

ASSIGNMENT TO RUSSIAN MISSION TO
THE UNITED STATES IN MARCH, 1917

In March 1917 I was given the job of looking after the Special Mission of sixty odd persons which Kerensky sent to the United States by way of Siberia and the Pacific Ocean to dodge the Germans) in a pious endeavor to get money out of us. (I saw Kerensky himself only years later at Paris). I went out to the West Coast to meet them, accompanied by a Baron von Ungern-Sternburg, a Secretary (holdover from the Tzar's days) of the Russian Embassy at Washington. Some of the members of the former Imperial Embassy, including the Ambassador Bakhmetieff, had resigned but had stayed on at Washington. The head of the Kerensky Mission was called Bakhmetieff too, but the former Ambassador had very decided views on any attempt to confuse the two names: ~~when~~ asked

asked if they were cousins, he is said to have replied: "Was George Washington a cousin of Booker T.'s?" The new Ambassador had been a civil engineer in Russia. Most of the members of the Mission were former minor officials of the old bureaucracy now risen to the top.

Ungern-Sternburg and I went out to Chicago and then to Winnipeg, where we joined the Canadian Pacific and made the delightful trip through the Canadian Rockies to Vancouver. Vancouver is a big, enterprising, busy, go-ahead town not unlike our own Northwest. From Vancouver we went by boat to Victoria. Victoria is delightful: with gardens and country houses and an authentic look of a colonial capital of the British Empire. Then by boat again to Seattle, where we awaited the

Mission

Mission which came across the Pacific from Vladivostok. We returned over the Chicago-Milwaukee and St. Paul on a special train. I rode part of the way in the electrical locomotive.

Those Russians were enormous eaters. I told our agents to be sure to have plenty of food and drink aboard. They said there was an over-abundance. The Russians lived ^{a good part of the trip} in the dining-car and at the end of the second day there was nothing left.

On entraining at Seattle, I asked ~~the new~~ Ambassador to have someone make up a list of ~~his~~ ^{the} Mission in order to assign the various compartments and berths in the train to them. The list they handed me read in part something like this: for one compartment, Mrs. Slopsky and Mr. Dropsky; for another compartment, Mrs. Katsky and Mr. Batsky. I vetoed that, ~~list~~.

At

At Washington the Mission stayed in the Hennen Jennings house, which was lent for the occasion, on Massachusetts Avenue.

I accompanied Mr. Bakhmetieff on calls on the various members of the Cabinet. He was especially interested in Mr. McAdoo, who was Secretary of the Treasury. President Wilson was favorably disposed to the Kerensky Government ~~and~~ *but* the Mission did ^{not} obtain ~~any~~ ^{the desired} financial assistance.

President Wilson gave a luncheon for them at the White House. After a fortnight's stay at Washington, I took them on to New York.

At New York we stayed at the Plaza Hotel. One night we went to a meeting (this was in June 1917) at the Madison Square Gardens which was distinctly Red in complexion, and there were

hundreds

hundreds of banners inscribed: "Down with the War". All of this was not much to the liking of the Kerensky Mission, who were by no means Communistic in their sympathies, and this was especially true of their Military and Naval Attachés, who had been officers in the Imperial Army. The shouting and the shreiking were indescribable; some of it in Russian and some of it in English, all of it of an anti-war nature.

Then there was a meeting in one of the theaters, with Mayor Mitchell presiding. When former President Theodore Roosevelt got up to speak, there was considerable booing, but Mayor Mitchell handled the situation admirably and quiet was restored; but the meeting was not a very satisfactory one.

I was mistaken for Mayor Mitchell and cheered

on

on several occasions: once at a fire drill by the New York firemen; another time at a big war meeting in Central Park; Mitchell was not a bad looking fellow so I didn't mind.

The Mission was widely welcomed as great things were expected along the democratic way of the Kerensky Government. Kerensky never had a chance! As soon as the Russians heard that he wanted them to keep on fighting, they turned against him as a man.

I find among my books a volume: "Visiting War Missions to the United States" and a letter from the Secretary of State, Robert Lansing: "the Department has caused to be prepared an edition de luxe of the proceedings in the Senate and House of Representatives on the occasion of the
receptions

receptions tendered to the visiting war missions to the United States, one copy of which, with your name thereon, goes to you in the pouch with this, etc., etc."

In the book, I notice that on June 26, 1917, at 12:15 p.m., the members of the Russian Mission were escorted by the committee appointed by the Vice President, into the Senate Chamber; the members of the Mission being the Ambassador Boris A. Bakhmetieff, head of the Mission; Lieut. Gen. Roof; Captain of the Guards Dubassof; aide-de-camp; Prof. Lomonossof; Col. Nikolaieff, Military Attaché; M. Novitsky of the Ministry of Finance; Capt. Shilt from the Ministry of War; M. Soukine of the Foreign Office (afterwards well-known with the "White" army in Siberia; and Lieut. Simirnoff."

We --

We -- Breckinridge Long, Assistant Secretary of State, Major Averill as Aide, and I -- accompanied the Mission into the Senate Chamber. Addresses were made by the Vice President and the Ambassador. Somewhat similar proceedings were held later in the House.

At the end of June, I was appointed to the Embassy at Paris, and as soon as the Russians left, in the first days of July, I began getting ready to leave. The Mission gave me a handsome ^{Fabergé} cigarette case, appropriately inscribed, etc., etc. I believe that I received some of the few presents the Kerensky Government had time to make.

While I was in Washington, the Italians sent a Mission too, under one of their Royal Princes, the Prince of Udine, a Naval Officer, who was widely entertained.