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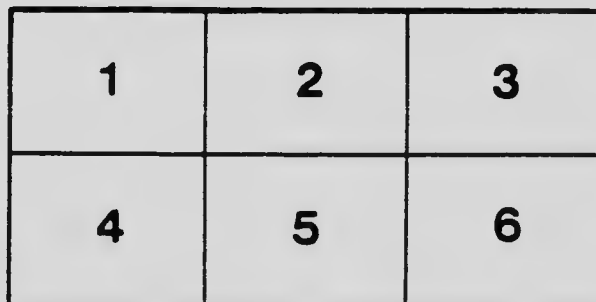
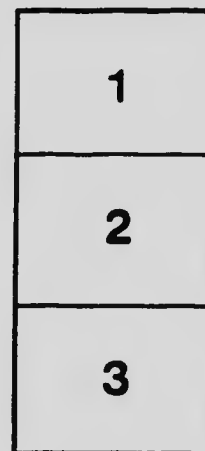
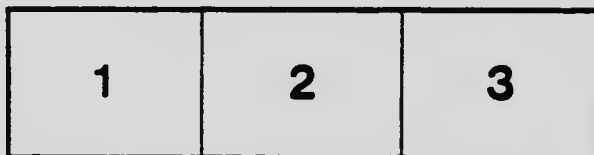
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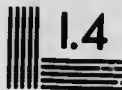
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GERMANY AND
'THE FEAR OF RUSSIA'

BY

SIR VALENTINE CHIROL

SECOND IMPRESSION

Price Twopence net

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GERMANY AND THE 'FEAR OF RUSSIA'

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OF all the arguments used to enlist the sympathies of the British public on the German side during the crisis which led up to the war, none made so wide an appeal to British sentiment as Germany's 'fear of Russia'. The average Englishman knows very little about Russia, and what he knows about her is often derived from violently though not unnaturally prejudiced witnesses—political refugees, Jews, Poles, Finns, and other victims of the repressive methods to which the Russian governing classes have clung, in many directions, tenaciously, in spite of the marked movement towards progress in other directions. Many Englishmen, therefore, see in Russia a remote but formidable and scarcely half-civilized Power, sprawling across two continents, imbued with an insatiable lust of conquest, herself ignorant of freedom and bent on confiscating the freedom of other peoples brought under her sway. This, of course, is a very distorted picture, but it fitted in admirably with Germany's purpose, which was to represent the coming war as a war for German 'culture' against Russian 'barbarism'. That it is nothing of the kind, many distinguished Russians, who cannot be suspected of subserviency to the Russian Government, have now undertaken to tell the British public. Amongst these are Professor Vinogradoff, whose admirable letter to *The*

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Times has been republished by the Clarendon Press ; Professor Struve, one of the founders of the Russian Constitutional Democratic party of the Duma, and M. Bourtseff, a leader of the advanced revolutionary party. They all speak on this aspect of the question with an authority to which I cannot pretend.

All that I desire to show is how incompatible is this theory of the German 'fear of Russia' with the relations of close intimacy and co-operation with Russia which Germany has always sought to cultivate, and has successfully cultivated until quite recently, with great advantage to her own immediate political purposes, but to the detriment of all the best interests of Russia.

The 'fear of Russia' is, it is true, not quite a new bogey in Germany. Even Bismarck used to trot out the danger of Pan-Slavism on sundry occasions when he wanted to make the German people's flesh creep, in order to procure acceptance of fresh military burdens. But he quickly put it away again as soon as it had fulfilled its purpose. Friendship with Russia was one of the cardinal principles of his foreign policy, and one thing he always relied upon to make Russia amenable to German influence was that she should never succeed in healing the Polish sore. In his own *Reflections and Reminiscences*, he boasts with the most extraordinary cynicism of the agreement which he made with Russia in 1863 for the repression of the Polish insurrection. There was a powerful party in Russia, to which the Tsar Alexander II himself at first inclined, which favoured large concessions to Poland. Bismarck threw the whole weight of Prussian influence into the scale of the reactionary party at St. Petersburg ; and the result was, as he himself describes it, 'a victory

in the Russian Cabinet of Prussian over Polish policy. . . . An agreement between Russia and the German foe of Pan-Slavism [i. e. Prussia] for joint action, military and political, against the Polish "fraternization" movement was a decisive blow to the views of the philo-Polish party at the Russian Court.' What Bismarck also defeated at the same stroke was the possibility of a triple *entente* between Russia, France, and England, even in those far-off days. For the two Western Powers were then working together to win Russia over to the liberal policy towards Poland, which Bismarck succeeded in checkmating. In regard to Poland, the Emperor William II, except for a couple of years under the more liberal Chancellorship of Bismarck's immediate successor, Count von Caprivi, has adhered steadily to the Bismarckian tradition. Germany, down to the present day, has oppressed her own Poles not less ruthlessly than Russia, but a great deal more scientifically.

