

THE EMPEROR KARL



L. Lang

THE EMPEROR KARL

by

ARTHUR COUNT POLZER-HODITZ

Translated from the German by
D. F. TAIT and F. S. FLINT

“Fate shuffles the cards and we play”
SCHOPENHAUER

PUTNAM
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APPENDICES

JOHANN ORTH

THE Argentine Police Authorities were also interested in Johann Orth's residence in South America. In the year 1899, a man who was living in the town of Concordia in the Province of Entre Rios, Argentine Republic, attracted the attention of the police by giving his name as Johann Orth, when notifying the loss of a pocket-book at the Prefecture of Concordia, not suspecting that this assumed name was better known than his real name. The police discovered that the man gave himself out to be a merchant from Austria, and that he was in the habit of frequently, though not regularly, visiting the inn of a certain Don Pedro in a suburb of Concordia. He never spoke to anyone, nobody was acquainted with him or visited him, he always appeared sunk in thought, and always paid his bill in gold. On one occasion he dropped several gold pieces and an order on a red ribbon. The police made investigations and found that he lived in the Province of Entre Rios, down the river from Concordia, in the house of one Nino de Villa Rey, a distinguished Italian gentleman. Police officers once watched him taking a walk with a lady in the evening in the neighbourhood of the house of Signor Villa Rey, idyllically situated on some high ground; he afterwards went into the house. Soon after this, he left for a lumber farm belonging to Signor Villa Rey, at Chaco on the River Paraguay. When the police asked Signor Villa Rey directly about the person living on his lumber farm, he replied that the name of the Austrian in question was Hirsch, a statement which was later proved to be false. The Argentine police authorities communicated their discoveries to the Vienna police. The reply came through the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and was to the effect that His Majesty wished to deal with the affair directly with the Concordia Chief of Police, Boglich by name, who had made the report. Suitable remuneration was promised for an exact investigation into

where Johann Orth was staying. Boglich asked that data to enable identification to be made should be forwarded from Vienna, which was done. However, the Argentine police did not pursue the matter further. In the year 1903 Don José Boglich wrote the following letter (it has been translated from the Spanish) to Don Eugenio Garzón:

Chief of Police of Concordia (Argentine Republic)

Concordia,

23rd September, 1903.

To Don Eugenio Garzón, Ex-Senator of Uruguay, Paris.

MY DEAR FRIEND,

I received your valued communication of 10th August last, and send you the following reply. Your own reserved and trustworthy character will enable you to excuse my inability to send you the notes forwarded to the Austrian Government. Nor would they be of much use to you, as they merely contain information about the residence of Johann Orth and a few personal details. With regard to the notes relating to Johann Orth's passing through Concordia, I do not think there is anything to prevent my telling you the course of events in strict confidence; you are already acquainted with part of it. When Johann Orth was passing through here in 1899, he put up at the same Station Hotel as yourself. The police were then keeping an eye on certain individuals of bad reputation who were fond of travelling through to Upper Uruguay, and, as a result, a commissioner turned his attention to a man who was staying in the above-named hotel and who described himself as "Johann Orth, Austrian, merchant."

There is no doubt whatever that this was his name, especially as it was printed on a metal plate on his luggage. You were the first, as you will remember, to put the idea into my head, two days after he left, of inquiring into Johann Orth's place of residence. We succeeded in discovering that he had gone with Signor Villa Rey to the settlement at Yerua. According to the conjecture of the officer who had been watching him, he left the settlement a few days later owing to the incautiousness of the local Police Commissioner, taking the



JOHANN ORTH

steamer for Concordia. There he went by train to Upper Uruguay, after he had been joined by a lady, who accompanied him on the rest of his journey.

Investigations made later showed that Johann Orth had proceeded to Chaco on the River Paraguay, to work on Signor Villa Rey's lumber farm.

