



R. W. T. STEAD, in the London Times, gives a graphic picture of the changed conditions in Russia under the new regime in that country, and he says:

Returning to Russia after an absence of three years, I find on every hand evidence of a change so complete as to seem almost incredible. To all outward appearance Russia, after the birth throes of the revolutionary years, has now resumed her normal life. Every one asserts, the Revolutionists more emphatically than any one else, that the revolutionary fever has spent itself, and that for years to come, provided that the great political evolution represented by the Duma is allowed regular development, there is no reason to apprehend a recurrence of the disturbances of 1905 and 1906.

The most remarkable evidence which is afforded of this transformation is the fact that at last the Tsar has a prime minister whom every one trusts. Three years ago the most dangerous symptom of the situation was the fact that nobody seemed willing to trust anybody. It was enough for any Russian to be placed in a position of authority for all other Russians to discover that he was the most untrustworthy man in the empire. Today M. Stolypin is universally admitted to be worthy of the confidence of the Tsar and of the nation. "Un brave homme et un parfait gentleman" was the twice repeated description given of the prime minister by his predecessor Count Witte. M. Milukoff, leader of the Cadets, was not less pronounced in his praise. Even the leading Reactionaries, who speak of him as the "Lafayette of the Revolution," and who maliciously quote Napoleon's saying about that worthy, that "there is no one so dangerous as an honest man conscientiously devoted to false ideals," admit that he is honest, that he is conscientious, and that he has ideals. The worst that I have heard alleged against him is that his ideals are not very imaginative, and that in reality they amount to little more than a sincere desire to make the best of everything and to see to it, to vary Wellington's phrase, that the Tsar's government must be carried on. In other words, instead of being fashioned on the lines of a German idealogue or a French doctrinaire, M. Stolypin is by temperament and by conviction very much like the best type of an English Whig.

M. Stolypin commands the confidence of his sovereign, the support of the Duma, and the devotion of an almost completely homogeneous cabinet. He is a man personally fearless, of nerves unshaken even by the appalling catastrophe which wrecked his house, maimed his child, and killed nearly three score of his guests, and what is still more remarkable, he is so incapable of intrigue that he cannot be made to realize the existence of the obscure creatures who, in high places and in low, spend their wretched lives in intriguing to secure his downfall. This inability to recognize the machinations of his enemies seems to give him something of the immunity of the Wunderkind in the fairy story, who passes unscathed through the haunted wood owing to his inability to see the demons and hobgoblins which would have destroyed him if he had displayed a sign of fear.

His policy is, of course, criticized, and is open to criticism on both sides. To the reactionary it is revolutionary, to the revolutionist it is too reactionary. But the Palinurus of the

Russian empire, although he may tack to the north to escape a sunken rock or to the south to avoid a quicksand, although he may shift his sail to catch the veering breeze, has at least succeeded in doing the two things indispensable for the navigator—he has kept deep water under his keel, and he is steadily making way to his desired haven.

M. Stolypin is a man of fine presence, with great simplicity of manners and a capacity for eloquent speech, which have led some to describe him as a Russian Gladstone. His only serious blunder so far has been his yielding to the fatal current which in the past swept the ship of State upon the barrier reef of Finnish autonomy. But that is not irreparable, and it is inconceivable that M. Stolypin, with the memory of the Plehve-Bobrikoff fiasco before his eyes, will persist in a policy which would add a Finnish difficulty to the troubles with which he is so valiantly contending. His great task is that of combating the fatal Slavonian tendency to anarchy, which, since the days when the Variages were summoned to give a government to Russia, has ever threatened the integrity and the peace of Eastern Europe. Three centuries ago Russians found salvation in the autocracy, the personal rule of a single man. It was an expedient suited to the times. But an empire of 150,000,000 souls is too vast even for the demon energy of a Peter the Great. The attempt to perpetuate the old system has led to a hopeless failure. It is in vain to persist in pouring 100 million gallons of new wine into the leaky old bottle which was never meant to hold more than 50 millions. The need for asserting the authority and the unity of the central government is as great as it ever was. To seek to secure it by the personal power of one autocrat results in the multiplication of petty autocrats in every province and in the establishment of administrative anarchy in every department. To cope with this peril there is only one effective means, and that is to graft the English system of cabinet government upon the Russian autocracy. The prime minister, elected by the sovereign to act as his alter ego, so long as he enjoys his confidence, must be master in his own cabinet and be responsible for the unity and harmonious co-operative working of all departments of the great State machinery. How far M. Stolypin is consciously working towards the realization of this ideal I do not know. But, consciously or unconsciously, he is steadily pursuing a policy tending in that direction. And from every point of view it is well that it should be so. From the appended interview it is evident how far from realized is the concentration of authority in a single centre.