In just the same spirit, Bismarck always sided with the party of German ascendancy in Vienna against the Austrian Slavs; and he used openly to resent any concessions made to them, until the Austro-German alliance was signed and sealed in 1879. Then he felt he could henceforth rely upon the still more anti-Slav tendencies of the Hungarian Government to counteract, as far as foreign policy was concerned, the tenderness which the Emperor Francis Joseph was inclined to display towards his Slav subjects in the Austrian part of his dominions. Here again, the Kaiser has walked in Bismarck's footsteps.

Nevertheless, when the Kaiser came to the throne and dropped the old pilot overboard, the relations between Germany and Russia entered upon a new phase.

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Bismarck preferred, on principle, the friendship of Russia to that of Austria; for he believed that there could be no more solid basis for political co-operation between great European Powers than common principles of internal government. At bottom, he remained a Prussian *junker* all his life long, and absolutism was and still is the ideal of all Prussian *junkers*. Thus, when the Tsar Nicholas I died in 1855, during the Crimean war, the Berlin *Kreuz-Zeitung*, then and still their chief organ, appeared in the deepest mourning with a leading article headed, 'Our Emperor is dead.' There was, of course, no German Emperor in those days; and, though there was an Austrian Emperor at Vienna, it was towards the Russian autocrat that the Prussian *junkers* turned in worship, just as every Mohammedan turns in prayer towards the Prophet's shrine at Mecca. After the Franco-German war, when Bismarck concentrated all his energies on the preservation of the great German Empire he had created, the combination which above all commended itself to him was the 'Three Emperors' Alliance', i.e. an alliance between Germany, Austria, and Russia, based upon common dynastic interests and, to a great extent, common principles of domestic government. It was only when Russian policy with regard to Turkey and her subject races began to alarm Austria-Hungary that, compelled to make his choice between Russia and Austria, Bismarck chose rather reluctantly the latter. He did not himself care twopence about the fate of the Christian races in the Balkans, which, as he once said, were not worth the bones of a single Pomeranian grenadier. But Russia could not remain indifferent to them. The whole nation regarded the emancipation of the Balkan peoples from the Turkish yoke as the historic mission of Russia. It was the Russo-Turkish war of

1827-9 which consummated the independence of Greece. The Crimean war was, for the Russian people, a war waged primarily for the overthrow of Turkish misrule. The Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8 resulted in the liberation of a large part of what is now the kingdom of Bulgaria. Austria-Hungary, on the other hand, had quite different views about the Balkans. The Austrians had played a great part in driving back the tide of Turkish conquest in Eastern Europe, but they had retained for themselves large territories inhabited by Slav races, Serbs, Croats, and others; in the same way, after the last Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8, they had occupied Bosnia and Herzegovina, also largely peopled by Slavs. Their ultimate object was to get down to Salonica and the Aegean Sea, and they did not want to see Turkey dismembered merely to make room for independent Balkan States, least of all for Balkan States under Russian protection. When Bismarck saw the growing friction between Russian policy and Austro-Hungarian policy in the Balkans, he could not run the risk of falling between two stools. He therefore concluded an alliance with Austria-Hungary, partly because she was far more likely than Russia to be content with the position of a subordinate ally. At the same time, to borrow one of his favourite expressions, he was not going to 'cut the wire to St. Petersburg' altogether; and, a few years later, when the wire was becoming rather shaky, he did not shrink from the famous Reinsurance Compact with Russia which, concluded behind Austria's back, fell only very little short of a treacherous bargain that Germany would put her own interpretation, when the time came, upon her treaty obligations towards Austria in the event of an Austro-Russian conflict.