As I heard nothing more about him, I decided to write to Signor Villa Rey, whom I knew personally and who, I was sure, would give me some information. My letter was sent off in December, 1899, and in February, 1900, Signor Villa Rey sent me an answer the nature of which you can best judge by reading the original letter, which is enclosed. Its contents show that he, being of a chivalrous character, was trying to hide Johann Orth out of friendship. This confirms the account given by a labourer of Villa Rey's, German Acuna by name, who returned to Yerua from Chaco and assured the Commissioner of the settlement that Johann Orth was at the camp at Chaco. He was asked whether he knew a Herr Hirsch, the man referred to in Villa Rey's letter, but he replied that there had been no such person there, and that he had never even heard the name. Acuna added that Johann Orth always spoke Italian with his employer, and that the latter always treated him with very marked attention.

Since then I have not heard any more about this person. Such, my friend, is my information about this affair, which circumstances have made convincing.

With very kindest remembrances,

Yours sincerely,
JOSÉ BOGLICH.

On 28th November Boglich sent Don Eugenio Garzón a second letter, in which he informed him that Johann Orth had disappeared. The manager of Signor Villa Rey's undertaking, in which the Archduke was employed in the year 1900 had told him that Johann Orth had started for Japan before the outbreak of the war with Russia.

These letters were published by the addressee in Paris in the year 1906.

II

Extract from an article in the evening issue of the "Pester Lloyd" for 10th January, 1924, by the Hungarian ex-Minister Kristóffy on the Emperor Karl's knowledge of Franz Ferdinand's Political Programme.

The Archduke Franz Ferdinand sent for me in May, 1912, when he was already haunted by dark forebodings, and in the course of our interview addressed to me the following words: "I want to entrust to you a secret, which no one knows except my wife. The Almighty holds the lives and destinies of all of us in His hand. In our ignorance of His decrees, my nephew the Archduke Karl and myself have come to an agreement to be put in force in the event of anything happening to me before I ascend the throne. I have assured him that I will respect his rights, and he has promised me, in the event of his becoming Emperor first, to recover the rights and possessions of the Monarchy and the Army which have been thrown away. We have drawn up a deed embodying this agreement and deposited it in the family archives. My nephew understands my plans, as he is a very intelligent young man, and," concluded the Archduke, "I now want you to give me a solemn promise that if the event I have mentioned occurs you will report to my nephew."

Deeply moved, I gave the desired promise and the Heir Apparent shook me by the hand. I will only say further that I have no longer any interest in concealing the truth in any way. I assert on my word of honour that the above-described incident happened in the exact way I have related it.

III

A Declaration of the Archduke Franz Ferdinand

The alteration in the designation of the Minister of War from "Imperial Minister of War" (*Reichskriegsminister*) to

“Minister of War” has been effected without my having been consulted.

This alteration, which I have repeatedly opposed both in speech and in writing, is a revolutionary constitutional change which may have the most far-reaching consequences. This measure, which is in no way substantiated by the Compromise Laws of 1867, is a submission to the nationalist demands of Hungary and a fresh concession to the separatist school, which denies the existence of a unified Empire.

Since the designation, “Minister of War,” was decreed by the Imperial holograph of 20th September, 1911, but not fixed by a Fundamental Law of the State, while the title, Imperial Minister of War, was fixed by statute, it appears that this alteration is not binding on me in the future.

In face of the accomplished fact, there is no course open to me but to guard myself in the most decided manner against this alteration in title, and solemnly to declare that I reserve the right to restore the legal designation of “Imperial Minister of War” when I am in authority.

ARCHDUKE FRANZ FERDINAND OF
AUSTRIA-ESTE.

Schloss Blühnbach,
October, 1911.

IV

The Crown Prince's Locked Portfolio

On one of the first days of the Revolution, the documents belonging to the Emperor's Private Office were transferred to the House, Court and State Archives. As the Private Office no longer existed at that time, and I was present, being in the course of moving from the Hofburg to my private house in Vienna, I was asked to assist in this official act, which had been undertaken by an official of the Archives. The portfolio was opened. It contained toilet articles, a book, a letter case with some worthless banknotes in it and a flat ash tray

made of onyx ornamented with gold or gilded bronze eagles' claws. On the inner side of the ash tray the following words had been hastily written in purple ink: "A revolver, not poison, a revolver is surer." The handwriting was obviously that of the Baroness Mary Vetsera. This ash tray with the words written on it may be the only authentic written document on the Mayerling tragedy. As I assisted at the transfer only in the capacity of witness, I was unable to influence in any way the fate of these objects.

