

FOUR

Russia's shameful intrigues

Victoria and Leo – Tsar Aleksandr III – The Bulgarian Crisis

1881 to 1886

~ Victoria and Leo ~

Before Marie had set foot in England for the first time there were those who doubted that she would adjust easily – if at all – to the lifestyle of the English court. Her Russian suite aboard the *Victoria and Albert* were so concerned about this that, according to Marie Erbach, they ‘were at considerable pains to admire everything because they saw how little effect the first impressions of England had upon Marie. She, the daughter of the Russian Tsar, was not so easily impressed ...’¹ There was a certain amount of retrospective readjustment in this subsequent recollection, as Marie’s ‘first impressions of England’ at this stage were restricted to the royal yacht and its crew. Nevertheless, a contemporary letter confirmed the general concern. On 2 March 1874, Queen Sophia of the Netherlands (formerly a princess of Württemberg and granddaughter of Tsar Pavl) wrote Lady Salisbury that her sister-in-law Olga von Württemberg ‘could *not* understand everyone and everything *not* submitting to her sway ... Should the Duchess of Edinburgh have the same feeling, how will she be able to exist in England surrounded by people who are no slaves!’²

Whether or not this was an accurate assessment of Queen Olga’s character, it certainly proved that Queen Sophia had never met Marie, who was not known to have exhibited such blatant arrogance. However, this statement does require modest qualification. Marie’s supposed ‘haughtiness’ observed by Victoria and others in 1874 – which the queen had been so quick to excuse away – was a natural conceit common to all intensely shy persons of high culture and intellect who are both aware of it and have to combat the social consequences it promotes. Fundamentally insecure, Marie’s perceived coldness was largely defensive, and she retained this buttress against disappointment and betrayal to the end of her life. It was apparent even to perceptive children such as Meriel Buchanan, the daughter of the last British imperial ambassador in St Petersburg, who met her for the first time in Germany in 1899 when her father was chargé d’affaires at Darmstadt. The adolescent girl was ‘frightened to death’ of Marie’s ‘gruff, abrupt manner’, although she was later to acknowledge that she had been at that time ‘too small to see the kindly humour that lay behind the mocking laughter in her eyes’.³

However, Marie never revealed her innermost nature to Queen Victoria, or even fully exposed her most private feelings to other members of the royal family, even those closest to her. For this it is necessary to look to her correspondence with intimate friends, and in particular male friends of a similar inner quality. General Wolseley was just such a man, to whom in 1883 she painfully stripped away for his benefit the superficial layers of conventional social gloss that had already by then become part of the received view of her:

I would give anything ... to be a great beauty ... breaking hearts and making people adore me as a divinity. To be talked of, looked at, followed, commented upon ... I am nothing at all, a good sort of harmless creature known by very few ... and moreover considered proud in society. I even don't make a good wife, I cannot force myself into taking an interest in the Duke's concerns ... I make nobody happy and my own self miserable.⁴

Such an outburst cannot be ascribed to any momentary lapse into maudlin self-pity, as there are extant a score of Marie's letters to her various close male friends making very similar judgements. If for four years after her marriage Marie on the whole succeeded in maintaining at least the illusion of being someone she was not, it was because she made an effort to do so in spite of herself. Her relationship with Victoria up until the Russo-Turkish War had been congenial and occasionally even something approaching familial. But, after 1878, she became progressively more defensive, more suspicious, and more careless with her social image. English jingoism had claimed her as an innocent victim, and she never truly recovered from this assault on her innermost *donjon*.

The happier early relationship with Victoria owed much to the mutual attraction between Marie and Leo, and did not go unnoticed by the royal family. Leo, who was the same age as Marie, had unfortunately developed the hæmophilia that had randomly mutated as a genetic strain in one of his grandparents. The disease had been correctly diagnosed early, but there was no cure at the time and few palliatives other than simple analgæsia, which usually dulled the mind as much as it did the pain. Sadly, Victorian hæmophiliacs lived out most of their painful and relatively brief lives confined to a bed or Bath-chair anticipating an early death.

Marie concerned herself with Leo's illness even before her marriage. She carefully followed the progress of his state of health, supposing him to be 'quite well' on hearing that he and the queen had vacated Balmoral in December 1873.⁵ In April 1874, Leo suffered a severe attack of bleeding in the joints that would prevent him from walking for the next eight months. Nevertheless, he had made the effort to be present at Marie's arrival at Windsor Castle in March, writing to Alice on 15 April that Marie appeared to get on remarkably well with his mother, that he had been told nothing but favourable things about Marie, and found them immediately confirmed. It was an effect that Marie would have on a number of men throughout her life, men who were very different in many ways but who all shared the common characteristic of intelligence, culture, and not a little eccentricity. Few women would ever feel the same way about her.

'Poor Leopold', Marie wrote from Coburg in July on hearing that he was still unwell, 'please give him my tender love. I will try to write to him tomorrow'.⁶ The following January he was still suffering badly, but happily he began to pull out of his long attack towards the end of the month:

If you knew how dreadfully anxious we were about dear Leopold and with what impatience we awaited every telegram. Thank God, he is much better now and I hope that all will go on satisfactorily. Could you tell him how much I have thought of him all this time, for I am so fond of dear Leopold.⁷

Nevertheless, because of his frequent indisposition and Marie's constant travelling, Leo's friendship with her inevitably made slow progress, and in fact it took a few years to properly mature.

In addition to reading and studying, the 'Scholar Prince', as he was known, had a sincere love of music. Although this followed family tradition in not penetrating the most sublime of all the arts much deeper than Arthur Sullivan and Charles Gounod

(both of whom Leo knew through their association with the Royal Albert Hall), he was able to travel eagerly with Marie to London from his seat at Claremont House in Surrey for the opening night of the 1877 Wagner Festival. This Wagnerian devotion was quite enough for Marie, especially when she drew comparisons with Leo's intellectually sluggish brothers, remembering also that he was gifted with genuine humility, courage, and a rather wicked sense of humour much like Marie's own. Queen Victoria respected and appreciated Marie's friendship with Leo, especially as the queen was quite aware that her sick son did not receive that attention from the rest of his siblings that he ought to have had. This applied particularly to his brothers, whose attitude towards him occasionally bordered on the callous.

But then the early warmth between Victoria and Marie cooled following the virulent eruption of the 'national and royal obsession' during the Russo-Turkish War. One month before the outbreak of the conflict, Marie could pay Victoria a subtle, slightly *outré* but nonetheless moving compliment. Describing her daughter Ducky to the queen, she noted how 'Little Victoria is very forward, she is shortened and sits quite straight and takes notice of everything. She is a great darling, quite worthy of the name she bears!'⁸ Six months after the Congress of Berlin, the situation had altered dramatically. Condolences respecting Alice's death over, Marie returned to London in December 1878 not to attend a formal function with Victoria present until she and Affie – who of course had been cautiously pro-Russian during the conflict – went to Buckingham Palace twice the following spring after an unusually protracted and quiet spell at Eastwell Park. On 11 May, Marie wrote Duchess Alexandrine: 'We went to two drawing-rooms presided over by the Queen, who welcomed us in a friendly way – then left us alone'.⁹

This terse comment perfectly captured the superficially polite but fundamentally damaged post-1878 relationship. As an Easter gift, Marie sent (but did not give) Victoria a Russian egg, deep blue with gilt sporting painted birds and flowers. For the queen's sixtieth birthday on 24 May, Marie sent her wishes by post hoping for 'at least a more bright and happy year than this last has been for us all'.¹⁰ She had been referring principally to the death of Princess Alice of course, but certainly also to the appalling recent political events. It was in fact not until two-and-a-half years had passed since her return from exile that Marie could write to Countess Tolstaia, on 7 October 1881, that she had at last been invited to Balmoral. Leo was also there, and Marie found the queen in good spirits, adding 'I am altogether in her good graces'.¹¹

The context of this remark suggests no great relief, rather a certain degree of cynicism. Nevertheless, this cautious *rapprochement* had been bought about by two melancholy incidents: a particularly harrowing attack of hæmorrhaging for Leo, and Tsar Aleksandr's assassination. When Tsaritsa Marie had entered the final phase of her illness, it was Leo who offered to look after Marie's children at Claremont House, after Affie's leave-of-absence terminated and before they were required to be in Russia. Early in 1881, Leo suffered an appalling attack of internal bleeding, and Marie gratefully returned the favour by looking after him as often as possible throughout January and February. She would have gladly continued to do so but for the murder of her father in March.

One such visit commenced on Friday 18 February and was planned to last without interruption until the following Monday. But by Monday Leo's condition had not improved, and Marie changed her plans, as she wrote Victoria: 'I remain with him nearly the whole day and read to him, I had not the courage to leave him ill as he was and return to London'.¹² On Tuesday, she was still there: 'I am sorry to say Leopold had again much pain ... I could not cheer him up. I think, considering all, he is very

patient, only he gets low spirited. He likes very much to be read to and it is a great pleasure for me, for he takes great interest in books and is very fond of reading, which is rare nowadays amongst young men'.¹³ Alix also took part in this nursing, as both Affie and Bertie were representing Victoria at the wedding between Prince Wilhelm von Hohenzollern ('Willy') and Princess Augusta von Schleswig-Holstein ('Dona') in Berlin, celebrated on 27 February.

To mark the occasion in Berlin, a grand banquet was held at Windsor Castle on Monday 7 March, which Marie was able to attend between visits to Leo. Here she concluded an informal artistic arrangement with Victoria. Earlier in the year, Affie had commissioned a small portrait of the late tsaritsa by the miniaturist Aleksandr Wegner of the St Petersburg Academy, which Affie had had set into a brooch as a *memento mori* before presenting it to Marie. Marie had shown this brooch to Victoria at the first drawing-room of the year, and the queen had been so impressed by it that she asked Marie to procure from Wegner a miniature of Alice to be set into a similar brooch. This was to be achieved with the aid of two photographs, one hand-coloured so that Wegner could reproduce Alice's hair precisely, and one standard plate from which the portrait would be made. Victoria was so keen on this project that, rather than wait for the banquet to give Marie the photographs, she had them sent to her the previous Tuesday by special courier so that at Windsor Castle she could have the pleasure of being told that they were already on their way to St Petersburg. Marie had been very amused by this demonstration of regal impatience, but more importantly it demonstrates the amelioration of the recent years of tension between the two women.

