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STRANGE STORY OF KING NICHOLAS OF MONTENEGRO

Story Says He Was in League With Austria And That Terms Were Agreed On Between Two Nations Last August--
Nicholas Dismissed His Cabinet and Placed Premier Minskovich in Charge Who Was a Strong Pro-Austrian--Montenegrin King Has a Passion for Poker.

ROME, Feb. 29.—King Nicholas of Montenegro's favorite game is poker, which he plays very badly and yet always wins. It is an open secret that during the last ten years the old King regularly spent many hours every day playing poker with the diplomatic representatives of the Great Powers accredited at his court, whose chief and best qualifications consisted in allowing him to win; thus a great portion of their office allowances was transferred into the King's pockets.

The more a diplomatist lost in poker at the royal palace at Cetinje the greater was the influence he acquired with the King, who judged Ministers and the countries they represented according to the amounts they could afford to lose at poker.

"In the King's pocket," a diplomatist who spent many years in Montenegro recently said, "one will find Russian rubles, British sovereigns, Austrian crowns and French Napoleons all mixed together, and strangely enough, in some mysterious way, enemy coins still kept filling the King's pockets even during the war, despite the fact that the representatives of the central Powers, both notoriously bad poker players, left Cetinje early in August, 1914."

The discovery made by this diplomatist and expressed in diplomatic language, figurative but quite plain, was far from a mystery to many people who tried to explain it by openly hinting that the German wife of the Crown Prince of Montenegro, Duchess Jutta (Militta) of Mecklenburg-Strelitz, probably continued to receive her allowance from Germany during the war. Her husband, Prince Danilo, spent most of his time abroad, even when war broke out, preferably in Switzerland or southern France, and his absence from Montenegro was regarded with suspicion, especially by the French, but then nobody suspected his father of conspiring with the enemy.

Continued to Play Poker.
The old King continued to play poker with the representatives of the Allies at Cetinje and during the early part of the war the Montenegrins fought side by side with the Serbians against the Austrians. Nobody then doubted that King Nicholas was not heart and soul with the Allies.

The French and British helped Montenegro and French naval guns with French artillerymen were sent to Montenegro and bombarded Cattaro from the Lovchen. The Russians sent munitions and money to Montenegro and the Italians provisions and supplies, but nothing came out of the Anglo-French naval operations in the Adriatic and Cattaro remained Austrian.

When Italy entered the war the King of Montenegro was most enthusiastic, and despite the fact that there was no love lost between him and his son-in-law, Victor Emmanuel, cordial telegrams were exchanged. It was then expected that the Montenegrins and the Serbians would resume the offensive against the Austrians in order to prevent them from sending troops to the western frontier against Italy. Instead nothing was done.

The Serbian army was being reorganized after driving out the Austrian invaders and the nation, after defeating another dangerous foe in the shape of typhus fever, was resting on its military laurels. The Montenegrins did not even attempt to explain their passive attitude toward Austria, but only complained because Italian help was lacking.

Meanwhile, the Austrians, who could have easily attacked Montenegro, were likewise passive. Hardly any troops were left along the Montenegrin frontier, and the heavy artillery defending Sarajevo in the early days of the war threatened by the Montenegrins was sent to the Italian front.

Occasionally an Austrian aeroplane flew over Montenegro and dropped bombs over Cetinje and Podgoritza, but even these air raids stopped, and from May to October, 1915, hardly a shot was fired between the Montenegrins and the Austrians.

Explanation From Premier.
The reports spread in Italy last summer that Montenegro was in league with Austria. This report was one of many, all unfavorable to Mon-

tenegro, but, as it was based on a positive fact, that of a conference between Prince Peter and an Austrian officer, it needed besides a denial also an explanation. A former Montenegrin Premier, who happened to be in Paris, was accordingly instructed to grant an interview, the gist of which was more or less as follows:—

"King Nicholas," the former Premier said, "was indignant against the Austrians for dropping bombs over undefended towns and killing women and children, and threatened reprisals, consisting in shooting the Austrian prisoners captured by the Montenegrins. Prince Peter was accordingly instructed to inform the Austrians of his father's decision and he sent his aide-de-camp to the Austrian lines with a request that he might confer with the late military attache at Cetinje, Major Hupko. The Major happened to be on the Isonzo fighting the Italians, but he was summoned at once, and he motored all the way from Goritza to Cattaro, where he conferred with Prince Peter.

"The news that a conference had been solicited by the Prince originated the report that an armistice had been concluded, but this report was utterly unfounded," the former Montenegrin Premier declared, although since then the Austrians omitted to drop bombs over Montenegro.

It is more probable that Italy, whose representative at Cetinje played poker atrociously by the way, knew all about this conference, which subsequent events proved to have related to something more important than bomb dropping. This may explain why no guns were sent from here to replace the French ones on the Lovchen. Still, King Nicholas continued to invoke help from the allies, and he even went so far as to issue a proclamation to his heroic people exhorting them to fight to the bitter end and affirming his determination to defend Montenegro until the last cartridge was fired and the last man was killed. Montenegrins, he said, prefer death to surrender, and he said he was going to lead them from mountain to mountain and that the national traditions of heroism were going to be renewed.