From all I have learned about the tragedy of Mayerling in the course of the years, I have become convinced that, in spite of facts that seem to support this theory, the death of the Crown Prince was not entirely a love tragedy. My brother-in-law, Marquis Bacquehem, who was Minister of Commerce at the time, told me that he had read the telegrams that passed between the Crown Prince and the Baroness Mary Vetsera. A custom had grown up that all the telegrams to or from members of the Imperial house should, after despatch, be sent by the head of the Telegraph Department to the Minister of Commerce, who submitted any that seemed important to the Emperor through the Private Office. Their telegraphic correspondence showed quite plainly that the Baroness's love had become an inconvenience to the Crown Prince. This was quite obvious in spite of the careful language in which his refusals were couched. The motive for the Crown Prince's suicide has always remained a mystery, but it must have been an affair of a political nature, in which not only the Crown Prince but also the Archduke Johann of Tuscany, later known as Johann Orth, were involved. It must have been an extremely serious matter, for the suicide undertaken jointly with the Baroness Vetsera was proved in all its details, was beyond question, and was, in fact, acknowledged. Why then was something connected with it kept a strict secret? The people who might have known something about it have gone to their graves without speaking. The documents relating to the death of the Crown Prince were, at the Emperor Franz Joseph's express orders, deposited not in the archives of the Ministry of the Imperial House, but handed over to the then Prime Minister and confidant of the Emperor, Count Eduard Taaffe. When the sealed packet was opened in 1912,

only blank scraps of paper were found in it. The documents had been removed.

The Countess Larisch-Wallersee, a cousin of the Crown Prince, used to tell a romantic story which suggested that some very serious matter was in question. She said that a few days before the Mayerling tragedy the Crown Prince handed over to her a small steel box sewed into a handkerchief, saying that he was in the gravest danger, as the Emperor might at any moment order a search to be made of his house and effects, and this box must not be found among them. Only one person knew of its existence. The box must be handed over only to this person, after he had proved his identity by giving as a password the letters R.I.U.O. A few days after the tragedy, the Countess received a letter signed with these initials, asking her to be at a certain place at a certain hour in the evening. When she got to the rendezvous, a man came to meet her, wrapped in a cloak and with his hat well pulled down over his face. He proved his identity by giving the letters R.I.U.O., and she handed him the box. As the stranger lifted his hat and stepped into the light, she recognized the Archduke Johann of Tuscany, later known as Johann Orth. He asked her whether she knew what was in the box. She said no, whereupon he remarked that he had been afraid she would give it to the Empress Elizabeth. If she had done so, she would, instead of being banished from the Court, as happened on account of her alleged encouragement of the relations between the Crown Prince and Mary Vetsera, have been made a Duchess. She had not been able to save the life of "that coward Rudolf," but she had saved her own.

From everything that has hitherto come to light about this tragedy of the Imperial House, we may infer, with a probability that almost amounts to certainty, that the Crown Prince Rudolf regarded death as the last and only solution of a terrible conflict of a political nature, and that Mary Vetsera, for love of him, accompanied him on his last journey.

A strange light is thrown on the Crown Prince's mental state at that time by the story of an event which for long remained unknown and which happened about a year before the tragedy. On 3rd January, 1888, a stag-hunt took place

at Mürzsteg. The Emperor had brought down four deer and two calves. The drive was nearly over, when the Crown Prince left his place to stalk a herd of deer. He fired a few shots, one of which almost grazed the Emperor Franz Joseph; the bullet hit the bearer, Martin Veitschberger of Mürzsteg, who was sitting behind the Emperor, on the underarm. It missed the Emperor by a fraction of an inch. Strict silence was maintained about this episode. The Crown Prince was not permitted to join the drives at Schwarzenbach and Geigergut on the following day. Freiherr von Mitis tells the story in his book, *Das Leben des Kronprinzen Rudolf*. The further particulars are taken from the lists which the Emperor kept with great exactitude of all the game he shot. It is one of the elementary rules of hunting that no gun should leave his place during a drive, a rule which is easily understandable both in one's own interest and in that of the other sportsmen, and which is never disregarded. The Crown Prince was such a good sportsman that no one thought of finding the explanation of his neglect of this elementary rule in anything except the fact that his mental and nervous state was no longer normal.