Meanwhile, back at Claremont House there was a problem with some of Leo's reading material. He wanted Marie to locate and read to him (he was unable to hold a book in his swollen hands) one of the two most celebrated works by John Abercrombie, a Scottish physician who had published *Enquiry Concerning the Intellectual Powers* in 1830 and *The Philosophy of Moral Feeling* three years later. It is not clear which of these Leo had in mind, but several editions of both works were published throughout the 1840s. However, by 1874 they were both out of print. Marie mentioned this problem in her letters several times, and on 2 March had to admit defeat: 'I have decided that tomorrow I will go once again to Claremont where Prince Leopold is still recuperating, unwilling to leave since he is in constant pain. The Abercromb[ie] book cannot be found in any library either in London or the whole of England. One might perhaps buy it at an antiquarian bookshop'.¹⁴

Unfortunately, eleven days later, Marie would be on her way to her father's funeral and the problem seems not to have been resolved. 'Poor darling Marie on whom her poor father doted', Victoria wrote Vicky on 16 March, 'it is too much almost to bear'.¹⁵ Victoria may well have suffered some remorse at not actively encouraging better relations with her daughter-in-law after the very unsavoury period of the Russo-Turkish War. On 23 May, she wrote Vicky that Affie had been to see her, alarmed at the 'depressed state of dear Marie ... He has implored me to let her come to Balmoral this autumn with him and I feel that ... I cannot refuse ... I am now the only parent dear Marie has and that I am doubly bound to do all in my power for her'.¹⁶ Victoria should not perhaps have required Affie's petition to make the invitation to Balmoral, where the great *rapprochement* would be effected.

The year 1881 was significant also for Leo. He was created duke of Albany, earl of Clarence, and Baron Arklow on 14 May; in November, he announced his betrothal to Princess Hélène von Waldeck-Pyrmont. On 21 November, hearing of the betrothal, Marie wrote him:

I am happy indeed for you ... that you have found for yourself a nice little wife ... I saw that you were rather mysterious at Balmoral ... Do you remember, I told you, I would give her a present? Now, I have had for some time a bracelet ready for your future betrothed, that is not my marriage present, but only a little souvenir ... tell her also that I am very fond of you and that she must make you very happy!¹⁷

But Marie was worried that Leo was insisting on a grand formal wedding ceremony. In the middle of April 1882, Affie and Marie were once again returning from a brief journey to the Continent, and Marie voiced her concerns to Victoria from Paris:

I also understand so well your anxiety about Leopold and his marriage. Why, why not have it privately in the small chapel? Does his happiness really depend on it? ... [I] took him out for a drive. I had no idea that he was so lame and was rather frightened when I saw him. I can't believe that he will be strong enough to ... go through all the ceremonies of the marriage.¹⁸

Leo had wanted at least one normal grand gesture in his sick life, but what was very probably good advice got the better of him, and when he married H el ene in St George's Chapel at Windsor Castle, on 27 April, the occasion was considerably less ostentatious than he perhaps had wished.

Marie Erbach arrived in London on Thursday 18 May for her first visit to England. That afternoon, Marie was due to leave for Windsor Castle and could not alter her date. She returned to Clarence House on the following Monday to find her cousin unwell but nonetheless eager 'to go out and see all the sights of London',¹⁹ which she in fact had already been doing since the day of her arrival. The two cousins went to Bagshot Park – the Surrey residence of the duke of Connaught – on 6 June for Ascot week. Shortly after returning to London, Marie left England again, this time accompanied by her children and Marie Erbach. They left on Saturday 17 June, with Erbach parting from Marie at Darmstadt. Marie and her children arrived in Coburg on the following Tuesday to remain in Germany for the next three months. At Kissingen, at the end of the month, Marie met Baron Artur Mohrenheim (the diplomat who on 12 December would replace Lobanov-Rostovskii in London), finding him 'rather a solemn man, but clever and has a nice wife and children'.²⁰ This was really Marie's first extended stay in her future duchy, and at this stage she was unimpressed: 'I don't find a small German court particularly entertaining'.²¹ The children left Coburg separately while Marie went to Italy at the beginning of October, visiting Padua, Verona, Bologna, Ravenna, Florence, Siena, and Pisa before travelling directly to Calais where Affie and the children met her, the family arriving at Eastwell Park on 12 October.

The final act in the tragic drama of the Scholar Prince had begun to unfold during this year, 1882. Leo was now a married man with a pregnant wife, deeply frustrated at not being able to perform some function in the wider world. He believed that the position that would best suit him under the circumstances would be as a colonial governor. His first choice was Canada, approaching Gladstone in the spring of 1883. The response (15 May) was unfavourable, with clear evidence that after discussions with Derby (Gladstone's colonial secretary since December 1882 after seceding from the Conservatives) and Ponsonby, Queen Victoria let it be known that she was intractably opposed to such an appointment. Goldwin Smith, who had been settled at Toronto since 1871 and married there, subsequently consolidated this opinion when he wrote Leo's comptroller of the household expressing the conviction that it would be unwise to appoint a member of the royal family to Canada on account of Fenian terrorism, although this had not prevented the queen's son-in-law from being appointed. The matter was leaked to the press and questions were raised in the

Commons (4 June) resulting in a diplomatic evasion by Gladstone, indicating that the matter would not be pursued.

Accordingly, Leo set his sights on Victoria in Australia, a traditionally arch-conservative province of a little over 858,000 inhabitants. The current governor since February 1879 had been the marquis of Normanby, who was due to retire by agreed resignation in March 1884 with the subsequent position as yet unfilled. Petitions in the New Year resulted in a diplomatic rebuff from Granville (4 January), who passed the request on to Derby for his consideration, although by now it was clear that Queen Victoria's judgement would be final and she had already decided that Leo's hæmophilia made him an unsuitable candidate for such an appointment.

After spending 'a rather dull' break at Osborne in December 1882,²² on 16 January 1883, Marie left for Berlin with Affie where she arrived on the evening of Tuesday 17. They stayed at the Russian embassy with Pëtr Saburov, whom she would shortly describe as 'a particularly pleasant, clever companion ... His one ambition is to become Russian ambassador in London [on Mohrenheim's imminent retirement] and I have been trying for it in every possible way as it would be most agreeable for my own self'.²³ From Germany they travelled to St Petersburg for a few days before returning to Berlin on 26 January, arriving at Clarence House at the beginning of March. This gave Affie and Marie about ten weeks in England at Eastwell Park before the second and main foreign event of the year: the coronation of Sasha and Minny in Moscow, from which Marie would return to England at the end of October.

Apart from Leo himself, the two key players in his evolving final drama were Marie and Sir Charles Dilke. Guests came and went throughout January 1884, fourteen of whom would have nothing to do with these events, but Leo and Hélène arrived at Eastwell Park for a stay of one week on Wednesday 9. Marie found the atmosphere unbearable. She had been trying for some time to persuade General Lord Wolseley (a baron since 1882) and his wife and daughter to come and stay at Eastwell Park for a long weekend, and so she wrote him two days later asking him to come down and help relieve the tension. 'I spent an endless morning, sitting with them and doing nothing', she explained in her invitation. 'I am exhausted and stupefied: he is always grumbling and she very nearly silly with her stupid small talk and infantine remarks'. Earlier, while Marie had been at Sandringham for a few days from 4 November following her return from Russia, Bertie had taken it upon himself to interfere with her Eastwell plans by suggesting a long list of guests to accompany the Wolseleys. However, most of these Marie had never before met, and in any event she did not want a large party (as she explained to Wolseley) and so 'paid no attention' to Bertie's guest list.²⁴

Although Dilke had voted against the grant to fund some of the expenses incurred by Bertie during his official representation at Aleksandr II's funeral (a matter of principal for the committed republican), this did not prevent him from cultivating a friendship with Bertie and the Edinburghs. Memories of Dilke's attacks on Affie's civil list put aside, on Monday 20 November 1882, Affie and Marie extended their first invitation to Dilke requesting 'the pleasure of your company' at a weekend party at Eastwell Park.²⁵ But this invitation caused Dilke a problem, as he explained in his diary: 'I was asked from 24th to 27th to stay with the Duke and Duchess of Edinburgh at Eastwell Park, but was also asked to Sandringham'.²⁶ On this occasion, Bertie's invitation was given preference and Dilke travelled to Norfolk.

On 25 November 1882, the Admiralty proposed Affie to the rank vice-admiral, supported by the Treasury two days later and assented to by the queen on the last day of the month. He was also notified of his appointment as commander of the Channel

Squadron, effective 26 November 1883. This appointment would leave Marie in charge of the estate, and she complained ironically to Wolseley that she would have nothing to look forward to other than ‘the lively prospect of being shut up either at Windsor or Osborne’.²⁷ It was this imminent isolation that had prompted Bertie’s well-intentioned interference; but the reason why Marie ignored his suggestion for a large party was that she subsequently saw an opportunity to convert it into something more positive than a gathering of virtual strangers. The idea for what would follow appears to have been in Marie’s mind since at least her brief stay at Sandringham.

Marie had by then already invited the Albanys to Eastwell Park after New Year 1884, and now that Dilke had entered Gladstone’s administration with the cabinet post of president of the Local Government Board (having for the first time publicly retracted some of the more vociferous radical speeches of his youth), Marie thought to use him as the intermediary between Leo and Gladstone. If she succeeded, Gladstone might be persuaded to put further cabinet pressure on Queen Victoria.

Having converted a large weekend party into what she hoped would be a political meeting, Marie suggested to Leo that he write Dilke with an explanation of her idea to hold a mini-conference at Eastwell Park to discuss his future in Australia. Meanwhile, she assembled the group from her available friends, while Leo did as he was bid and wrote Dilke on Friday 11 January, the same day that Marie sent her invitation to Wolseley. However, it was a difficult time for all of them: the duchess of Albany was six-months pregnant with her second child; Marie was also six-months pregnant; and Leo was understandably frustrated and despondent, which set of circumstances had occasioned Marie’s rather uncharitable remarks to Wolseley. However, there was at least one amusing incident during the pre-conference period that was most probably accurately recalled by nine-year-old Missy:

On that morning which I so vividly remember he [Leo] came down to breakfast holding a handkerchief before his mouth, saying that he had just lost a front tooth. There was consternation and anxiety amongst the grown-ups seated around the table, because ... it was all important that he should in no wise be wounded, fall or hurt himself ... My mother, his hostess, was especially very much upset. She asked him to take his handkerchief from his mouth and let her see where he had lost a tooth.