M. Stolypin received me the day after my arrival in Russia at the Elagin Palace. He said at first that he deprecated an interview in the newspaper sense of the word as tending to limit the freedom of conversation. At the close of an hour's talk I asked his permission to submit to him the notes of the interview for his revision, in the hope that he might find that they contained nothing that was not suitable for publication. He consented, but as he was leaving the city for a much needed holiday and change of air, he asked me to submit the interview to M. Makaroff, his adjutant. This was duly done, and I received from M. Makaroff permission to publish the interview as approved, merely enclosing in brackets elucidating remarks embodying additional information given me by M. Makaroff.

I began by explaining to M. Stolypin that I had a commission to write a series of articles

for the English press for the purpose of enlightening the British public on the actual condition of things in Russia; that this was most desirable on account of the conflicting statements that had been current, and also because we hoped that after the Reval interview the relations between Russia and England had become established upon a friendly footing. Russian affairs, therefore, were of more interest than ever to the English.

I begged to ask if he would be so good as to inform me upon certain points. The first was as to the subsidence of the revolutionary fever. I should be glad to know whether, in his opinion, this happy change, which was largely due to his excellency, could be regarded as temporary or permanent.

M. Stolypin replied that in his opinion the change was permanent. "The revolution is dead, although," he added, "if we should be so unfortunate as to make great mistakes, it might revive again, but not unless."

I asked him if he thought it possible—if the revolution was dead—to dispense with the extraordinary measures which had been adopted for the purpose of repressing disorder. These were, first, the state of siege; secondly, the executions; and thirdly, administrative exile.

M. Stolypin replied that he had seen statements in the English newspapers which implied that the government was occupied in doing nothing else but making executions and exiling people to Siberia. Nothing could be further from the fact. Everything that was not normal in Russia in the action of the Executive was due to the necessity of having to deal with the results of the abnormal state of disorder of the last two or three years; but this was temporary and would pass when the excesses which necessitated it had ceased to exist. "Take, for instance," said M. Stolypin, "your first point as to the state of siege. I admit as fully as any one can desire that it is impossible to go on governing indefinitely in a state of siege. At the present moment l'etat militaire only exists in three districts of Russia proper, Sevastopol, Odessa, and Kharkoff. It has had to be maintained also in the Baltic provinces, Poland, and the Caucasus."

He was, however, in good hopes that it would be possible to raise the state of siege in Odessa and Kharkoff in a couple of months time, and at the beginning of the winter it would be possible to relax it in the Baltic provinces and Poland, so that by Christmas the state of siege would exist only in the Caucasus.

Then with regard to the executions. M. Stolypin said there was no man regretted more than he the necessity for capital punishment. His own temperament revolted against severity, and if four or five years ago any one had told him that it would ever be possible for him to be administering a system in which executions took place, he would have regarded the idea as unthinkable. But necessity knew no law, and he was convinced that if the executions were stopped tomorrow there would be a fresh outbreak of murders, violence, etc., from which no one in high places might escape. The executions which are at present taking place were not for the most part the punishment of crimes committed during the revolutionary period, but of murders and robberies which were now taking place, although in some places, and chiefly in the Baltic provinces, many men who had committed crimes two or three years ago were now being brought to justice.

I asked M. Stolypin if he could give me the figures which would show whether the executions were diminishing or increasing, and added, that, according to the statements of Russian revolutionists in London, there were 15 persons hanged every day in Russia at the present time.

"I have not got the exact figures," said M. Stolypin; "but I will secure them for you. In the meantime I will only say that 15 executions a month would be much nearer the truth, and this number, I hope, will diminish as the criminals of the revolutionary party are caught. I will, however, obtain for you the exact statistics."

