddering at the thought of crime, have not hesitated to regard the criminals as great heroes.

Says Mme. Z. Ragozhin:

Russia has been visited by a virulent paroxysm of that form of political aberration which made so great a patriot and so pure a man as Mazzini an advocate of political murder, and armed the gentle hand of the romantic, tender-souled boy, Sand, with the political dagger.¹

The comparison is not a happy one. The murder of Kotzebue involved the death but of one isolated victim, and that of the murderer. But the Russian Nihilists with their last bomb have thrown the spark into the very heart of Russia. They have aroused the sleeping monster — the blind vengeance of the unreasoning masses, and thousands of innocent victims may perish yet. Already two men have been beaten to death in the streets of Moscow for tearing the Emperor’s photograph; and the house of Rissakoff’s father, in a small provincial town near Moscow, has to be surrounded night and day by a battalion of armed soldiers to protect it from being razed to the ground, and his parents and household from being [161] killed, though the poor old man is on the verge of insanity, and has several times attempted to commit suicide. The following scene from the preliminary examination of Sophia Perovsky (Hartman’s paramour and confederate at the railway attempt at Moscow and the chief conspirator now involved), taken from the St. Petersburg *Official Gazette*, will illustrate both the national feeling and the broken hopes of the Nihilists.² Owing to the unprecedented nature of the case, the judges appointed are armed with unlimited powers.

“The young lady [says the *Gazette*] showed herself extremely insolent and daring before her judges. Their attempts to elucidate from her some details of the crime with which she is connected, proved utterly useless. Looking them fearlessly in the face, she burst out laughing. When pressed to explain the cause of her hilarity, she exclaimed,”

“I laugh at your tribunal! You will remain as blind now as your police, before whose very nose I waved my pocket handkerchief while giving the signal to my friends to throw the bomb on the day of Emperor’s execution. . . . Having done my work, I quietly retired, and went home without their ever remarking my participation in the final scene. . . . I laugh at you and your police.” . . .

“But think of what lies in prospect before you!” . . .

“Gallows? I know that well, and am prepared for it from the first. I laugh at your gallows as I do at you!” . . .

“But think of God. . . . He . . . ”

“I laugh at your God likewise . . . I do not believe in God.”

¹ *The last trial of the Nihilists.*

[Students, look up “Not a single tear of hallowed love is fruitless,” in our Mystic Verse and Insights Series, where introductory notes on the character of Evgenii Vasilitch Bazarov, the Russian paradigm of Nihilism, and protagonist in Ivan Sergeevich Turgenev’s acclaimed *Fathers and Sons*, 1862, are given. — ED. PHIL.]

² [Sophia Lvovna Perovsky (1853–1881) was the daughter of the Governor of the St. Petersburg Province. She was executed as a result of the trial of the Nihilists.

Official Gazette, later spoken of as *Government Gazette*, was the *Pravitelstvennaya Gazeta* which was the official Journal of the Government at the time. — *Boris de Zirkoff.*]

“Woman”! — sternly remarked the Judge — “hold you nothing sacred in the world! What is there, then, you do not laugh at?”

She became suddenly serious. “My people” — she said — “The Russian people — is the only object I do not laugh at; it is my sole divinity and idol!”



The judges after consulting returned:

“Prisoner! We will now act according to your own desires. We will put an end to your examination and will not sentence you to any punishment — neither gallows nor even simple exile. We will exempt you altogether from *our* tribunal; but, taking you to the Palace Square, we will deliver you into the hands [162] and justice of your idol — the Russian people. Let it be your only judge. . . . Gendarmes! Lead the prisoner away.”

A quarter of an hour later, Sophia Perovsky was writhing at the feet of the Imperial Procureur. Outside, near the gates of the Tribunal, the agitated masses of populace were howling, cursing, and threatening, at the prison van which brought the political prisoners for their examination, the soldiers vainly trying to keep the threatening crowds at a distance.

“Yes! Yes!” she cried ringing her hands — “I will tell you all, all. . . . Sentence me to whatever torture and death you will. . . . But do, oh, do not deliver me unto the people! . . .”