Uncle Leopold removed his handkerchief, which had large red stains all over it, and there, sure enough, was a big black hole ... where one of his front teeth was gone. Everybody clustered round his seat, asking questions, suggesting remedies, when all of a sudden he burst out laughing. It was all a naughty farce. The hole in his mouth was black sticking-plaster, the stains on his handkerchief red paint!²⁸

Missy added that the assembled group passed through the customary stages of shock, anger, and finally laughter.

Shortly after Leo left Eastwell Park, he received a second communication from Derby (19 January) informing him that he could not press for an appointment that was opposed by the queen. Nevertheless, Marie pressed ahead with her mini-conference.

If nothing else, this curious meeting was at least a fine diplomatic achievement for Marie in that not all those she had managed to assemble liked each other. In fact, Wolseley loathed Dilke almost as much as he loathed Gladstone, but he had been willing to attend the mini-conference for the sake of Leo and his hostess. Wolseley’s relations with Victoria were little better due to his lifelong struggle against her cousin the duke of Cambridge, general commander in chief since 1856. Wolseley had been for two years quartermaster-general at the War Office where he had promoted reforms against severe opposition from the royal duke whose military principles were rooted in the age when the British army dressed in bright red and marched against its enemy to the steady rhythm of a drummer boy.²⁹ However, Wolseley’s influence outside

military matters was slight, while Victoria would even for a time oppose the viscounty suggested for him by (ironically) Gladstone.

There were two members of the Baring banking family also present: Lady Emma and her brother Francis. Lord Francis Baring was the eldest son of Lord Northbrook, Gladstone's first lord of the Admiralty. Other than this, he was Liberal member for Winchester since 1880. Lady Emma Baring was a society figure and a respected philanthropist later to become a Commander of the British Empire. Financially, Barings had been heavily involved in Russia since 1849, particularly since the Russo-Turkish war when the Rothschilds had sided with Disraeli and the Ottoman empire in a political and ethnic move, withdrawing their financial services to Russia. In fact, Russia was to be the principal European sphere of investment for Barings until after the Great War, even following reinvestment by the Rothschilds during the 1890s. This fact may have determined the Baring presence at Eastwell, although this branch of the family was not directly involved with the running of the bank. The Lornes were also there, the marquess having returned to England the previous November after resigning at the end of his five-year governor-generalship of Canada. But he was now out of office – he could not lawfully retain his seat in Argyllshire while governor-general – and would as a result lose his attempt to take Hampstead in 1885.

There were also two foreigners in the group. Count Nikolai Adlerberg, 'always cheerful and good company',³⁰ was still the long-serving secretary to the Russian embassy, promoted from second to first secretary in 1883. But other than that he had as his most influential boast the fact that he was related to the great military and diplomatic family of Adlerberg who in various capacities had served the Russian imperial regime since Nikolai I. But most curious of all was the inclusion in the party of Count Constantino Nigra, Italian ambassador in London since the summer of 1883. He had been Cavour's right-hand-man and minister to Sardinia-Piedmont in Paris until 1860, then ambassador for Italy until the fall of the French Second Empire, becoming a chivalrous personal friend to Eugénie. He had met and befriended Marie in Russia in 1883 as Italian ambassador to St Petersburg at the time of the coronation of Sasha and Minny, and he would remain in London until his transfer to Vienna in December 1885.

Unfortunately, although predictably, the meeting was not a success as far as the outcome was concerned. What hope could such a disparate group assembled in a circumstance of desperation and limited influence hope to achieve? All the members were political liberals other than Lord and Lady Wolseley – but this would have had more influence with Gladstone than Victoria, and it was she, not he, who required persuading. Dilke and Wolseley were not favourites at court; Lorne, as a commoner, had had a difficult task marrying the queen's daughter and he had no particular influence with his mother-in-law; while Nigra (a liberal-constitutional-nationalist), although a much-respected veteran diplomat, also had no special relationship with the queen. In his diary, Dilke described the eventual and inevitable outcome of what had been a well-intentioned diplomatic success but a political failure:

The matter [of the governorship] had been discussed at Eastwell (where I stayed with the Duchess of Edinburgh from the 19th to 21st [January]) by me with the Duchess as well as with the Princess Louise and Lorne ... The party consisted of Nigra ... the Wolseleys, Lord Baring and his sister Lady Emma, and Count Adlerberg ... On January 24th there was a regular Cabinet. The Queen had written that she would not allow Prince Leopold to go to Victoria.³¹

And that – as anyone familiar with Victoria's mind would have known – was that. On 24 January, Derby wrote Leo more emphatically than before that both he and

Gladstone were of the opinion that the matter could not be pressed any further as it was contrary to the wishes of the queen.

Dilke returned to London, but the rest of the party remained behind at Eastwell Park. On 22 January, Marie hosted her annual Servants' Ball, she and Loosy dancing the quadrille with local tradesmen, and, on Sunday 27, the conference party attended a service at St Mary's followed by a small shoot and luncheon at the old rectory. On the following day, the party disbanded.

On 21 February, a dejected Scholar Prince left England for the winter sun of Cannes, alone as his wife was unable to travel with her advanced pregnancy. There, at the Villa Nevada, he was found on 28 March on the floor having apparently struck his head during a fall – whether accidental or quite deliberate will never be known – after badly injuring a knee. He did not regain consciousness and died from a massive brain hæmorrhage a few hours later. Leo's body was returned to England and buried at St George's Chapel in Windsor Castle on 5 April.

Neither Affie nor Marie was able to be present. Marie had been at Clarence House on the day Leo died, and Affie had returned from Coburg that same afternoon. But a week later, Affie was aboard ship while Marie had returned to Eastwell Park where she was expecting to give birth to her fifth child (a daughter known as 'Baby Bee') within the following two weeks. However, they were represented at the funeral by William Colville and made up for their enforced absence when they both attended the christening of the infant duke of Albany on 4 December, also at St George's Chapel, where Marie laid a wreath on Leo's tomb. Ten days after the funeral and a few days before the birth of her fourth daughter, Marie wrote Victoria a letter of condolence:

It was here, at Eastwell, I saw the last of Leopold. I think he enjoyed his stay ... but prudent he could never be. We were always great friends and I often and often tried to reason with him and had that time one long and satisfactory conversation during a drive ... I will miss him so much, he was so clever, pleasant and full of information.³²

No sympathy engendered by these various family tragedies was likely to have either a profound or permanent beneficial effect on the post-1878 relationship between Marie and Queen Victoria. On 26 September 1882, Victoria wrote Vicky: 'How charming Olga of Greece is, so handsome and so dear and charming. She has none of the brusqueness of the rest of the Russian family even including our dear, excellent Marie'.³³ There were no more attempts to excuse this 'brusqueness' as there had been in 1874. The Russo-Turkish War with its concomitant Russophobic jingoism in England had been the Rubicon she had been drawn across marking the line between making an effort to suppress her natural contempt and making none at all. A characteristic of this new atmosphere – one absent from Marie's pre-exilic days – was her readiness to severely censure the queen for any action she found objectionable.

A fine example concerned the proposed marriage of Marie's brother Sergei to Grand Duchess Elizabeth ('Ella') von Hessen-Darmstadt und bei Rhein. Although these two first cousins had known and liked each other from childhood, a marriage between Ella and Willy was the first union mooted for her, one strongly supported by Queen Victoria who 'could not but think with regret of what might have been' when this fell through.³⁴ The queen was horrified by the possible union between her beloved first ducal Hesse family – Ella was her granddaughter – and the Romanovs, whom she now considered to be beyond moral salvation. Working herself up into a self-righteous frenzy with the aid of imprudent and inaccurate letters from Vicky based entirely on court gossip, Victoria blamed Aleksandr and his association with Dolgorukaia for the late tsaritsa's unhappiness. 'If such terrible things have to be done

they ought to be hidden away out of sight', she commented,³⁵ fuelling future notions of English Victorian hypocrisy.

Marie supported her brother, and wrote Wolseley of the 'deplorable influence of the Queen' in her continued opposition to the marriage. 'I have no words strong enough to blame [her] ...[Sergei] was Russian, and she [Queen Victoria] had enough of one Russian in the family (meaning me, of course) ... [and] she will not allow the marriage'. Marie then exposed a further hypocrisy concerning the union that was about to join the first and second ducal families together when Alice's eldest child, Princess Victoria, became betrothed to Ludwig von Battenberg (the future Anglicized marquis of Milford Haven) on 1 July 1883:

When the eldest was betrothed to my cousin, she did not like it and only got over it because Prince Louis was her subject, as she wrote to me [a lieutenant in the British navy], 'but in general', she added, 'I don't care for people marrying and [Princess] Victoria ought to have stayed at home, and devoted the rest of her life to her Father'. Her actual words, and how do you like them? ... Not one single person in England ... will ever say the truth to the Queen! I am perfectly decided to write to her very strongly upon the subject.³⁶

It would appear that Victoria's attitude did not stem from any objection to Baron de Senarclens von Grancy's influence in the Hesse family tree, since this had been dealt with according to her precepts of circumspection and all due attention paid to social propriety. She objected only to the Russian influence in the second ducal family, and she persisted in making tendentious comments on what she perceived to be Russian immorality to the granddaughter now affianced to a man of partly Russian descent:

As regards Ella ... there is one subject you have not touched upon ... that is the *very bad state* of [Russian] Society & its *total want of principle*, from the *Grand Dukes downwards* ... Serge and Paul are exceptions but I hear the former is not improved of late ... Russians are *so unscrupulous* ... You say that ... Ella wld insist on spending a good part of every year out of Russia ... but she must *not* look to being *much & often* with *me* – as I cld *not* have a *Russian Gd Duke* staying with *me often* or *for long* – That wld be *utterly impossible* & I wish dear Ella shld look at the difficulties and drawbacks until she embarks in what afterwards she might *regret*.³⁷

However, the marriage went ahead at Darmstadt on 15 June 1884 in spite of Victoria's best efforts to prevent it.