Allies Decide to Send Help.
King Nicholas' merits as a statesman certainly are worthy of recognition, as his proclamation had the desired effect, and the allies decided to send help, including guns, for the Lovchen. The guns were accordingly sent, unfortunately on a Greek ship owned by an Austrian, who, when in mid-Adriatic, signalled to an Austrian submarine which was in waiting to sink the ship with her cargo after naturally giving ample time to the crew to take to the boats. Other ships with munitions and provisions were similarly sunk by the Austrians, thanks to valuable information supplied by the Montenegrins, who even tolerated their port of Antivari to be closed with Austrian mine fields.

The Italians, however, succeeded in landing provisions, especially flour, at San Giovanni di Medua, both for the Serbians and the Montenegrins, and asked the latter to have them transported to Cetinje and Scutari. Despite the fact that the Montenegrins had 200 transport carts and 2,000 draught horses, presented to King Nicholas by the Czar of Russia, they refused to carry the provisions inland and neglected to repair the road between Medua and Scutari. The provisions were partly looted by the Montenegrins, who sold them to the Albanians, and partly allowed to deteriorate.

Instead the road between Jacova and Scutari, which the Austrians will now in all probability use in advancing to Scutari, was thoroughly repaired by the Montenegrins immediately after they occupied this city with Austria's tacit consent.

A Secret Agreement.
There is every reason to believe that between Montenegro and Austria last August during the conference between Prince Peter and Major Hupko, at which the late Austrian Minister at Cetinje, Baron Otto, is believed to have been present. According to this agreement, Austria promised Montenegro territorial compensations in Novi Bazar and Albania, including of course Scutari, which the Montenegrins had to occupy at once against

the cession of Mount Lovchen, which the Austrians prepared to capture at an early date soon after crushing Serbia with the help of the Germans and Bulgarians. Evidently some provision was made for the restoration of the Prince of Wied as Mpret of Albania, who in fact has been at Pristina more than a month waiting to advance toward Durazzo.

The agreement was conditional on the success of the Austro-German invasion of Serbia, and in fact it was confirmed or rectified last October. News of it was brought to Rome by a British officer, who, it is reported, secured a copy of it at Cetinje, rushed to Scutari and from there to Avlona, whence he came to Italy on a torpedo boat at full speed.

The reason the Allies and especially Italy did not take any action against Montenegro after they had secured evidence that the King was in league with Austria has not been explained. Possibly it was one of the Allies' mazy mistakes.

It is impossible that the Montenegrins did not know that the Austrians were preparing to attack the Lovchen last month. When the attack was imminent King Nicholas sent Gen. Martinovich to take charge of the defence of the mountain and placed him in command of a few thousand men. Gen. Martinovich is notoriously pro-Italian and his appointment evidently satisfied the Allies that the Montenegrins intended to defend the Lovchen.

Pro-Austrian Premier.
Meanwhile, King Nicholas dismissed the Cabinet and appointed a new one, with Minskovich, who is notoriously pro-Austrian, as Premier.

Then the Austrians attacked the Lovchen. They first occupied the Village of Miras, which was defended by a company of Austrian deserters, and then ascended to Kuk, which they conquered without hardly firing a shot. It would have been absolutely impossible for the Austrians to climb up the sides of the mountain had the Lovchen been defended; instead, the only troops consisted of the 100 Austrian deserters at Miras, who were killed to a man by the Austrians before they reached Kuk by surprise.

Gen. Martinovich, with a handful of men, resolutely attacked the Austrians and drove them away from Kuk, but the Austrians were 17,000 strong and they had heavy artillery. So, as they attempted an enveloping movement against the Montenegrins by way of Budua and threatened to cut them off, Gen. Martinovich abandoned the defence of the Lovchen, which the Austrians occupied.

Hardly any more fighting followed, because immediately the King and court abandoned Cetinje and went first to Podgoritza and then to Scutari, while orders were given to Marko Guikanovich, president of the Council of State, to hand over the capital to the Austrians and initiate negotiations for an armistice, as agreed upon long ago.

Future Intentions.
The only Austrian fighting in Montenegro so far consisted of the attack of the Lovchen, besides the pressure along the frontier by the Austrian army under Gen. Kooevess. It is feared that more fighting, real fighting too, will follow. The Austrians will find it very difficult, if not impossible, to disarm the Montenegrins, who, under the leadership of Gen. Martinovich, are now opposing resistance in the interior.

Possibly the Austrians will occupy Montenegro in order to advance against Durazzo and Valona from the north, together with the Bulgarians from the east. This may explain why the attack against Salonika has been postponed, since obviously an easy invasion of Albania will not fail to impress the Greeks more favorably than an unsuccessful attack against Salonika, and possibly might lead to their intervention in favor of the Central Empires.

The Austrians count a great deal on the support of their friends, the Albanians, who for centuries have had their clergy subsidized by Emperor Francis Joseph and his predecessors. The Albanians already have aided the Austrians in Montenegro and Northern Albania, and undoubtedly both the Catholic tribesmen and the Moslems are now fully convinced that since Serbia and Montenegro have been conquered by the Austrians, it will be safer to side with them than with the allies. In Central and Southern Albania the Austrians, with the Mpret and his followers and the representatives of the Sultan of Turkey, now hope to have nothing to do but advance in a so-called military promenade.

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CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I., Feb. 21.—F. L. Rogers, president of the Provincial Fox Breeders' Association; Chester McClure and C. W. Callbrek, representatives of the association, took a large number of pelts to New York and received \$1,000 each for a number of skins. Ten skins averaged \$950 each and twenty sold at an average of over \$700 each. The association will meet to-morrow.

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