V

Guiding Principles drawn up by Count Czernin on 18th February, 1917, in German, and taken down by Count Erdödy to Count Czernin's dictation.

(The original was destroyed at Neuchâtel,¹ after it had been translated into French by Prince Xavier. The following is a re-translation into German.)

1. The alliance between Austria-Hungary, Germany, Turkey and Bulgaria is absolutely indissoluble. A separate peace with one of these States is out of the question.

2. Austria-Hungary has never intended the destruction of Serbia. It is, however, necessary to provide guarantees which shall guard against the occurrence in the future of political

¹ Prince Sixte de Bourbon-Parma, *L'offre de paix séparée de l'Autriche*, pages 58-59.

intrigues such as those which led to the murder at Sarajevo. Moreover, Austria-Hungary has the intention of paving the way for friendly relations with Serbia by far-reaching economic concessions.

3. If Germany is willing to surrender Alsace-Lorraine, Austria-Hungary would naturally put no obstacles in the way.

4. Belgium must be restored and compensated by all the belligerents.

5. It is a great mistake to believe that Austria-Hungary is under the tutelage of Germany. On the other hand, the opinion is widespread in Austria that France acts entirely under English pressure.

6. Austria-Hungary also does not intend to destroy Rumania. But she must hold that country as security until she has received a guarantee for the maintenance of the complete integrity of the Monarchy.

7. Austria-Hungary has publicly declared that she is merely waging a defensive war, and that her aim will be attained the moment the free development of the Monarchy is assured.

8. In Austria-Hungary none of the various nations enjoys any privileges. The Slavs will always have the same rights as the Germans. Foreign countries have a wrong idea of the sentiments of the Slavs, who are loyal to the Emperor and the Empire.

VI

The Emperor Karl's Addenda to the above Principles of Count Czernin.

(The Emperor's original manuscript was torn up and burned at the request and in the presence of Count Erdödy, after Prince Sixtus had read it. Prince Sixtus reconstructed the text on 23rd February, 1917.¹)

¹ Prince Sixte de Bourbon-Parma, *L'offre de paix séparée de l'Autriche*, pages 60 et seq.

Confidential.

To 3. We shall support France and put pressure on Germany with all the means in our power.

To 4. We have the greatest sympathy with Belgium, and know that it has been unjustly treated. The Entente and we shall make reparation for serious injuries.

To 5. We are most certainly not under the authority of Germany; for example, we refused to break with the United States against the will of Germany. It is believed in Austria that France is entirely under English influence.

To 7. Germany also.

To 8. With us there are no privileges for individual nations; the Slavs enjoy equal rights. Unity of all the nations and loyalty to the dynasty. Our one aim is to maintain the Monarchy in its present dimensions.

VII

Extract from Prince Sixtus's letter to the Emperor Karl, dated Paris, 16th March, 1917. (Translated from the French.¹)

But, in order to attain this result, there is only one means, and it is absolutely indispensable. That is, that you should as soon as possible declare to me in writing, in a clear and unequivocal manner, your acceptance of the four points. I am taking the liberty of enclosing a draft. I implore you to keep to this draft as closely as possible, in order to prevent the substance of it being watered down by the usual reservations of the Chanceries, which are most deplorable, as they waste valuable time, when we should be proceeding rapidly in order to anticipate events. If I cannot bring forward these four points in a clear and definite form, the authorities here will continue to be influenced by the first Note, which was regarded as quite unacceptable. . . .

¹ *L'offre de paix séparée de l'Autriche*, page 73.

VIII

Draft Note enclosed in the Above Letter of 16th March, 1917.
(Translated from the French.¹)

1. Austria-Hungary, so far as is within its power, adjudicates Alsace-Lorraine to France, or that part of it which was formerly in the possession of France, and will use all the means at its disposal to support France's demand for the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine.