Marie was of course highly selective over who should be at the receiving end of her ascerbic pen. But this was not the only way she was able to make her opinions known, often finding a subtle approach more satisfying. William Waddington, a Frenchman of English descent, had been appointed French ambassador in London in the summer of 1883 where his American-born wife, Mary, ran a liberal salon at the embassy in Albert Gate. The Waddingtons were popular with the royals, and on 29 March 1884 they attended a dinner at Windsor Castle at which Victoria was present but where it was Marie, heavily pregnant, who held court, with both queen and daughter-in-law doubtless still brooding over the Hesse/Russian match. Mary Waddington, who of course knew nothing of what had transpired between them and therefore missed the point, nevertheless sensed the atmosphere and described the scene accurately enough:

The conversation was not very animated. The Queen herself spoke little, and the English not at all – or so low that one couldn't understand them – however, my Ambassador couldn't stand that long, so he began talking most cheerfully to the Duchess of Edinburgh about Moscow, Kertch, and antiquities of various kinds, and as the Duchess is clever and inclined to talk, that corner became more lively. I can't say as much for our end. I think most Englishmen are naturally shy, and the presence of Royalty (the Queen above all) paralyses them.³⁸

This observation is interesting for two other reasons: it indicates something of a rivalry between Marie and Victoria as two figures around whom a different *milieu* would assemble, and it demonstrates again that Marie was quite unafraid of her mother-in-law. Randall Davidson, dean of Windsor and domestic chaplain to the queen, later noted in his journal his belief that Victoria, like many strong characters, secretly respected those who had the courage to oppose her, even if, like John Brown, they were simply permitted to do so. No such permission was granted Marie, however, about whom Dean Davidson might have written the same observation. Missy was left with some sense of this when she wrote:

Even Mamma, who, according to us, was omnipotent, had to count with Queen Victoria, had to listen to her, and if she had not exactly to *obey*, had anyhow to argue out all differences of opinion. But as she was strong-willed and autocratic, I can imagine that these arguments were tough.³⁹

This mutual characteristic was as much their salvation as it was their undoing.

On 8 October 1884, Marie was invited by the Admiralty to launch the ironclad H.M.S. *Rodney* at Chatham docks, one of three such low-key public functions she undertook as duchess of Edinburgh. Following this, both Affie and Marie travelled to Kingston-upon-Hull in East Yorkshire at the invitation of the Spring Bank Orphanage for which they opened a fund-raising bazaar and laid the foundation stone for the new wing of the infirmary. Marie would subsequently reveal her displeasure at having to open bazaars, and more happily, no doubt, she was able to spend many undisturbed weeks in Kent where she continued to promote Eastwell Park as a place where Russians could meet with one another. Shortly after her return from Yorkshire, there was a party arranged by her for Baron Georges de Staal, Russian ambassador to the Court of St James since 1 July, with Grand Duke Mikhail Nikolaevich, Vova, and Shuvalov also invited.

Perhaps more satisfying where acts of benevolence were concerned, it was also during this period that Marie at last realized her desire to become permanently associated with some 'charitable and other establishments', as Queen Victoria had put it in 1874. The Unity of Oddfellows, eighteenth-century in origin but reformed in 1812, was a friendly society with its headquarters in Manchester, and which in 1885 boasted 1,063 Lodges accommodating 80,697 members. The Grand United Order of Oddfellows, as the quasi-Masonic brotherhood was known, founded the Duchess of Edinburgh Lodge (1220 in its registry of lodges) and its junior branch, the Good Samaritan Juvenile Society, on 1 April 1884, with the first enrolment nineteen days later and official registration on 20 April 1885. The location for Lodge 1220 was at The Mission Rooms, Pantile Fields, Hampton Hill by Teddington in Middlesex, a new suburban parish established in 1864 with an unmemorable church dedicated to St James.

According to the introduction in the Rule Book, published by a local Hampton firm in 1884, the junior lodge was for boys aged between five and sixteen. It 'shall have for its objects, the raising of funds by entrance fees, subscriptions of the members, fines, donations, and by interest on capital ... for insuring sums of money to defray the expense of burial of deceased members; for rendering assistance to the members when sick; for supplying medical attendance and medicine; and for paying the entrance fees of members joining the Grand United Order of Oddfellows [Duchess of Edinburgh Lodge]'. In other words, as with Freemasonry, the junior 'Samaritans' raised funds to help only themselves while preparing the young members to join the adult lodge where this principle of self-help would continue as an Oddfellow.

Nevertheless, as membership included mostly working-class men (a significant proportion appear to have been associated with the London and South Western Railway company serving the parish) and their sons, it was perhaps better than nothing while at the same time providing those who required it with the sense of belonging to some exclusive pseudo-cultic group. In March 1904, the Lodge moved a few streets away to 12 Eastbank Road (the section that in September 1909 was renamed Cross Street with the lodge renumbered as 32). On 1 November 1917, the Good Samaritan Juvenile Society and its peculiar function disappeared when it was amalgamated with the Duchess of Edinburgh Lodge.⁴⁰ It is unlikely that Marie ever visited the Lodge founded in her name, but hers was one of the many donations the Samaritans and Oddfellows received on a regular basis up until 1893.

The Oddfellows may not have been prostitutes (one supposes), but Marie's desire to work with 'the fallen' among women would never have been a realistic proposition.

~ Tsar Aleksandr III ~

By definition, no autocratic political system may differ from the quality of the personal absolutism inherent in the autocrat. This intrinsic defect of Russian tsardom led to its eventual downfall as surely as the activities of the revolutionists. Moreover, it was they who were able to influence the course of tsardom by exploiting the inevitable consequences of their dramatic actions. Lacking widespread popular support, Narodnaia Volia assassinated a benign monarch in the full knowledge that his successor would institute a policy of reaction and oppression. It is a comfortable but illusory bulwark against revolutionary tendencies to assume them to comprise imbeciles and incompetents working to no general purpose; in the history of Russian revolutionary activity this is on the whole not the case. By promoting the onset of autocratic reaction against them, Narodnaia Volia thought to swell the ranks of anti-tsarist factions among the people and increase their own limited popularity.

The revolutionists were therefore quite aware of their good fortune in having Sasha as heir apparent in 1881. His deceased elder brother, Niksa, had been a man very different from the one who would take his place on the throne. Niksa had been the son most like his father. Having been possessed of strong intellectual gifts, he was a confirmed political liberal who had discussed the possibility of serious constitutional reform as a teenager. Inevitably, he became Marie's favourite brother, even though – or perhaps because – he was a decade older than she, while Sasha was her least favourite sibling along with Sergei, and whose sisterly support over Ella had not been earned exclusively as a result of family ties.

Physically, Sasha was an imposing man: broad-shouldered, heavily built, and standing six feet three inches in his carpet slippers. But, with the exception of adhering to the principles of married life, he entirely lacked any of the qualities that had so endeared Niksa to Marie. Deficient in imagination and capable of few original ideas, Sasha had been an easy target for Pan-Slavists whose high banner of 'Orthodoxy, Autocracy, Nationality' had been impressed on him by Konstantin Pobedonostev, his tutor and a former jurist who in 1880 had become Ober-Procurator to the Holy Synod, the most influential office within the Orthodox Church following the suspension of the patriarchate in 1721. It was Pobedonostev who had translated Gladstone's *Bulgarian Horrors* into Russian, at the same time endowing it with an unwarranted Pan-Slavist slant. It remains one of the ironies of later Russian history that the philosophy employed to manipulate the heir apparent into becoming the repository of a style of tsardom that would save Russia in fact contributed to its permanent disintegration.

The fact that Sasha sported a full beard was hardly lost on his Russian contemporaries, although commentators in the West then and subsequently would fail to appreciate the significance of his facial hair. The Orthodox Church claimed to owe its spiritual foundation to Byzantium, itself the child of the Hellenic civilization of wider Greece, while the Catholic Church originated in the traditions of Roman patricians. Greeks – it was generally but incorrectly believed – wore their hair long and grew beards, while Romans – it was generally but incorrectly believed – wore their hair short and shaved. This primitive form of tribal differentiation first became a custom then canon law, with few exceptions obliging Orthodox clergy and religious not to shave or cut their hair, and Catholic clergy and religious to shave and be tonsured. In 1705, Pëtr I, as part of his attempt to 'Westernize' Russia, forbade the growing of beards throughout the empire, and although Ekaterina II repealed this law, no subsequent tsar wore a beard until Sasha as Aleksandr III. This was not at all a

matter of personal taste but an open and prominent statement of his allegiance to the Pan-Slavist doctrines of Pobedonostev. For the same reason, he spurned the wearing of Western-style clothing other than on state occasions, preferring the simple clothes of Russian peasants for which he earned himself the epithet 'The *Muzhik* Tsar'. Again, this was not humility – or even an affectation – but a virtual policy statement.

Sasha reacted to his father's assassination just as Narodnaia Volia had hoped and expected. On 4/16 March, he issued a policy circular to the major foreign powers outlining his intention to concentrate on the 'moral and material development' of Russia – partly a Pan-Slavist euphemism for what would now be termed 'ethnic cleansing' – while maintaining a pacific foreign policy. A peace treaty with China was announced in April, and, on 18 June, the *Dreikaiserbund* was restated in Berlin with a separate protocol attached protecting the altered situation in the Balkans since the Congress of Berlin. These moves may well have been sincere, but they had as their primary objective the releasing of the new administration from foreign worries in order to concentrate on internal affairs, which it did with singular ferocity.

In another clever move by the revolutionists, the executive committee of the beleaguered Narodnaia Volia offered Sasha a publicly stated truce on 10/22 March in exchange for certain reforms to be discussed at a meeting under a flag of truce. But of course Narodnaia Volia had not the slightest intention of discussing reforms, and knew that the offer would be rejected out of hand, which it swiftly was. By doing so, the new administration placed itself in the public position of appearing to be an unmerciful dictatorship while giving the revolutionists 'just cause' to retaliate. The day after the execution of Aleksandr II's assassins, Narodnaia Volia, their truce rejected, publicly declared them 'martyrs of the people' and announced war on the state. On 29 April/11 May, Sasha issued his retaliatory declaration of repressive autocracy, officially withdrawing the constitution Loris-Melikov had drawn up with Aleksandr. Far from being a set of random tragic circumstances that might have been avoided, everything was in fact going according to the revolutionary plan.

Loris-Melikov's position was now extremely awkward. Marie had received two letters from him – one in March and the second at the beginning of April – in neither of which did he mention 'his wish to resign'. Marie hoped that he would not be obliged to leave: 'I feel very sad and low and very uneasy about the state of affairs in Russia', she wrote Victoria on 17 April. 'I would be very, very sorry indeed if Count Loris-Melikov left the office he held, and it would be a great mistake on the part of Sasha to dispense with his services'.⁴¹ But, as Sasha had happily anticipated, Loris-Melikov found it impossible to work with a tsar who opposed everything for which he had laboured with Aleksandr II, and he resigned two days after the withdrawal of the new constitution. Loris-Melikov's obligatory resignation shocked the tsar's administration, and when he left he took three other liberal ministers with him, including the competent minister of the navy, Aleksandr II's brother Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich.

