

Prince Ivan Obolensky, the newly appointed governor-general of Finland, enjoys the unenviable reputation of being one of the most cruel and ruthless administrators in Russia. Born in 1845, he first served in the navy; and in the Russo-Turkish war he distinguished himself in Silistria by constructing a bridge over the Danube for the transport of Russian siege guns. Shortly after the war he left the naval service and obtained a civil post in Simbirsk which he held for seven years. About five years ago he was appointed governor of Charkoff, where he suppressed the students' riots and the agrarian movement by resorting to very harsh measures. He treated the peasants as revolutionaries and had them beaten by the Cossacks. He sent the Cossacks to the villages, and innocent and guilty alike were mercilessly beaten, and some of them to death. He imposed a fine of eight hundred thousand rubles on the offending communities, thus turning many peasants into beggars. After the suppression of the riots the governor turned his attention to political suspects, and arrest followed arrest, the result being that discontent increased and reached its climax in the attempt on the life of the hated prince in August, 1902. Prince Obolensky escaped with a slight wound. His would-be murderer was a member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party, which had passed sentence of death on the governor for his 'butcheries.'

Prince Obolensky, however, had now become a persona grata with the Czar, who, after the attempted assassination, addressed a telegram to him declaring his high appreciation of the governor's activity, and thanking God that his life had been spared. Shortly afterwards, Prince Obolensky was summoned to St. Petersburg, as he had been almost boycotted by Charkoff society.

The first result of the prince's appointment was the suppression of several newspapers in Finland, including the *Poivolehti* (Helsingfors), which seems to have been disrespectful to the memory of the late General Bobrikoff. Four or five more Finnish organs, it is said, are marked for suppression by Prince Obolensky, who, prior

to his departure for Helsingfors, received an elaborate letter of instructions from the Czar. "Strengthen in the minds of the Finnish people the conviction that their historic destinies are indissolubly bound up with those of Russia," wrote Nicholas II. The prince is further bidden to maintain for the welfare of Finland the 'local autonomy' she now enjoys. The entire epistle is amazing to the independence Belge (Brussels), one of the leading liberal organs of Europe:

"When we read attentively the Czar's autograph letter addressed to General Obolensky when he succeeded General Bobrikoff as governor-general of Finland, we are surprised at the lack of comprehension persisted in by the ruling classes of Russia in the face of the events transpiring in the Grand Duchy. The Czar declares that the local administration and the legislation enjoyed by Finland since her union with Russia may be retained. Would it not be supposed that St. Petersburg is unaware that the Finnish constitution has been ignored, that all liberty has been taken away from this long free people, who never misused their freedom? And when Nicholas II. adds that authority, without weakening, must strive to knit Finland more closely to the empire, it is not easy to understand what new menaces are made to the Finnish nation?

"We readily understand that it is desired in St. Petersburg to unify all the parts of the vast Russian empire, impart a character in common to the governments in the different provinces, create a solid mass that foreign influence can no longer permeate. But what can not be justified is the desire to accomplish all this in a reactionary spirit, and what can not be approved is the abstraction from a wise and safe people, which has never abused the freedom accorded it, of rights which it has never exceeded. In no circumstances, under no pretext of unifying a system of government, may a people be caused to retrograde when it has become sufficiently enlightened by its own efforts to have the control of its own affairs entrusted to it."