That was the position when William II dismissed

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Bismarck. Now Bismarck's chief object was to safeguard the position of undisputed pre-eminence which the German Empire had acquired on the European continent, and to prevent, at all costs, any hostile combination of Powers which might imperil his life's work. This did not satisfy the young Emperor. He wanted Germany not merely to remain the most powerful State in Europe but to become a world Empire. The Near East, Constantinople, Asia Minor, and Syria—first attracted his attention, and, as he could not very well conquer the Sultan's dominions, he set to work to capture the Sultan himself. All the other Powers were constantly warning the Sultan to introduce reforms and to set his house in order. The Kaiser said to him in effect: 'Deal with your house as you think fit, and I will protect you against these busybodies, if you will make it worth my while. All I want is railway concessions, commercial concessions, banking concessions, privileges for my German colonists in Syria and elsewhere, and the employment of German officers to reorganize and equip your army with German war materials.' To seal this bargain, he was quite willing to go to Constantinople and pay his court to the 'Red Sultan', Abdul Hamid, when the rest of the civilized world was boycotting him on account of the Armenian massacres. Austria-Hungary followed the lead of Germany, though not without occasional hesitation; for she knew that it was only with the help of Germany that she could achieve her own ambitions in the Balkan Peninsula.

But to Russia, German ascendancy at Constantinople could not fail to be most unpalatable; and, as one of the first acts of the Kaiser after he had dismissed Bismarck was to drop his Reinsurance Compact with Russia, the German wire to Petrograd, if not actually

cut, was again very much weakened, and a tariff war between Russia and Germany tended further to make bad blood between the two countries. The Kaiser was by no means ready at that time to break with Russia, and the policy of adventure which Russia was then entering upon in the Far East proved a godsend to Germany. The construction of the Siberian railway, linking up the Tsar's dominions in Europe with his possessions on the remote Pacific, was opening up to Russian statesmen the possibility of finding in the Far East that access to the warmer waters of the world from which they were practically cut off in Europe. The victories of Japan over China in 1894-5 introduced, however, a new and very disturbing factor into their calculations. The Emperor William was quick to seize his opportunity. If he did not, as the Japanese firmly believe, actually instigate Russia to prevent Japan from reaping the fruits of her Manchurian campaign against China, he was prompt to lend her his heartiest co-operation; even at the cost of sowing in Japan a harvest of bitter resentment which has even now come to maturity in the investment of Kiaochao by the Japanese forces, Germany helped Russia and her (on this occasion) somewhat unwilling ally France to eject the Japanese from the territories ceded to them by China. She of course very soon required payment, and Russia was not overwell pleased when, two years later, the Mailed Fist descended upon Kiaochao. On the other hand, she was able to rely on the Kaiser's eager acquiescence when, shortly afterwards, she herself took possession of Port Arthur. One good turn deserves another, and so, in the international expedition for the relief of the Legations in Peking, during the Boxer movement in 1900, the Tsar allowed himself to be jockeyed by the Kaiser

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into proposing that all the foreign forces in Northern China should be placed under a German Generalissimo, Field Marshal von Waldersee, who returned the compliment by giving the Russians a free hand in Manchuria. Germany, again, had no sooner signed an agreement with this country during the Boxer movement for the preservation of the integrity and independence of the Chinese Empire than, at the first hint from St. Petersburg, she hastened to repudiate all idea of its having any application to the Manchurian provinces of China, over which Russia was establishing a scarcely veiled protectorate. Directly and indirectly, German influence henceforth steadily elbowed Russia into a conflict with Japan which, it was hoped in Berlin, would not only divert all Russia's energies from Europe, but also lead to the ultimate conflict between Russia and Great Britain which was then still the certain hope of German statesmen.

Here, however, as in many other cases, the Emperor William overreached himself. From the days of the Holy Alliance onwards, the Russian and German sovereigns have been in the habit of entertaining much closer personal relations than usually exist between the rulers of two independent States. Apart, for instance, from the ordinary diplomatic representation, a special military plenipotentiary, accredited to the person of the sovereign, served as the medium for direct and extremely confidential communications, sometimes quite unknown to the Embassies. Moreover, in Russia, a large section of the Court and of the higher official world consists of Russians of German origin, many of them from the Baltic provinces, whose sympathies have not unnaturally been largely German. Even amongst pure Russians, the reactionary party

has always had much more in common with Imperial Germany than with the liberal Powers of Western Europe. All these forces were in turn mobilized by the Kaiser to urge Russia on to action in the Far East, and to encourage the belief that Japan either would shrink at the last from a conflict with the mighty Russian Empire, or would be easily crushed if she ventured upon the attempt. These forces carried the day, and brought on the Russo-Japanese war, but the result was not what the Kaiser had expected. Thanks very largely to the cordial understanding which had been restored between England and France, both Powers were able to stand out of the conflict, though France was the ally of Russia and Great Britain was the ally of Japan. The war was localized in the Far East, and Russia was defeated.