Sasha, saved from the embarrassment of having to dismiss his father's favourite minister, could now fill the ministry of internal affairs with a reactionary Pan-Slavist like himself. The Third Department of the Imperial Cabinet had been abolished by Aleksandr II as part of his social reforms, but Sasha instituted a new system of secret political police (*Okhrana*) established in the three principal urban centres of discontent: Warsaw, St Petersburg, and Moscow. He then gave Loris-Melikov's post to Ignatev, who with Sasha's full authority ran the Okhrana with the unscrupulous Yurii Sudeikin as chief in a virtual police state. In March 1881, shortly after Aleksandr II's assassination, Viacheslav Pleve, the son of a russified schoolteacher of

German descent, was appointed director of the police department in the ministry of the interior. A firm upholder of the autocratic principle, bureaucratic government, and class privilege, Pleve's efficiency in suppressing terrorist activity was at least equal to that of Sudeikin.

The arrest and prosecution of those opposed to the new regime became daily occurrences and would be impossible to list authoritatively, but a selection of the more prominent examples during Sasha's first two years of rule may usefully be given: on 16/28 February 1882, ten men were sentenced to death (with nine commutations) for conspiracy; two students were executed on 22 March/3 April for the assassination of the public prosecutor in Odessa; and eighty workmen were arrested on 3/15 April after a mine was discovered beneath a Moscow street, the sentences varying from fines to imprisonment.

Administrative changes were calculated with great care. The ageing Gorchakov retired from the ministry of foreign affairs during the course of the first week of April 1882, to be replaced by his assistant Nikolai de Giers. Gorchakov's departure had been reluctant but inevitable under the circumstances, with considerable pressure having been put on him by the new tsar. Although Giers had been Gorchakov's alleged apprentice, unlike his master he put himself entirely at the disposal of the tsar, reducing Russia's interest in foreign affairs so that the administration could concentrate on internal matters.

On 1/13 June, Ignatev retired from active politics to be replaced by Dmitrii Tolstoi, the former minister of education so loathed by *The Times* and all Russian liberals. It was therefore business as usual in the Okhrana, where Sudeikin employed every policing device from entrapment and bribery to espionage and torture. Sudeikin, who may have plotted against both Pleve and Dmitrii Tolstoi in order to obtain for himself the position of minister of the interior, would eventually pay the price for his suspect methods by being murdered, along with his nephew, on the night of 16/28 December 1883 by one of his own revolutionary double agents. However, until then the results of these methods were certainly statistically successful. About 200 alleged Nihilists were arrested in St Petersburg on 8/20 March 1883 for conspiracy, and all were eventually imprisoned, with a further unspecified number arrested on 15/27 September on the same charge. Sixty-three more were arrested on 7/12 October and exiled to Siberia, while in Moscow, on 28 December 1883/9 January 1884, thirty-seven students were arrested and eventually imprisoned.

Meanwhile, Gorchakov had died at Baden-Baden in the early hours of Sunday 11 March 1883. *The Times* (12 March) was moved to note that since taking up office Giers 'has introduced into the Imperial policy a spirit which seems to relegate the period of [Gorchakov's] sway to remote antiquity', adding the fantasy that the statesman had died 'on the eve of the new Tsar's coronation, and of what it is hoped may be the beginning of a happier era for the Russian people'.

However, back in the real Russia, the coronation of Sasha and Minny as Tsar Aleksandr III and Tsaritsa Marie Fëdorovna had to be postponed until Tolstoi and Sudeikin were satisfied that it could take place without undue danger to them and their guests. This was considered to be the case by January 1883, in spite of the persistence of the revolutionists, and the announcement was therefore made that the coronation would take place at the Kremlin on 15/27 May. Affie was selected to represent Queen Victoria at the coronation by agreement reached between Granville and the queen on 19 February; Marie did her duty as a family member. She would become increasingly despondent at the political direction Russia would take after 1881, but nonetheless would never fail in her duty to be present at every important

family occasion in Russia up to the Romanov Tercentenary celebrations of 1913. But she would never again undertake an impromptu journey to visit specifically any member of the last two ruling families who, if met at all, would be seen while visiting someone else.

Accordingly, she and Affie left for Russia in the middle of May for Tsarskoe Selo, remaining there for a week before arriving at Moscow with Sasha and Minny aboard the imperial train on 10/22 May. Marie was friendly towards Minny, having liked her ever since as Princess Dagmar of Denmark she had been affianced to Niksa before being encouraged to marry Sasha after the heir apparent's death. 'Sasha and Minny are most kind to me and I spend half the day with them and take long drives with Minny, as she never walks'.⁴² Minny helped Alix promote pro-Russian sympathy in Marlborough House in opposition to Bertie, and in addition was opposed to her husband's particular brand of autocratic nationalism, although she was impotent to alter any part of it. On the other hand, the tsar as a Pan-Slavist and the tsaritsa as a daughter of mutilated Denmark shared a violent detestation of Germany, a country for which Marie had a certain measured sympathy that would only increase as she experienced it. This would subsequently cause certain problems for the two women.

It was at this coronation that Marie first met the Waddingtons, since William had been sent to the coronation as the official representative of the French Third Republic prior to his posting to London. At a Kremlin ball given on 24 May/5 June, Mary found herself in a quiet corner taking tea and ices with a select group that included Marie. Like Lady Augusta Stanley, Mary Waddington was not gifted with an extensive vocabulary, noting that nobody was inclined to talk much 'except the Duchess of Edinburgh, who seems clever and ready to talk'. Four days later, she met Marie privately for tea: 'She is easy, clever, and was much interested in all that was going on'.⁴³ Nevertheless, once again it may be observed how this easy-going manner was not noticeable at the English court in 1883; however, nor would it be evident for very much longer at the Russian one.

After Leo's death and the birth of Marie's last child, there were two further journeys abroad, again to Germany and Russia, and then France. The first was made in May to Coburg and then July to Illinskoe, Sergei's country residence on the *Moskva* river about forty miles west of the city, to celebrate the conclusion of his successful marriage to Ella. In spite of her opposition to the union, Queen Victoria had made the effort to travel to Darmstadt with Beatrice for the ceremony, but Marie did not join her, having travelled directly to Coburg, and it is probable that this had been deliberate. In any event, the meeting at Illinskoe was a short family affair, and neither Affie nor any children accompanied her. Marie returned to London on 8 August, staying one day at Clarence House before moving to Birkhall in Scotland.

Birkhall was a small property on the Muick river in Grampian a few miles south of Ballater. Officially, it belonged to Bertie, but the previous May it had been given over to the Edinburghs for the autumn of 1884 after Marie successfully petitioned Victoria for it. Marie found it 'quite charming',⁴⁴ staying there with Nikolai Adlerberg and her four daughters. The conditions were cramped, and Missy certainly remembered correctly that Birkhall 'cannot have been ... very big ... as we all three [elder sisters] ... slept in one huge bed'.⁴⁵

Vova had married Princess Marie von Mecklenberg-Schwerin in August 1874. Taking the Russian name Marie Pavlovna, she was known as Miechen to her family and friends, and Marie would become one of her closest intimates. After returning to Eastwell Park at the end of September, she heard that Miechen would be in Paris. 'I suppose you would not object to my going in November for a few days to Paris to see

my belle-soeur Miechen?’ she petitioned Victoria.⁴⁶ This was certainly by now merely a *pro forma* method by which Marie contrived to do whatever she wished, as it is difficult to imagine the consequences of a refusal.

After returning from Paris, Marie moved to Eastwell Park for the Edinburgh Christmas where, apart from several journeys to London involving Arthur Sullivan, she remained until 22 May 1885 before spending the first part of the summer at Clarence House. One amusing incident before her departure for London concerned Staal and Adlerberg, who had come down at the beginning of May for a weekend. The local press was astounded to observe that Marie and her two Russian guests had spent a long afternoon in the wider Eastwell estate picking wild spring flowers like a trio of schoolgirls, each with a wicker basket and a store of jokes.

One brief journey to Coburg was undertaken on 29 June, and by the end of the following month she was at Osborne Cottage, returning briefly to Clarence House on 26 August before arriving back at Eastwell Park a few days later on Saturday 29. Early in December, Marie was seen for the second time at Canterbury Cathedral, this time with Affie and Princess Mary (‘May’) of Teck, taking a deep interest in the tomb of Edward Plantagenet, the ‘Black Prince’, after whom one of Affie’s ships had been named.

The year 1885 was an unusually quiet one for Marie, but it was very much a lull before another Russian storm, and if not in a teacup certainly in a samovar.

Meanwhile, a book had been published in London that autumn whose immense popularity may well have ensured that some of what it contained would be brought to Marie’s attention. Thomas Escott, quondam lecturer in Logic and professor of Classical Literature at King’s College London, had succeeded John Morley as editor of the *Fortnightly Review* in 1882. Since 1866, he had also been a leader-writer for *The Standard*, a twice-daily Conservative newspaper. Early in 1885, he put these words into his *Society in London by a Foreign Resident*, which included a defence of Affie against the charge of parsimony, already widespread:

The Duke of Edinburgh is a contrast to both his brothers, and is less popular than he deserves to be. His wife ... never captivated the hearts of the English people like her sister-in-law ... [Affie] is a clear-headed, astute, sagacious, and careful man of business ... he is not parsimonious, he is simply wise ... His manner ... is less charming, polished, and conciliatory than that of his elder brothers ... He is apt to be brusque, sometimes even a little contemptuous or disparaging, in his comments ... When [Marie] first came to England she was the victim of an untoward combination of circumstances. The English people were in one of those humours, which recur at intervals, of hostility to Russia. She found herself ... in an unsympathetic atmosphere. She was greeted with respect ... but not with enthusiasm. She reciprocated the tepidity ... The English public were not slow to discover that there was less of fascination in her bow ... than in that of the Princess of Wales, and that her face was seldom brightened by a smile. Those who are better acquainted with her have long since learned her merits ... She is not, and she never will be, a popular personage. But she is a deserving princess ...⁴⁷

Lady Brooke, the future countess of Warwick, confirmed this view of Marie when she later recalled that Marie ‘was never popular in this country ... she was naturally haughty and had besides a somewhat abrupt manner ... [she] had a lovely complexion, and a fine, commanding presence, but she was not beautiful. She did her best to make friends in her new surroundings’.⁴⁸

~ The Bulgarian Crisis ~

The Anglo-Russian crisis over Bulgaria commencing in 1885 was preceded by another over Afghanistan. Britain had already conducted two major campaigns against Afghanistan – from 1838 to 1842 and from 1878 to 1880 – in an attempt to consolidate the territory beyond the Northwest Frontier as a buffer state, latterly specifically against the perceived threat by Russia against the British *raj* in India. The second of these Afghan wars had been instigated by an Afghano-Russian accord when the amir Shir ‘Ali Khan received a Russian envoy at Kabul in June 1878, signing a treaty by which the amir would be protected by Russia, while at the same time refusing Britain the right to do the same. In his subsequent memoirs (1895), General Sir John Adye made the interesting point that he had always believed that Russia’s alleged designs on Afghanistan would be detrimental to Russia. For him, warfare and military expansion were a science, and the acquisition of bleak, difficult, and economically unrewarding territory such as Afghanistan would serve only to cripple any imperial aggressor. This also applied to Britain. In a lengthy article for *The Times* (18 October 1878), he regarded Britain’s incursions and territorial designs during the second Afghan war as a ‘dangerous delusion’.