Remarks the *Gazette*:

What a fearful irony in that popular fury directed against their would-be saviours. What a mockery in the presence of these unasked-for, self-constituted patriots and leaders of the people. What a depth of Satanic lying in their high ringing phrases about the people being their only “idol,” and of idiotic credulity in those who believe in such like phrases!



Letter 3.

The state of Russia is as bad, and its future as black and uncertain as ever.

From a Correspondent, *The Pioneer*, Allāhābād, May 18th, 1881.

[In H.P. Blavatsky's *Scrapbook*, Vol. XI, pp. 85-86, now in the Adyar Archives, there is a pen-and-ink notation at the end of this article which says: "H.P.B.'s article."]

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The trial of the regicides is over, and four men, from the scum of Russian society, and one woman belonging to the nobility, have paid the penalty of death. But has the mystery of the tragedy of March 1st (13th) been cleared up by their execution? There is reason to seriously doubt whether anything beyond the personality of the murderers is known to Europe. The Russian Press reporter has to lock up his hard-earned information, with little chance of producing it unless he would bring down disgrace upon himself and his journal; and the foreign "special correspondents," the most hopeless [163] and easiest misled individuals in the Russian metropolis, were permitted to know of the great trial just as much as the Senate would suffer them to learn and no more. They were only allowed admission on certain days in all the preceding trials, and they found themselves especially unfortunate at the last one. They were forewarned to abstain from publishing reports from their shorthand notes, and had to limit themselves to reproducing the *official* report of the daily numbers of *Pravitelstvennaya* (*Government Gazette*). No further back than the last foreign mail, among the numbers of the *Moscow Gazette* for the first week in April (old style) — a paper supposed to contain the fullest and best reports of the trial — we find a copy with two out of its four pages *entirely white*. Page 3 begins with a word from the middle of a sentence, the preceding columns having been obliterated by the censor. Great and unusual were the precautions taken to ensure secrecy and an undisturbed course of action to the judicial authorities; and though favoured persons, duly warned and furnished with tickets, were admitted in numbers sufficient to fill the vast hall, they were all military and civil officials. Nor should we lose sight of the fact that all the preliminary and most important examinations of criminals and witnesses had been taken secretly, and within the impenetrable precincts of the Chief Justice's office.

Under these circumstances we can never be sure that the news received today will not be fully contradicted tomorrow. Hence, one feels more ready to give credence to information gathered from private letters than to the contradictory, foggy reports we find in most of the papers. The following comes from an eyewitness of the daily events rapidly accumulating and succeeding each other in the "Imperial Chamber of Horrors," as the correspondent expresses it. Strange and incredible as the news may appear, it will not take students of Russian history by surprise, as it is but the continuation of a rumour spread fifteen years back, which has never entirely died out. Owing to new and ugly *facts*, that rumour now comes out stronger and louder than ever. It is simply this: — the secret and wealthy hand, one which [164] has constantly eluded grasp and which was *always* supposed to hold and guide the strings of the miserable and generally foredoomed *marionettes* known as the "executive agents of

the Terrorizing Faction of the Russian Socialists,” is at last recognized. The various gangs of boys and girls — and they are hardly anything else, since out of the sixteen prisoners tried for the Kropotkine murder all were under thirty years, and eight of them under twenty-five — whenever arrested, were found to consist chiefly of penniless students, burghers,¹ and working men; and yet, further investigation discovered invariably that these lads were possessed of very large sums of money. People can hardly be supposed to carry on secret publications on a large scale, to prepare costly mining works in various parts of the country, bombs and infernal machines pronounced by the specialists as expressing “the last word of science,” to journey from end to end of so vast an empire, to foreign countries and back, to buy houses wherein to conspire and prepare their destructive engines, and finally to maintain a host of subaltern² agents — all this cannot be done, without having a *banker* of the Rothschild kind at their backs. The cost of the several chief mining works had been roughly calculated and found enormous. The problem, where could all that money, all these funds which seemed inexhaustible, come from, became lately very perplexing. When once a million of roubles was discovered in the *portmanteau* of a prisoner, the problem occupied an important place in police investigations, and became the most important one of the day. And now that the question seems answered, there is more than ever a probability that Europe will never know of it; for:

That unanimous, persistent rumour names unhesitatingly the Grand-Duke Constantine, the late Emperor’s own brother, *as the direct and chief conspirator of the regicide*. . . .³ What object he had in view, or what could be his personal hopes, is hard to tell. The same *vox populi* assures us that at the bottom of that unrelenting, cruel persecution of which the defunct Czar had been chosen the victim, there lay the hope of somehow provoking a general rise, bringing things to a revolution, [165] during which the Grand Duke would first proclaim himself a dictator and then — well, Napoleon the III’s *coup d’état* was as good a model as any. And if — adds the same rumour — the ever-watchful, seemingly never discouraged Hydra of Russian Socialism had ever an extra head to raise as soon as the previous one was crushed, it is because of the untold generosity of the man who furnished the funds. Enormous sums of money have been secretly capitalized of late in foreign markets and traced to the Grand Duke, and even the priceless stones from the family *ikons* in his private chapel, a theft but just discovered, were taken out by no hand of a common thief, but by that of their owner.

It is hard to believe, or even to realize, the dreadful accusation, but such is the unanimous and persistent rumour. And fratricide is no uncommon stepping stone to power in Russian history; ugly facts of the most crushing character have lately transpired which would seem to preclude even the possibility of any further doubt. In the middle of April the circulation of the *St. Petersburg Vedomosty* was stopped, and its office pounced upon and sealed by the police, only because it had significantly ad-

¹ [members of the wealthy bourgeoisie]

² [lower ranking]

³ [Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolayevich (1827–1892), second son of Emperor Nicholas I, married to Alexandra Iossifovna, daughter of Prince Saxen-Altenburg. — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

vised these police “instead of making useless perquisitions¹ in small grocery shops and the metropolis dens, to carefully examine and search *the cottage on the Millionnaya*,” the latter appellation being a nickname for the Grand Duke Constantine’s palace in that locality. It is positively known, too, that General Trepoff, the would-be victim of Vera Zassulitch,² acting on what he considered unimpeachable testimony, had repeatedly insisted that the late Emperor should grant him permission to make a secret search in his brother’s palace, but that the Czar had most emphatically refused, telling Trepoff that he was mad. At last, the latter managed to procure and bring the Emperor’s letter, in which the Grand Duke was so seriously compromised that upon reading it the unfortunate sovereign granted him the long-sought-for permission. But it came too late. Evidently there were spies on the Emperor’s premises; for, when General Trepoff went to the suspected palace in the dead of the night, and but a few hours after the permission had been granted, he found that the inner [165] portions of a large cupboard and of an iron safe inside it, in which the Grand Duke kept his private correspondence, had been in some mysterious way, burnt to ashes. When in the presence of his select agents Trepoff opened it, there was nothing to be seen but a thick cloud of smoke, and the seekers merely burnt their fingers with the heated metal of the safe. This manoeuvre served to obliterate every vestige of damaging proof; and the episode had to be hushed up. Another no less significant, though not a direct proof, is furnished by the Grand Duke’s son. When he had robbed his mother of her diamonds, and had fought a fist duel in which he successfully thrashed his father — for which double feat of valour he was banished and remains to this day in exile — he wrote to the Emperor pleading for mercy, which was refused. Since then he wrote several letters to the late Czar, his uncle, as well as to his cousin, the present Emperor. They were read by Princess Dolgoroukov; and, as she never was distinguished for either tact or discretion, their contents were blurted out by her in a family broil, and thus became the joint property of the court gossip. The young Grand Duke, while pleading guilty of the theft, said that he had only saved the diamonds from worse hands than his — those of the Nihilists. He declared that he personally was and would ever remain His Majesty’s most faithful and loyal subject, while his father and mother were but two traitors who conspired against the Czar’s life. It is now proved for a certainty that on the day of regicide the Emperor, yielding to the entreaties of both Loris-Melikoff and Dolgoroukov, would probably have remained at home, had not the Grand Duke Constantine’s wife suddenly thwarted Loris-Melikoff’s plans. The Grand Duchess Alexandra Iossifovna, or “Madame Constantine” as she is called, touched the Czar’s pride to the quick by remarking that “were he to abstain from showing himself on that day, the people might suspect His Majesty of being a coward.” That was enough, and the Emperor drove to his doom. It is a well-known fact that ever since March 5th (17th) she has been kept a prisoner in her palace, no one being allowed to see her but in the presence of a high official, who is said to sleep in a room [167] next to her own bed chamber. Then there is the fact of their eldest son, the Grand Duke Nikolay Constantinovitch being publicly arrested on the open accusation of being implicated with the Nihilists. Moreover the high office of