2. Belgium must be completely restored to its sovereign rights under the present dynasty, retaining all its African possessions, without anticipating the question of the compensation it may receive for losses suffered.

3. Austria-Hungary has never intended to destroy Serbia. We declare our willingness to restore Serbia to its sovereign rights under the present dynasty. Further, as a sign of good will towards this kingdom, and in order to ensure it a suitable and natural outlet to the Adriatic, Austria-Hungary is prepared to hand over to Serbia the Albanian territory at present held by Austria-Hungary. We are likewise disposed to encourage friendly relations with Serbia by means of far-reaching economic concessions.

4. Austria-Hungary proposes to enter into negotiations with Russia, on the basis of the Monarchy's adopting an impartial attitude with regard to Constantinople, in return for the restoration of the territories of the Monarchy at present occupied by Russian troops.

From the moment when these fundamental conditions are accepted, His Majesty the Emperor of Austria declares his readiness to maintain his troops in a waiting attitude in their present positions, provided that the opposing troops observe the same attitude.

In the event of the present agreement's being signed by France and her allies, and if Germany should oppose it and try to compel Austria-Hungary to abandon it, France and her allies should immediately with all their forces support Austria-Hungary in its resistance to this demand and against a declaration of war on the part of Germany.

¹ *L'offre de paix séparée de l'Autriche*, pages 81-82.

IX

The Emperor Karl's First Letter to his Brother-in-Law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, dated from Laxenburg, 24th March, 1917. (Translated from the German translation.)

MY DEAR SIXTUS,

The third year of this war, which has brought so much pain and sorrow to the world, is approaching its end. All the nations of my Empire are more than ever united in a common resolution to protect the inviolability of the Monarchy even at the cost of heavy sacrifice. Thanks to the unitedness and to the cordial co-operation of all the nationalities of my realm, the Monarchy has for almost three years been able to withstand the most violent attacks. No one will be able to deny the military successes won by my troops, especially on the Balkan Front. France has on her side displayed great power of resistance and magnificent *élan*. We all unreservedly admire the splendid traditional valour of its Army and the spirit of sacrifice displayed by the whole of the French nation. It is a particular pleasure to me that, although we are now enemies, no real opposition of ideas and aspirations separates my Empire from France, and that I am justified in hoping that my keen sympathies for France, conjoined with those that prevail throughout Austria-Hungary, will in future be able to protect us against a recurrence of this state of war, for which I cannot in any way be held responsible.

For this purpose, and in order to give precise expression to the genuineness of these sentiments, I beg you, confidentially and unofficially, to inform M. Poincaré, the President of the French Republic, that I will support the just claims of France for the restoration of Alsace-Lorraine with all the means at my disposal and to the utmost of my personal influence with my ally.

With regard to Belgium, its sovereignty must be restored; it must retain its African possessions in their entirety. The question of any compensation for the losses it has suffered is not hereby anticipated. Serbia will be restored to its sovereign rights. As a pledge of our good will, we are disposed, in

accordance with the rules of justice, to give Serbia a natural outlet to the Adriatic and also far-reaching economic advantages. As a first condition and one that must be fulfilled, Austria-Hungary, on her part, will demand that the Kingdom of Serbia will in future abandon all connection with any society or group, with the "Narodna Odbrana" in particular, or suppress connections the political object of which is the dissolution of the Monarchy. Serbia must loyally and with all the forces at its disposal check all political agitation of this kind both in Serbia and beyond its frontiers, and must bind itself to act in this way under the guarantee of the Entente Powers. Events in Russia compel me to reserve my ideas on this subject until such time as a legal and definitive Government has been established in that country.

Now that I have explained my ideas to you in this way, I shall ask you, on your side, after conferring with both powers, to communicate to me the views of France and England, in order to prepare the ground for an understanding on the basis of which official negotiations may be instituted and brought to a conclusion satisfactory to all.

Hoping that we may as soon as possible bring to an end the sufferings of so many millions on both sides and of so many families now plunged in grief and anxiety, I beg you to believe in my cordial and brotherly affection,

KARL.