Nonetheless, Russian activity in the direction of Afghanistan was further proof, to those who wanted it, that Rawlinson and Burnaby had been right and that Afghans were conspiring with Russia to allow the tsar easy access into India. Furthermore, gradual Russian expansion into Central Asia had been sporadic but progressive since the Russo-Turkish War, with Ashkhabad falling in 1881 and Merv – the *casus belli* of Rawlinson, Burnaby, and so many others – falling on 10 March 1884.

Hartington had joined Gladstone’s second cabinet as secretary of state for India in April 1880. His Russophobia undiminished, late in 1881 Hartington proposed a treaty between Britain and Russia to confirm the Afghanistan frontier, one effectively stating to the tsar ‘Thus far shalt thou go and no farther’. He had vigorous support from Northbrook, a former governor-general of India (1872-76), but the rest of the cabinet, including Gladstone, were at this time unenthusiastic, and the idea was shelved. This attempt to restrict supposed Russian advances towards India by those who professed not to believe in them was more than some could bear. In June 1882, the journalist Charles Marvin sent *The Russian Advance Towards India* to his publisher in London, an important work based on his recent travels to Russia where he had interviewed Chernaev, Ignatev, and the celebrated hero of the Russo-Turkish and Central Asian wars General Mikhail Skobolev. Also interviewed was the duke of Argyll. Marvin’s fury was reserved principally for Hartington, but there was a good measure left for Gladstone:

... if there has been any duplicity in connexion with the Central Asian Question during the last two years, it rests more with England than with Russia ... Had not Russia been made the victim of misrepresentations, for English party purposes, there would have been none of the recent unjust outcry against her in England. It is not to the honour of Mr Gladstone that it should have been his own cabinet which has inflicted on Russia a great wrong, nor to the credit of the Russophil Liberals that none of them should have attempted to expose it.⁴⁹

Perhaps there was no connection between the two events, but hardly had the book reached the bookshops (September) than Hartington was removed to the War Office (December).

However, it was not in fact the fall of Merv two years later that caused the next panic in England as Rawlinson and Burnaby had predicted. A frontier commission

would be set up under Russian and British officers to determine the precise legal territorial limit of the northern Afghan border in order to provide that indisputable Rubicon whose crossing by Russia would constitute a more reasonable *casus belli*. In August 1884, the British-backed Afghan Barakzai amir, Abdurrahman Khan, accepted both the proposal and the provisional findings of the commission. Although the border would not become so *de jure* until July 1895, the proposed line was already in operation *de facto* when Russian forces captured Penjdeh on 30 March 1885, thereby effectively earmarking the territory in advance of the commission's final decision.

Because Penjdeh sat on the proposed border, Russian presence there constituted a direct threat to Afghanistan and then, according to the old belief, beyond Afghanistan to India between Baluchistan and the Khyber Pass. Moreover, Britain had officially assured Penjdeh to Afghanistan as early as 1840. Then, in April 1885, faced with the Russian advance against Penjdeh, Abdurrahman Khan had visited Lord Dufferin (viceroy of India since 1884) at Rawalpindi where a concord was established by which Britain would stand by Afghanistan in the event of Russian penetration. There was no withdrawal from such an agreement, so when Penjdeh was reached even Gladstone suffered a fit of pragmatic 'post-Mervous tension' (partly to restore public faith in his administration after the recent disaster over General Gordon), forcing him to concede that the *casus belli* might come with penetration of the proposed bastion of an independent Afghanistan. The reserves were called up, and the cabinet applied to parliament for a war credit (voted 27 April) nearly double that which Disraeli had asked for in 1878. With this clear signal given, through diplomatic moves Gladstone and Granville held back the Russian advance neither man claimed to believe.

In July, with Salisbury heading his first administration as both premier and foreign secretary after Gladstone's defeat in June, there were further problems when it was reported that there was considerable military activity around the Zulficar Pass, a narrow passage leading into Afghanistan east of Penjdeh in Persia. It was now thought certain by some that Russia certainly meant to strike at India, and an Anglo-Russian conflict was again imminent, with Salisbury fearing (3 August) a 'complete rupture between England & Russia',⁵⁰ making overtures to Bismarck for a potential Anglo-German plan to mediate, which were rejected by the German chancellor.

Shortly afterwards, however, and apparently inexplicably, the Russian forces began to withdraw from both beyond Penjdeh and the Zulficar Pass. The Pass was relinquished by official announcement on 22 August, and although Penjdeh was not returned to Afghanistan, Russian forces were reduced and there were no further advances, while the Pass was made over to Afghanistan in return for Russia being allowed to retain Penjdeh. On 10 September, a protocol signed in London restated the proposed Afghan border to Russia's satisfaction, and this critical situation – almost certainly a potential war – was defused only to be replaced by a second and even more protracted Anglo-Russian crisis.

The cause of the Russian withdrawal was not the sabre-rattling in Britain but events developing in Bulgaria. Sandro, faced with the undeniably difficult task of upholding a liberal constitution pulled out of a lawyer's hat when he himself was by disposition an illiberal and inflexible ruler, had arrested most of his liberal ministers on trumped-up charges. By 1883, he was virtual dictator of what should have been a constitutional province. A liberal counter-revolution, masterminded by Russian agents keen to maintain the *status quo ante* set up under Aleksandr II, forced Sandro to reinstate the 1878 constitution on 20 September 1883 under a liberal ministry led by a minister he had once arrested. Sandro accepted these terms as he could hardly do otherwise, but the late tsar's nephew-in-law was now an implacable enemy of Russia – whose

increasing influence he had been resisting ever since his election as prince – and keener than ever to play the big shiny fish in a murky little pond.

Sadro's first move was to make the murky little pond much bigger. Accordingly, on Sunday 20 September 1885 (a date deliberately selected to mock the liberal victory exactly two years earlier), effective union between Bulgaria and Eastern Rumelia was announced in direct contravention of Articles II, XIII, and XIV of the Congress of Berlin. Sandro's relations with neighbouring Serbia had also never been good, and Milan II (king since 1882) declared war on Bulgaria on 13 November, seeing the union as an act of military consolidation, which of course it was, demanding compensation for previous historical differences.

In Britain, those who opposed the union blamed the ensuing crisis entirely on Russia merely on account of Sandro having had an aunt who had married a tsar. But in fact the move had been a popular one to which Alexander, as a professional prince appointed to uphold a constitution, had merely given his consent, no matter that he had done so very eagerly and had probably promoted it. Moreover, he was still titular head of two principalities and not ruler over one homogenous state. The incident again divided political opinion in Britain, where some supported the idea of a Greater Bulgaria even though they were forced to condemn the manner in which it was being brought about.

One such was Salisbury, who favoured an enlarged Bulgaria consisting of two united but separate states as a buffer between Russia and Constantinople, he having by now assumed Disraeli's absurd mantle as the chief British politician of empire. Back in 1874, Salisbury had informed his viceroy in India that although he accepted that Aleksandr II had no personal interest in penetrating India, 'he is not rigorous enough to prevent his officers doing it in spite of him'.⁵¹ On 11 June 1877 (and quite possibly inspired by Major David's earlier pamphlet, whose reasoning he followed closely), Salisbury had delivered a celebrated speech in the Lords suggesting that those promoting the belief in Afghanistan as a quick route into India should avail themselves of Ordnance-Survey-style maps (rather than pocket editions) to acquaint themselves with the vast and treacherous distance involved.

So although Salisbury was clearly no Russophobe and certainly no Turcophile, he was also no friend to the reactionary tsardom of Aleksandr III. The tsar was 'so bad a minister that no consequent or coherent policy is pursued', he explained on 15 September to Sir Robert Morier, adding: 'we must lead her [Russia] into all the expense that we can, in the conviction that with her the limit of taxation has been almost reached, and that only a few steps further must push her into the revolution over which she seems to be hanging'.⁵² But since Russia was quite invulnerable to a military assault, there was 'all the more reason to avoid, if we can, a crisis which must lead to such terrible calamities'.⁵³ Morier, who had been appointed to St Petersburg in August 1884 to the disgust of Granville and Bismarck, would incur the wrath of his queen by his steadfast pursuit of Anglo-Russian accord until his transfer in 1893.

Meanwhile, Sandro, who had alienated Russia and found he could no longer count on Aleksandr III's support against King Milan, appealed to his suzerain 'Abdul-Hamid for aid on 14 November. This appeal caused the Porte some legal problems, as the sultan's administrative state had effectively united with his feudatory one, and a conference of ambassadors met at Constantinople to discuss the separate issue of Sandro's novel legal status while Turkish military aid was suspended.

Now without Turkish or Russian help, Bulgaria was initially no match for the invading Serbian forces, and six days into the war Sandro submitted to a demand from the Porte that he withdraw from Eastern Rumelia. However, the military tide

immediately turned, and on the same day the Porte issued its demand (19 November) the Serbian army was severely defeated at Slivnitsa, which led in turn to a Bulgarian invasion of Serbia through the Dragoman Pass. Further defeats at Zaribrod four days later, and Pirot four days after that, led to Austro-Hungarian intervention and an enforced armistice on 28 November. On 21 December, a protocol was signed by an international commission with a new armistice to last until 1 March 1886. On 16 January that year, a collective note from the powers called on all the Balkan states to demobilize as a prelude to another major conference at Constantinople.