It was true that, as one result of the Japanese war, Russia's military forces were seriously crippled for years and her position, even in Europe, considerably weakened; but the bitter lesson which she learnt from her defeat was not at all that upon which the Kaiser had reckoned. In the first place, the Tsar Nicholas realized that the advice he had received from London before the war had been far sounder and inspired by far more genuine friendship than the advice he had received from Berlin; for the British Government had consistently warned him that Japan would certainly fight if pressed too hard, and that, if she fought, she might prove to be a very formidable foe. Then, again, the revolutionary movement in Russia, which had derived much of its strength from popular resentment at the Manchurian fiasco, had not ended in the complete triumph of reaction which the Kaiser and the pro-German party in Russia had expected. On the

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contrary, the constitutional reforms, the establishment of the Duma, the attempts to infuse a more liberal spirit into the bureaucracy, created new currents of thought throughout Russia, which were much more in sympathy with Western Europe than with Germany. Not only the most progressive parties in Russia, but even the moderate conservative parties welcomed from the first the possibility of a better understanding between Great Britain and Russia, not merely on international grounds, but because they were convinced that friendly relations between the two countries were bound to exert a favourable influence on the Russian internal situation. The reactionary parties, on the other hand, were those that persisted in the old distrust of England, and clung desperately to the time-honoured connexion with Germany.

Thus, for the first time, the Russian Government was induced to approach the question of a political understanding with Great Britain in an entirely new spirit. This country had often before, especially under Liberal administrations, made overtures to Russia for a settlement of existing differences in Asia; but until the Japanese war induced a more chastened spirit in St. Petersburg, such overtures never met with any genuine response. French influence, too, was now exerted in St. Petersburg for the removal of any further chances of conflict between her Russian ally and her British friend. In 1907, an Anglo-Russian agreement was signed for the settlement of the three principal questions concerning Central Asia, which had repeatedly threatened to embroil the two countries, and it not only removed the chief dangers of collision between them, but paved the way for more intimate relations than had existed for nearly a hundred years. To

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Germany, the Anglo-Russian agreement of 1907 brought even more bitter disillusionment than had the Anglo-French agreement of 1904, because it was still more unexpected. The Kaiser felt that, just as he has already lost one of his trump cards in the removal of the old colonial jealousies between France and England, he was again losing another in the removal of the old Asiatic antagonism between Russia and Great Britain. So as, in 1905, Germany had made a desperate attempt to break up over Morocco the Anglo-French understanding before it had had time to consolidate, so, in 1908, a determined attempt was made to smash the Triple Entente between Great Britain, France, and Russia. The crisis arose with the formal incorporation of Bosnia and Herzegovina with the Hapsburg dominions and the simultaneous proclamation of Bulgarian independence. I need not dwell here upon its vicissitudes. Austria-Hungary, who was primarily concerned, had practically carried her point by diplomatic pressure, but this did not satisfy the Kaiser. It was not enough that Russia, whose military organization had not yet recovered from the Japanese war, should be compelled to abandon the claims she had rather rashly advanced on behalf of her Slav clients. The Kaiser insisted upon her public humiliation, and a scarcely veiled ultimatum was delivered at St. Petersburg, which at that stage was quite needless except to advertise Germany's 'Shining Armour'.

The humiliation thus inflicted upon Russia was resented all the more keenly as it struck at the very point where the policy of the Russian Government most accurately reflected the sentiments of the whole nation. There is in Russia as in most other countries, and far more than in any democratic country, a chauvinist

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party whose ambitions find little echo in the nation as a whole, and that party has always been very strongly represented amongst the official classes, and not least in the Russian Foreign Office. The policy of Asiatic adventure upon which the Russian Government had entered was the policy of that party. The Russian people have always remained more or less indifferent to Persian or Tibetan or Far Eastern questions. Its heart was never even really stirred by the war against Japan. On the other hand, Russian policy in the Balkans, whether or not it was always prompted by disinterested solicitude for the little Slav brothers, always struck a responsive chord throughout Russia; and the people perhaps even more than the Government fiercely resented the slap in the face which Russia had received as a great Slav Power.