"Now as to the exiled by administrative order. The Russian revolutionists in London say that we are exiling 200 persons a day. Upon this point I can give you the exact figures, because I asked to be supplied with them when I saw what wild statements were being made in the press. I find that the total number of persons who have been exiled by administrative order is slightly over 14,000, and most of these have been sent to the Northern provinces of Russia, and not to Siberia. Of these 14,000, 2,000 have escaped, so that we have now 12,000 in our hands."

I then asked M. Stolypin as to the Jewish question. He said that the difficulty about the Jews was that any progress in the direction of reforms—unless it was done very carefully—would provoke a violent agitation among the classes who, for one reason or another, dislike the Jews. The hostility to the Jews was partly religious, partly economical. The priests were against the Jews everywhere, so also were the small traders and others who dislike the Jewish competition. These two motives, combined with racial animosity, rendered it very difficult to alleviate the position of the Jews without making matters worse. Instead of better,

I then asked M. Stolypin what was being done about the agrarian question, about which in England it was believed very little progress had been made.

"Quite the reverse is the fact," said M. Stolypin. "Very much progress has been made, and if nothing had been done the state of the provinces would be far from quiet. Indeed, it is partly owing to the steps which have been taken to improve the conditions of the peasants that there has been a cessation of the attacks upon landlords' houses and a general quieting down of the country districts. If we were to desist in the carrying out of our agrarian reforms we should have again to face a recurrence of the jacqueries from which we suffered so much two years ago."

I asked M. Stolypin to explain to me briefly what had been done in the direction of land reform.

"The first thing that has been done," he replied, "has been to assert the principle that the peasants must everywhere as rapidly as possible be converted into freeholders; that is to say, we regard the institution of the Mir, with its communal ownership, under which no peasant is now secure that the labor which he has invested in his holding may not be transferred to his neighbor, as fatal to economic progress. The foundation stone of our agrarian policy is the substitution of private for collective ownership, for experience shows that communal holding weakens the sense of property and develops anarchical notions. This is a great task and one which cannot be carried out in a moment. The mere necessity of surveying the lands entails great delay. There are only a certain number of surveyors whom we can employ, and the task is one that requires time."

"Then, again, we have transferred to the peasants great quantities of land that belonged to the government, and also we have transferred to them much land that formed part of the Imperial appanages. The Land Bank advances often as much as 100 per cent. of the purchase money requisite for the purchase of this additional land, and the peasants repay it in small annual instalments. All this work is a progress. It occupies the minds of the peasants, convinces them that serious and earnest effort is being made to improve their conditions. Their minds being occupied with this practical question, they are no longer the prey to revolutionary agitators who promise them impossible things."

I asked M. Stolypin what was the present position of the Black Hundreds, which in England were believed to be active in the instigating of attacks upon the Jews in the interests of reaction. He said that the Black Hundreds regarded him as their worst enemy, and were continually attacking him, describing him as an arch-revolutionist.

M. Stolypin said that it should never be forgotten the great difference that existed between Russia and England. In Russia there was a great lack of what he regarded as the distinctive safeguard of society in England—viz., the English equilibrium. In England he would perhaps be regarded as a Radical.

M. Stolypin expressed his great satisfaction with the good results of the work done by M. Isvolsky, who had achieved two great things in the conclusion of the conventions with Japan and with England, without either of which the foreign relations of Russia would have been in a much more difficult position than they are, happily, today. The Anglo-Russian convention, for instance, enabled them to contemplate the Persian crisis with composure, feeling that the disturbances would be confined to the Persians, and would not in any way affect the relations of England and Russia. He said that at Reval it had been a great pleasure to make the personal acquaintance of the King of England, whose great tact he admired, and admired not less the accuracy of his information as to the past history of the negotiations between England and Russia.

I asked him about the Russian fleet.

"I am going on with the building of our four battleships."

"In spite," said I, "of the opposition of the Duma?"

M. Stolypin replied to me, "the Duma opposed, but the Council of the Empire supported, the policy of naval construction proposed by the government. Under our constitution, when the two bodies of the legislature differ, the government is authorized to fall back upon the last legal vote, which is quite large enough to enable us to go on with the building of the ships this year."