¹ [thorough enquires or searches]

² [Vera Ivanovna Zassulich (1851–1919) who was acquitted in connection with the attempted assassination of Governor-General of St. Petersburg, Dmitri Feodorovich Trepov (1850–1906). — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

the *Amiralen-Chef* held by the Grand Duke Constantine since his very childhood has been suddenly abolished, and the official Government paper has notified all Russia of it. Again, at the time when the dining room in the Winter Palace was blown up, the whole of the Imperial family was present during the catastrophe except the Grand Duke Constantine; who had, on the pretext of some business two hours before, left for Cronstadt. Nor was he at St. Petersburg on March the 1st (13th), having most unexpectedly gone again to the same place on the previous night, returning to the metropolis but three days later, pretending as an excuse a sudden and serious attack of illness upon hearing of the fearful event. Lastly, Zhelyabov is said to have made at the last hour, and hoping thereby to save his own life, a most positive and unequivocal revelation that the funds of the Russian Socialists were furnished to them by the Grand Duke.

Among other erroneous information given out by the St. Petersburg Press is the statement that Princess Yurievsky (Dolgoroukov), the late Czar's wife, had been banished.¹ The [168] story told in the letters we quote is quite different. Half insane with terror after the announced death of the Emperor, ordering her winter carriage, she rushed into it alone, unperceived in the great tumult, and commanded the coachmen to drive her "across the frontier" — anywhere but near the palaces. After hours of aimless driving the old and faithful coachman, perceiving that she had fallen from exhaustion and weeping into a kind of stupor, quietly drove her back to the Winter Palace and delivered her safely to her affrighted ladies-of-honour, who knew not where she had gone. An hour later the young Emperor, who had heard of her attempt to escape, came to her room and begged for admission. The poor woman was terribly frightened, but [169] soon found out her mistake. When the old Czar, sinning against all social and religious laws, had married her on the fortieth day after the death of the Empress, great had been the public indignation. His children felt terribly

¹ [Princess Katherine Mihailovna Dolgorukova was born November 14/26, 1847. She was the daughter of Prince Mihail Mihailovich Dolgorukov and his wife Vera Gavrilovna, *née* Vishnevitzky, being therefore a direct descendant of Prince Rurik through the canonized Princes Vladimir (d. 1015) and Mihail of Chernigov (c. 1179–1246); she belonged to the same Elder Line of the Dolgorukov Family as H.P. Blavatsky's own grandmother, Princess Helena Pavlovna Dolgoroukov. Princess Katherine was therefore a distant relative of H.P. Blavatsky.

Emperor Alexander II had known her since she was a child of only ten years. After the death of her parents, Katherine and her sister Marie were educated in the famous Smolny Institute at St. Petersburg at the expense of the Emperor himself, who had taken personal charge of the welfare of the entire family (the girls had four brothers). Very soon after her graduation, the strong tie which had existed between the Emperor and Katherine from the very first ripened into love. The story of this rather remarkable union is quite unique. It withstood all criticism, enmity and even scandal. Princess Katherine gave birth to three children, one son and two daughters, by the Emperor, and acted for many years as his counsellor and refuge in times of stress and trials. Hardly a month after the death of his legitimate wife, the Empress Marie Alexandrovna, in June of 1880, the Emperor married Princess Katherine and by Imperial Ukaz secured for her the name of Princess Yuryevsky which was to be the name of their descendants as well. There is ample historical and documentary evidence to support the belief that the Emperor was about to crown Katherine as an Empress, when he fell the victim of a terrorist's bomb.