As between the two Sovereigns, the wire from Berlin to St. Petersburg had been almost irreparably damaged by the Kaiser's Shining Armour; but when, in theory, the supreme authority is concentrated, as in Russia, in the hands of one man, he is rarely able to exercise real control over any department of the State. Hence in Russia the curious administrative anarchy which often seems to prevail under autocratic rule, even after the events of 1909. Thus it came about that although the Tsar had from the beginning been a whole-hearted supporter of the understanding with England, German influence continued to make itself felt in many powerful quarters, and even in the Russian Foreign Office. In foreign policy, it was chiefly in connexion with Persia that the voice of the German tempter still frequently obtained a hearing, and partly under pressure, Russian diplomacy, it must be admitted, often put a severe strain upon the spirit if not the letter of the Anglo-

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Russian agreement of 1907. Still more visible was the hand of Germany in the swing of the Russian pendulum towards reactionary methods at home; but the more bitter the disappointment of the progressive parties in Russia over the developments of internal policy, the more steadfastly they clung to the maintenance of friendly relations between the Russian and the British Governments as a certain safeguard for what remained of their liberties. Events, meanwhile, were shaping themselves in the Balkan Peninsula in such a way as to force the hands of even the worst reactionaries, who, whatever else they might be willing to do, could not repudiate altogether the traditions of Russian policy in regard to the Slavs outside the Empire.

The small States of South-eastern Europe had taken to heart the lesson of 1908-9. They felt that their interests and even their independence were exposed henceforth to even greater danger from the ambitions of the two Germanic Powers than from their old enemy Turkey. Each of them began to set his own house in order, and a genuine attempt was made to compose their past differences and jealousies in order to meet the common enemy. Long-drawn negotiations between them resulted in the formation of a Balkan League composed of Bulgaria, Greece, Serbia, and Montenegro. All had not, probably, quite the same objects in view. Bulgaria and perhaps Greece had an eye chiefly to Constantinople. For Serbia and Montenegro, it was the Austrian menace that loomed largest. All, however, claimed special, if sometimes rival, interests in Macedonia, and it was Turkish misrule in Macedonia which ultimately brought the Balkan League into the field. The action, perhaps the very existence, of the League took Austria and Germany by surprise. The result of

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its action was a still more unpleasant surprise for them. A victorious Balkan League was likely to prove a very formidable obstacle to Austro-Hungarian expansion to the Aegean Sea ; and Germany's prestige at Constantinople was specially affected by the fact that it was she who had made herself largely responsible for the organization and even for the equipment of the defeated Turkish armies. Germany, therefore, was quite ready to co-operate as peacemaker with Great Britain. The British Government was chiefly concerned to put an end to the war lest it should spread beyond its local limits. The German Government reckoned that, once peace was signed with Turkey, the Balkan League would quarrel over the division of the spoils and fall a prey to internal dissensions. It proved an accurate calculation. Russia tried at the last moment to defeat it by offering to act as arbitrator between the Balkan States. Serbia, whose exorbitant demands had gone far to provoke the conflict, could not reject the Russian proposal, for she, more than any other Balkan State, was dependent, in the last resort, upon Russian protection. But at Sofia the influence of the Germanic Powers prevailed, and King Ferdinand of Bulgaria, whose ambitions were still more inordinate, would not hear of arbitration, and himself cut the Gordian knot by initiating hostilities against his Serbian neighbours. Once more, the result was not what Germany or Austria-Hungary had expected and hoped. For Rumania, who had hitherto been regarded as a satellite of the Germanic Powers, suddenly emancipated herself from their influence. Under the pressure of her armies, as well as of defeats inflicted upon the Bulgarian armies by both Serbia and Greece, Bulgaria was compelled to acknowledge herself beaten ; whilst with Greece, Serbia, whom Austria had flouted

in 1909, emerged triumphantly from this fratricidal struggle.