Speaking of the general tranquility of the country, M. Stolypin said that one of the most reassuring facts of the situation was that the young people were going back to their studies, and now, in the schools and universities, were attending their classes and studying their books, instead of making revolutionary speeches. One of the worst consequences of the disorders of the last few years was that for three or four years the young men who ought to have come forward as duly qualified doctors, engineers, and so forth, were lacking, and Russia was suffering in every department from the lack of trained youth.

I then touched upon another subject of great interest to many people in England. I said that on my way out to Russia I had met

Mr. Bramwell Booth, son of "General" Booth, of the Salvation Army, who asked me to make inquiries whether there was any possibility of the admission of the Salvation Army to Russia.

M. Stolypin asked "whether the Salvation Army really did good work?"

I replied, "The Salvation Army does excellent work, apart altogether from its distinctive religious teachings, and is one of the most useful philanthropic organizations in the world."

M. Stolypin inquired if it meddled in politics.

I replied, "Absolutely not. Even in England it abstains entirely from political action, and in other countries no complaint has ever been made of any Salvationist either meddling in politics or conducting any religious propaganda hostile to the religious creed, ritual, or prejudices of any other Christian Church."

M. Stolypin asked, "Whether they could be relied upon not to inflame popular sentiment against the non-Christians?"

I replied, "The Salvation Army work is too Christian to be hostile to any body. For instance, in every country people of all religions and of none, Freethinkers, and Roman Catholics recognize the solid philanthropic secular value of the work of the Army and support it with subscriptions. "General" Booth is on terms of personal friendship with Lord Rothschild, who has repeatedly subscribed to the social work of the Army."

M. Stolypin remarked that he saw no political reason why there should be any obstacle placed in the way of the coming of the Army into Russia.

I replied that I was very glad indeed to hear this. That I was certain that the Salvationists would prove in Russia, as they had proved in countries as far apart as Germany and Japan, that they rendered valuable service to the State. In Germany 12 years ago they were under the surveillance of the police. Today German cities like Hamburg and Elberfeld make them annual subsidies. In Berlin they have about 40 halls and centres of activity. In Japan the Emperor in person thanked "General" Booth for the great good he had done to his people. The King and Queen of England, the Presidents of France and the United States have testified to the value of the Salvationists' work.

M. Stolypin said that he thought the Salvation Army might come to Russia. It would at any rate interest the people and might be useful. "But what about meetings in the open air, which are quite contrary to Russian law?"

I replied that "the Salvation Army was ready to meet the views of the Russian authorities as to whether it was or was not expedient to hold meetings in the open air, and to make processions through the streets." At the same time I reminded his excellency that in Russia the meetings of the Mir were always held in the open air. That was, however, an unessential detail. I had for 25 years been in close personal relations with "General" Booth and the work of the Army, and could with the utmost confidence assure his excellency that the Salvationists are good people, who do good work making bad citizens into good citizens, without doing any mischief to the State.

M. Stolypin said, "I think they might be useful. I see no reason why they should not come. But let me have a copy of their statutes, so that I can examine them before I give my final decision."

I replied promising to submit a copy of the Salvation Army statutes, and further recapitulating the following assurances I was authorized to submit on behalf of Mr. Bramwell Booth.

1. The Salvation Army will not in any way mix itself in politics.
2. The Salvation Army will not in any way antagonize any other religious organization.
3. The Salvation Army will comply with the wishes of the authorities as to open-air meetings and processions.
4. The Salvation Army never holds any meetings at which it would not welcome the presence of representatives of the government.
5. The Salvation Army will, if required, give notice to the police of every meeting which it intends to hold.

I added that the Salvation Army had for some years been at work in Helsingfors, that if it came to Russia it asked for nothing from the government except permission to do its work at its own expense, and that the annual income of the Salvation Army from voluntary subscriptions amounted last year to more than a million roubles.

Mr. Green had been paying four dollars a week for board; his appetite constantly increased. Finally his landlady said that she must either sell out and quit or raise her boarder's rate. One day, after watching him feverishly devouring plateful after plateful, she plucked up courage and said:

"Mr. Green, I shall have to raise your board to five dollars."

Mr. Green looked up with a start, and then in a tone of consternation he said:

"Oh, Mrs. Small, don't. It's as much as I can do now to eat four dollars' worth."