Eventually, Princess Yuryevsky and her three children went to Paris where she was completely absorbed in their education. In later years she lived a great deal of her time at Nice, France, where she died February 15th, 1922, hardly noticed at all.

The role which Princess Katherine played in the enlightened and liberal policies and plans of Emperor Alexander II was far-reaching and constructive, and it is obvious that her influence upon him was of a nature which smoothed many an asperity in his life and provided a haven from the outrageous accusations and enmity which were piled upon a ruler who was at heart humane and idealistic, often the victim of those whose utter selfishness could not be dispelled by either ideals or generous action.

While very little has ever been written about Princess Yuryevsky attention should be drawn to the following two works: *Le Roman tragique de l'Empereur Alevandre II*, by Maurice Paléologue, French Ambassador to Russia (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1923; 154pp., illus.) and *Katia*, by Princess Marthe Bibesco (translated by Priscilla Bibesco. New York: Doubleday, Doran & Co., 1939; xix, 256pp., illus.). — *Boris de Zirkoff*.]

annoyed, though it is now urged that the poor man must have been feeling there was no time to lose; and the prospect of the Princess being soon publicly recognized and crowned, she having prevailed upon the Emperor to fix the ceremony for next May — a determination declared by the Czar himself — was not likely to smooth the ill-feeling between the parties. But now, when the terrible blow had fallen alike upon the guilty and the innocent and Alexander III had nothing more to fear, his feelings underwent a total change. In the sincerity of his filial grief he determined to honour the memory of the martyred Czar, by showing respectful and friendly feelings to his widow, the woman his father had so devotedly loved. And so, no sooner had he entered the room than he went to the hysterically-screaming Princess, and tenderly embracing her he pledged his word of honour to forget the past and love and honour her as his father's widow. "I solemnly promise to you to do all I can for you and your children — *my brothers*," he added. The young Empress was also summoned, and a full reconciliation ensued on that day. And now the morganatic Empress is installed in the Winter Palace for ever, and made sole mistress of it; the Emperor deciding to remain in "Anitchkoff," while the Imperial abode is to be used only on the great Court ceremonies and festival days.

Meanwhile the state of Russia is as bad, and its future as black and uncertain as ever. That neither the Nihilists, nor the people they are supposed to work for, will benefit by the murder may be inferred from the words pronounced by Alexander III a short time before the catastrophe. He was heard to say:

I will not follow in the steps of my father when I become the Czar, but rather in those of my grand-father.

Concludes the correspondent:

And now the public is in ceaseless agony, lest they should also kill our new Emperor. The death of the late Czar — monstrous infamy, a dishonour [170] and an eternal disgrace as it was for Russia — cannot yet be looked upon as a *national misfortune*. But if his son is murdered the crime is sure to fall as a most terrible calamity upon the whole land. For the present Czarevitch being but a boy, we would have as Regent the Grand Duke Vladimir; and regency in Russia is historically known to have never brought aught else but public disasters. . . . Our Emperor is frightfully changed. . . . Last night I saw him coming down from his apartments. Pale, thin, and careworn, he already looks more like his shadow than the hale strong fellow he used to look two months ago, and the young Empress looks still worse. A regular panic has seized even upon the little children. One night the little Grand Duke George, late in the evening, escaped from his nurses and came running all in tears to his father, loudly screaming,

Papa, papa, let us go away! Oh! do let us run away to England and to aunt Alexandra; but not by rail — or we shall be blown up in the air as grandfather was . . . Let us escape in a balloon, and they will not reach us.

The nurses and ladies-in-waiting were all silently weeping around the child. And such scenes occur daily!