Both in Vienna and in Berlin, it was felt that a severe blow had been dealt to the position of the Germanic Powers in South-eastern Europe, and that the situation could only be retrieved by taking action which would inevitably involve the risk of bringing Russia into the field. It was then that, for the first time, German statesmen began to talk about the 'Russian peril', and the impending conflict between German 'culture' and Russian 'barbarism'. In Vienna, the talk was more about Serbian insolence, and the necessity of chastising it. The murder of the Austrian heir apparent and his consort at Serajevo on June 28 provided the long-sought-for opportunity. That abominable crime overbore the old Emperor Francis Joseph's reluctance to sanction any kind of warlike enterprise, whilst the German Emperor, who had been a close friend of the Archduke, unquestionably felt it deeply, and as a personal injury not less than as a political misfortune. The counter-blow was dealt swiftly and brutally. The Austro-Hungarian ultimatum to Serbia, charging her with a deliberate conspiracy against the safety and integrity of the Hapsburg dominions, as well as with the actual connivance of some of her officials in the crime, demanded an abject and quite unparalleled surrender of Serbia's independence. We know now that, though the German Foreign Office may have been content to give a free hand to Austria without asking or wishing to be made acquainted with the details of the Austrian demands, it was not so with the German Emperor. His ambassador in Vienna, Herr von Tschirschky, whose influence was throughout exerted for war, enjoyed his special confidence; through the am-

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bassador he knew exactly what the Austrian ultimatum was to be—an ultimatum carefully framed to secure not acceptance but rejection. Even so, under Russian advice, Serbia did accept it almost in its entirety; but even this sacrifice in the cause of European peace was of no avail. We know also, from the German official memorandum published after the outbreak of hostilities, that, though addressed to Serbia, the ultimatum was from the first directly aimed over her head at Russia. M. Sazonoff, the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, was quick to realize that this was the real object which the two Germanic Powers had in view, but the whole Russian nation was equally quick to realize it. Popular feeling ran as high over the Austrian menace to Serbia as it had done in former days, when the issue was the emancipation of the Balkan Slavs from the Turkish yoke, and M. Sazonoff undoubtedly spoke for the Russian people as well as for the Russian Government when he at once declared that Russia could not allow Serbia to be crushed, and that she would rather face all the risks of war. In Austria there was at first an inclination not to take this warning very seriously. It was lightheartedly assumed that Russia would, at the last moment, flinch as she had done in 1909 before the Kaiser's 'Shining Armour'; and when it became clear that this time she was in grim earnest, a belated attempt was made to resume conversations with St. Petersburg, which were, in fact, still proceeding when the Kaiser precipitated the catastrophe by his two-fold ultimatum, to Russia and to France. Then, indeed, was the German wire to Petrograd irrevocably cut, and all the warnings of Bismarck's statesmanship cast to the winds.

Even from so brief a review of Russo-German relations,

it will be seen how little the present war has to do with any inexorable antagonism between German 'culture' and Russian 'barbarism'. So long as Germany could successfully exploit for her own purposes all the worst elements in the governing classes of Russia and deflect Russian ambitions into channels which did not impede her own, German statesmen and the German press laid eloquent stress upon the old dynastic friendship and the community of conservative principles and of political interests between the two countries. But when the gradual movement towards progress in Russia itself began to undermine the buttresses of German influence, and when finally the exigencies of the Kaiser's World-Policy compelled him to make a frontal attack upon Russia's position as the great Slav Power of Europe, then German statesmen and their scribes in the German press suddenly discovered that it was no longer, as in the old days when Germany was helping to hypnotize Russia in the Far East, the Chinese and the Japanese that threatened the 'holiest possessions' of European civilization, but that terrible Slav barbarism of which Russia was the monstrous embodiment. Well, if Russian barbarism were all that Germans in their new-fangled 'fear of Russia' have depicted it to be, it might still stand comparison with the sort of German 'culture' which has staggered humanity since the outbreak of this war. But the so-called 'barbarism' which has suddenly provoked in Germany a righteous indignation too long dissembled to be very genuine, is largely the result of long-arrested development. It is too often forgotten that, whilst Western civilization was slowly but steadily emerging from the Dark Ages, the forbears of modern Russia provided for a couple of centuries the great breakwater against which the tide of Asiatic

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invasion repeatedly spent itself. Only then was Russia free to begin to tread the path on which the rest of Europe had already been striding forward. If we still owe the Russians of those remote days a debt of gratitude, it looks as if, before this war is over, Western Europe may have contracted a further debt towards their descendants of the present day for bearing a very large share in the preservation of Europe's liberties against the modern Huns.