With Bulgarian forces now out of Eastern Rumelia, 'Abdul-Hamid capitulated before popular opinion there and officially conjoined the two provinces on 2 February, now *de facto* and *de jure* a single political entity with Sandro as feudatory prince to the sultan for a five-year period, as had been agreed at the ambassadorial conference the previous November. Peace between Bulgaria and Serbia was reached at Bucharest on 3 March (accepted ten days later by 'Abdul-Hamid prior to the official opening of the conference at Constantinople) where Sandro demanded governorship of the new Bulgaria for life. Predictably, this demand was rejected, but on 5 April, his five-year term was made official on terms reluctantly accepted by Sandro three days later.

Affie became directly involved in the crisis when neither Greece nor Serbia initially accepted the collective note of January 1886, with Greece demanding territorial concessions from Turkey as a bulwark against the enlarged Bulgaria. On 14 December 1885, with Affie's three-year appointment to the Channel Squadron close to terminating, Salisbury's cabinet assented to a proposal from the Admiralty that he should succeed Hornby as commander-in-chief of the Mediterranean Squadron, the foremost active position in the Royal Navy, in January 1886. Salisbury noted in his cabinet account to Victoria that there 'was no political objection' to such an appointment made 'on purely professional grounds'.⁵⁴

Accordingly, Affie arrived at Malta on 5 March. He was called to action when an ultimatum sent by the powers to Greece on 26 April demanding immediate disarmament met with an inadequate response. Salisbury had been defeated at the polls the previous November, and Gladstone formed his third administration in February 1886 with the marquess of Ripon as first lord of the Admiralty. At the beginning of May, Lord Ripon released his full instructions to Affie, which were to engineer a naval blockade against Greece and prepare for the possible bombardment of Athens followed by an armed landing.

British, German, Austro-Hungarian, and Italian representatives vacated Athens on 7 May, and on the following day Affie enforced the blockade just as the Greek army mobilized. The threatened Græco-British war was averted by internal political dissent in Greece. The war ministry fell and its replacement declined to assume the responsibility of undertaking a war against the combined forces of Britain and Turkey, if not also against the other powers. A decree for disarmament by Greece was signed on 24 May by King George and announced to the powers on 1 June. After some sporadic fighting, peace was restored, and the formal declaration of the raising of the blockade was announced six days later.

By October 1885, both Queen Victoria and Salisbury had agreed on the need to maintain Sandro as prince of Bulgaria (since by then it was clear that he would not suffer to become a Russian puppet), but to attenuate his influence by maintaining the union of the two provinces as separate entities under one governor-general. By this means, Britain could limit the damage done to the Congress of Berlin and also save face for both the nation and the Conservative Party, since all the world knew that

Disraeli had laid the foundation stone on which the present crisis had been so artlessly erected.

This crisis brought Victoria's ill-concealed Russophobia once again to the fore. 'Lord Salisbury', she wrote her premier on 25 September, 'cannot be aware of the fearful insults and positive ill-usage that he [Sandro] has met with at the hands of Russia and of the Emperor personally, though he is his first cousin, and therefore this cannot be an act in favour of Russia'. On 22 October, she wrote him of 'Russia's shameful intrigues ... we are defending the cause of liberty ... against Russian aggression and tyranny'.⁵⁵

The feeling between queen and tsar was mutual. Sasha's youngest daughter, Grand Duchess Olga, placed on record that 'My father could not stand her. He said that she was a pampered, sentimental, selfish old woman'.⁵⁶ This could not have helped the relationship between Marie and Victoria, for Marie's sympathies were now the opposite of what they had been a few years earlier. Marie had initially supported Sandro's election as prince of Bulgaria, even to the extent of becoming his effective nominator before her father. Victoria had liked Sandro since he had become enamoured of her granddaughter Princess Frederika von Hohenzollern ('Moretta'), a union supported by the queen and Moretta's mother Vicky, but violently opposed by Bismarck who saw trouble for Germany with a Hohenzollern-Battenberg match. The wedding did not materialize since Bismarck's pervasive influence was irresistible, but Victoria did not abandon her sympathy for Sandro, who although another descendant of the second ducal family was more acceptable to her as an implacable enemy of Russia. Marie, on the other hand, did abandon her sympathy for Sandro when he declared himself an enemy of Russia, and she thereafter supported her brother against him in spite of her reservations concerning Sasha's style of tsardom.

The Bulgarian crisis should have been settled at the Constantinople conference, but it was not. In the early hours of 21 August 1886, a *coup d'état* was staged in Sofia by three Bulgarian officers who entered the palace with an armed guard and took Sandro prisoner. They removed him to Silistria and from there to Lemberg (L'vov) where he was placed into Russian custody six days after his capture. Victoria pressed for British military intervention, and it required all of Salisbury's diplomatic skills to convince her of the absurdity of this in the light of Britain's very much second-rate land army.

Meanwhile, the revolutionary provisional government established in Sandro's absence, and which had deposed him the day after his removal, had itself fallen through lack of popular and military support to be replaced by a loyalist and deeply Russophobic ministry-regency under the popular lawyer Stephán Stambolov. Sandro returned to Sofia on 3 September, but, exhausted and disillusioned, on the following day he announced his intention to abdicate, having remained on the throne just long enough to ensure that Sasha would accept a regency under Stambolov, which he reluctantly did. Stambolov took power on 6 September, and two days later Sandro retired from politics, leaving Sofia to become a general in the Austro-Hungarian army.

Shortly after having arrived on Bulgarian soil on 29 August, Sandro made the mistake of sending a provocative telegram to Aleksandr III whose final line read: 'As Russia gave me my Crown I am prepared to give it back into the hands of its Sovereign'.⁵⁷ By this apparent submission, Sandro seems to have hoped to gain the tsar's sympathy and the crown of Bulgaria with it; he was given neither. Instead, on 25 September, Bulgaria was given a Russian mission under General Nikolai von Kaulbars in an attempt by the tsar to wrest control from Stambolov, which policy of

open intimidation led to the presence of Russian warships at Varna one month later, from which troops disembarked on 2 November.

Queen Victoria was furious. She wrote Lord Cross – now secretary of state for India in Salisbury's second administration following Gladstone's defeat in the summer – on 29 September of the 'absolute necessity of *not* letting Russia interfere unnoticed with the interior affairs of Bulgaria ... The world thinks we mean to do *nothing*, and it is doing enormous harm'. Ten days later, she again wrote to Cross, alleging that Kaulbars was behaving 'contrary to international law and usage'.⁵⁸ Salisbury delivered a speech in the Commons on 9 November condemning Russian aggression, and a previous threat by Kaulbars to quit Bulgaria – thereby leaving the province open to direct attack by Russia – was carried out on and after 20 November.

Affie's appointment to the Mediterranean Squadron at the beginning of the year was naturally a considerable upheaval for Marie and her family, although it came as a considerable relief to everyone:

But the great question of the moment is the nomination of the Duke as commander of the fleet in the Mediterranean. He is completely carried away by this very high posting and, in the end, brilliant conclusion to his maritime career; after this, he will rest on his laurels and wait patiently for his Coburg inheritance. The command will last three years and the Duke should probably leave for Malta at the end of February. I will stay with the children in London until after Easter, when I hope to go to Coburg and then a little later to Russia. To go to Malta towards the spring makes better sense, since I would not immediately wish to introduce the children to the tropical heat.⁵⁹

Accordingly, Marie and her four daughters – Prince Alfred was in Coburg where he generally remained – left Eastwell Park shortly after Easter Sunday (25 April). There had been a vast farewell supper on Wednesday 13 January for all the staff and estate employees held at various public houses and inns, as well as at Eastwell Park itself. The lease with the earldom of Winchelsea was terminated, and it was noted that the Edinburghs took an order for 300 packing cases for their removal from Kent, some of which were as large as a grand piano – and not only those required for Marie's pianos. They took the customary overland route to Coburg, and Marie arrived with her family on 15 May with 'such violent fever with neuralgia, that I was almost off my head'.⁶⁰

Just as on previous occasions, however, Marie maintained a polite relationship with Victoria, although she may well have dwelled on the cold fact that throughout the twelve-year occupation of Eastwell Park the queen had never once visited either her or Affie.⁶¹ In any event, leaving the children in Coburg, Marie travelled to the Hotel Continental in Paris for Tuesday 18 May. This hotel (since 1968 the modified Intercontinental) had been inaugurated on 6 June 1878 and occupied the entire corner at 3 rue Castiglione. It was one of the most magnificent in Paris, having been built on the ruins of the former Ministry of Finance that had been burnt down by the Communards in 1871. A replica of the famous Hôtel de Ville that had also been destroyed during the general conflagration, it boasted 400 rooms and twenty-five suites. While there, Marie bought the latest parasol for Queen Victoria's birthday the following Monday. Without any references to current problems, she was able to tell her that 'Paris looks very lovely and the atmosphere is so wonderfully bright'.⁶² From Paris, on Tuesday 25, she travelled to Baden to see her former governess, Countess Tolstaia, before returning to Coburg at the beginning of June.

Marie then took a few days by herself to visit Queen Olga in Württemberg at her small villa on the outskirts of Stuttgart, followed by a visit to her friend Viktoria von Hohenzollern ('Charly'), Willy's younger sister who since 1879 had been married to a prince of Saxe-Meiningen-Hildburghausen; she also travelled to Schönberg in July to

see Marie Erbach. At the end of the month, the family left Coburg for Russia, staying at the summer palace of Peterhof, fifteen miles southwest of St Petersburg on the Bay of Kronstadt. 'Here we live in separate small villas in the park', she explained to her new best friend Lady Randolph Churchill on 2/14 August. 'I live with the children in one house, and the Majesties live in a cottage some five minutes' walk from us'.⁶³

The family moved down to Moscow at the end of August to stay at Illinskoe with Sergei, from whom Marie vainly sought to buy some horses to take to Malta in between a great deal of mushroom-picking and complaints that Sergei was spoiling Sandra. Two weeks later, Marie and her children left Russia for Germany. After a day in Berlin, Marie returned to Coburg on 24 September, where she wrote Lady Churchill that in Berlin:

I ... had a long and interesting interview with our friend Bismarck. I have not heard from the Queen since the Bulgarian Disaster. She might perhaps "boulder" [shun] me because I was in Russia during the time and witnessed everybody's astonishment at the quite unexpected fall of my lamented cousin ... we knew nothing whatever beforehand and it was real excitement that time!⁶⁴

Marie explained the Russian position and her compatriots' ignorance of Sandro's capture at first hand, but she nevertheless informed Lady Randolph Churchill that she was certain somehow to be blamed when she eventually returned to England.

Marie may well have been right, because the prevailing notion in England after the Bulgarian *coup d'état* was that Russia had been entirely behind it. This was, as Marie knew, quite untrue, and Sandro was eventually released by direct command of the tsar. However, this is not how Queen Victoria wished to see it, and it was immediately clear to her that Sandro had been spirited away not so much by Russian hands as 'Russian fiends', as she put it to Salisbury the day after the *coup*. Three days later, she wrote him a heavily underlined letter on '*Russian villainy*' and the 'treachery of the *Russian* agent at Sofia', insisting on 'strong observations to the Russian Ambassador and Russian Government' who '*must see* that she *cannot* again *attempt* a similar *coup d'état*'.⁶⁵ Victoria retaliated by reversing her previous conviction, insisting that there should be a full union between Eastern Rumelia and Bulgaria with Sandro nominated prince for life.

A number of British politicians supported this view, albeit for different reasons. The earl of Iddesleigh, foreign secretary in Salisbury's second cabinet (who as Sir Stafford Northcote in Disraeli's last cabinet had pursued a moderate course), thought that Turkey should be prompted into officially summoning Sandro to Bulgaria during his captivity. This would lend him credence as a ruler while pre-empting the Russian proposal to install General Nikolai Dolgorukii – Katia's cousin – in Sofia as the official regent at a time when Stambolov had not yet assumed control. Iddesleigh correctly supposed that once Dolgorukii had given Russians a foothold in the Balkans both he and they would be difficult to remove.

Lord Randolph Churchill, Salisbury's chancellor of the exchequer, also supported Sandro against Russian interests, even though he was by this time a committed Russophile. However, above all, Churchill was an advocate of peace, and he accepted the widespread view that without Sandro in Sofia a general war was likely to break out. On 7 September 1886, however, he dissented in cabinet from the Salisbury-Iddesleigh view that Sandro should be maintained in Bulgaria as a bulwark against Russian interests. He was fast becoming indifferent to Russia and the Eastern Question, favouring the view that Russia may in fact have Constantinople if it wished as this was of no concern to Britain, although even Russophiles such as Morier

reckoned (14 September) that this would not lessen the 'crypto-belligerency' between Russia and Britain.

Marie's influence on Churchill in this matter can and will be ascertained, but it is a pity that her relations with Bismarck cannot. Her interview with the German chancellor would certainly have been 'interesting', but her use of the word 'friend' must surely have been heavily ironic. Throughout the Bulgarian crisis, Bismarck had been unwilling to support Austria-Hungary openly against Russia and so encouraged Britain to do so instead, a propaganda exercise in *Realpolitik* of which Russia was keenly aware. Bismarck's government hacks, known as the 'Reptile Press', had been pushing the 'national and royal obsession' respecting Russia and British India for the benefit of any British traveller in Germany. The zoologist Peter Mitchell noticed this when he visited Berlin in the summer of 1884. On 22 June, a young Berlin businessman explained to him that 'Russia ... is your enemy too. She wants to take India, and India she will have. Your country should not have treated her so tamely over Afghanistan; your Lord Beaconsfield showed himself a great man and understood that, but Mr Gladstone is a fool as he does not wish to crush Russia'.⁶⁶

Marie and her daughters left Coburg on 23 October, taking a route to Stuttgart via Württemberg and Geneva, then Strasbourg and finally to Marseilles, where Victoria again thoughtfully placed the *Osborne* at their disposal to take them for the last leg of the journey. They left Marseilles at 10:30 in the morning of Wednesday 27, and arrived at La Valetta on the late afternoon of Saturday 30 October.

NOTES and REFERENCES to Chapter Four

¹ *Erbach* 173-4.

² *Wake* 183.

³ *Buchanan: Diplomacy* 30. Few people display a single mood at all times although Marie has all too often been judged when she was not at her best. Casual remarks [10 Jun. 1874] such as ‘She is very like her brother [Aleksei], but so gay and animated’ [*Cartwright* 260] are as common as any other.

⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1064, Marie to Wolseley 10 Aug. 1883.

⁵ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1426, Marie to Queen Victoria 26 Nov./7 Dec. 1873.

⁶ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1440, Marie to Queen Victoria 25 Jul. 1874.

⁷ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1451, Marie to Queen Victoria 2 Feb. 1875.

⁸ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1486, Malta to Windsor Castle 23 Mar. 1877.

⁹ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, London to Coburg.

¹⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1559, Clarence House to Windsor Castle 23 May 1879.

¹¹ HL MS 62 MB1/U24, Eastwell Park to [?].

¹² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1598, Claremont House to Windsor Castle 21 Feb. 1881.

¹³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1599, Marie to Queen Victoria 22 Feb. 1881.

¹⁴ RIG A.I.s. 8°x 4, Clarence House to [?].

¹⁵ *Fulford: BM* 97.

¹⁶ *Ibid.* 104.

¹⁷ RA VIC/Add. A 30/429, Eastwell Park to Claremont House 21 Nov. 1881.

¹⁸ RA VIC/Add. A20/1608-09, 20 Apr. 1882.

¹⁹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1610, Marie to Queen Victoria 6 Jun. 1882.

²⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1612, Marie to Queen Victoria 8 Jul. 1882.

²¹ RA VIC/A 20/1613, Marie to Queen Victoria 10 Sep. 1882.

²² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1048, Marie to Wolseley 28 Dec. 1882.

²³ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1068, Marie to Wolseley 27 Sep. 1883. In this both Saburov and Marie would be frustrated, although Saburov would become a valued member of Nikolai II’s State Council (Duma).

²⁴ RA VIC/A 20/1081, Eastwell Park to London 11 Jan. 1884.

²⁵ BL Add. MS 43874 f.106, Clarence House to [?].

²⁶ *Gwynn and Tuckwell* i 487.

²⁷ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1074, Eastwell Park to London 19 Nov. 1883.

²⁸ *Marie of Romania* i 47.

²⁹ In this context it is worth noting that the entire nation was aware of the long running feud between the duke of Cambridge and Wolseley, and it is surely the royal duke who was chiefly satirized by W. S. Gilbert as the ‘Modern Major-General’ in *The Pirates of Penzance* (1879). The received view, based on little more than stage mimicry at the time, is that it was Wolseley. But he is unlikely to be the principal model as he *was* a very modern major-general who modernized the British army, while the duke of Cambridge did all he could to maintain its principles as they had been in his boyhood. Gilbert’s heavy irony is blatant, and surely he exposed the true identity of the major-general in the lines ‘For my military knowledge, though I’m plucky and adventury, / Has only been brought down to the beginning of the century’ [I 491-2]. Marie, as will be seen, developed an abnormally close and peculiar relationship with Wolseley, while she had little informal contact with the duke of Cambridge.

³⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1103, Marie to Wolseley 27 Aug. 1884.

³¹ *Gwynn and Tuckwell* ii 26.

³² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1622, Eastwell Park to Windsor Castle 15 Apr. 1884.

³³ *Fulford: BM* 126.

³⁴ *Ibid.* 73, 5 Apr. 1880.

³⁵ *Ibid.* 82, 3 Jul. 1880.

³⁶ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1066, Coburg to London 20 Aug. 1883. Marie on several occasions revealed that she had written severe letters to Queen Victoria, but none survives. The likelihood is that they were destroyed either by Victoria on receiving them or (more reasonably) by Princess Beatrice after 1901 when she took it upon herself to censor her late mother’s papers.

³⁷ *Hough* 55, Balmoral to Darmstadt 21 Sep. 1883.

³⁸ *Waddington* 192.

³⁹ *Marie of Romania* i 74.

⁴⁰ PRO FS 15/485 *Duchess of Edinburgh Lodge*.

⁴¹ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1601, Eastwell Park to Osborne.

⁴² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1618, Marie to Queen Victoria 3/15 Jun. 1883.

⁴³ *Waddington* 88, 103.

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- ⁴⁴ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1626, Marie to Queen Victoria 10 Aug. 1884.
- ⁴⁵ *Marie of Romania* i 72.
- ⁴⁶ RA VIC/Add. A 20/1627, Eastwell Park to Balmoral.
- ⁴⁷ *Escott* 23-6. The popularity of this work was such that the 9th edition was published the following year. It was also translated into French and published in Paris in the winter of 1885. By 'Foreign Resident' Escott had meant someone foreign to London like himself, and not a foreigner from abroad. Inexplicably, however, the French translation (of the 3rd revised 1885 English edition) bore the title *La société de Londres par un diplomate étranger*.
- ⁴⁸ *Warwick II* 76.
- ⁴⁹ *Marvin* 255.
- ⁵⁰ *Charmley* 200.
- ⁵¹ *Roberts* 144.
- ⁵² *Ibid.* 353.
- ⁵³ *Charmley* 202.
- ⁵⁴ PRO CAB 41/19/50, Salisbury to Queen Victoria 14 Dec. 1885.
- ⁵⁵ LQV II iii 698, 705.
- ⁵⁶ *Vorres* 54.
- ⁵⁷ *Corti: Alexander* 239.
- ⁵⁸ *Cross* 188.
- ⁵⁹ RIG unsigned fragment 8°x 4, Clarence House to Coburg Jan. 1886.
- ⁶⁰ RA VIC/Add. A 17/1760, Marie to Lorne 15 May 1886.
- ⁶¹ This omission cannot be ascribed to Victoria's reluctance to travel: this was reserved for journeys abroad, and she often travelled to various domestic destinations without feeling that her well-ordered routine had been unduly disturbed. Several of these had been to places not far from Eastwell Park. During 1871 and 1872, Victoria went three times to see Napoleon III at Chislehurst, which lies just forty miles along a direct route north from Ashford, and twice again in 1879, first to see Eugénie and then to attend the Prince Imperial's funeral.
- ⁶² RA VIC/Add. A 20/1633, Marie to Queen Victoria 23 May 1886.
- ⁶³ *Cornwallis-West* 184-5.
- ⁶⁴ CAC Churchill Papers CHAR 28/46/23, Coburg to London.
- ⁶⁵ LQV III i 179, 187-8.
- ⁶⁶ *Mitchell* 58. This piece of Reptilian Reportage did not fool Mitchell. On 9 Feb. 1896, he contributed an essay for the *Saturday Review* in which he stated that England's real enemy since 1870 had been Germany, and that the next great war would be fought between Britain and the Second Reich. The increasingly widespread realization that Germany was the new potential European aggressor helped in part to alter Britain's traditional view of Russia as the belligerent most to be feared.