X

Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma's Draft for the Emperor's Second Letter to Him, dated Neuchâtel, 5th May, 1917. (Translated from the German translation.)

I note with satisfaction that France and England share the views which I regard as the main foundations for a European peace. They are, however, opposed to me in refusing to conclude peace without the participation of Italy. Italy has just offered to make peace with the Monarchy, having abandoned

all the impossible demands hitherto made to me with regard to the Slav lands on the Adriatic. She now confines her demands to the Italian Trentino. I have postponed the investigation of this demand until after I have received an answer to my peace offer from France and England.

To-day, therefore, I declare myself prepared to make peace with the Entente on the basis agreed upon with France and England, supplemented by the request of Italy and the point of view of Prince Lvov. This basis is in agreement with the points relating to Belgium and Serbia and France contained in my letter of 24th March. It further, as an answer to the disclosure recently made to me, admits of the surrender of the Italian-speaking Trentino to Italy, and, finally, as an answer to the disclosure of Prince Lvov, of the *status quo ante bellum* with regard to Russia and Rumania.

This conclusion of a separate peace between the Monarchy and the Entente, while the war between the German Empire and the Entente continues, cannot in any circumstances cause me to take up arms before the conclusion of the general peace. If, however, the German Empire, mistaking my sentiments towards itself, should attack the Monarchy, the Entente must assist me to the full extent of its power to repel this unexpected attack.

There is occasion for the immediate conclusion of an armistice pending the final conclusion of peace between the Monarchy and the Entente, during which my troops would remain in their present positions. Protected by this armistice, the mutual exchange of prisoners of war between the Entente and the Monarchy must proceed. The economic blockade between the Entente and the Monarchy must also be raised, so that the grain purchased in Russia by the Entente may be transported through Switzerland or Italy to France. . . . On the other hand . . . tons of the grain planted by the Germans in Rumania and Turkey may be transported without hindrance through Bulgaria and Serbia to Germany.

XI

The Emperor Karl's Second Letter to his Brother-in-Law, Prince Sixtus of Bourbon-Parma, dated from Laxenburg, 9th May, 1917. (Translated from the German translation.)

MY DEAR SIXTUS,

I note with satisfaction that France and England share the views which I regard as the main foundations for a European peace. They are, however, opposed to me in refusing to conclude peace without the participation of Italy. Italy has just offered to make peace with the Monarchy, having abandoned all the impossible demands hitherto made to me with regard to the Slav lands on the Adriatic. She now confines her demands to the Italian Trentino. I have postponed the investigation of this demand until after I have received an answer to my peace demands from France and England. Count Erdödy will have acquainted you with my views and those of my Minister on the various points.

The good understanding between the Monarchy, France, and England on so large a number of important points will, I am convinced, overcome the last difficulties which still stand in the way of the conclusion of an honourable peace.

I thank you for your co-operation in this work for peace which I have undertaken in the common interest of our countries. This war, as you said to me at parting, has imposed on you the duty of remaining faithful to your name and the great past of your house, first, by helping the heroes wounded on the battlefield, and, secondly, by fighting for France. I understood your attitude, and though we are divided by events for which I have no personal responsibility whatever, my affection for you remains unchanged.

I consider it important that, if you are willing, I should continue to communicate my personal views to France and England through no agency but yourself.

I assure you once more of my cordial and brotherly affection.

KARL.

XII

Aide mémoire, dated Vienna, 9th May, 1917, composed by Count Czernin and given to Prince Sixtus at the same time as the Emperor's Second Letter.

1. A one-sided surrender of territory by Austria-Hungary is out of the question; the idea might be discussed if compensation were given in the shape of other territory, provided that it is taken into account that the soil heroically defended by our soldiers and saturated with their blood is incomparably more valuable to us than any new territory could possibly be.

2. What guarantees are offered to us that at the Conference the integrity of the Monarchy (with the frontier rectifications now decided on) will be maintained?

3. A definite reply cannot be given until the above two points have been answered, when Austria-Hungary can enter into discussions with her allies.

4. In any event, Austria-Hungary is prepared to continue the conversations, and is still disposed to work for an honourable peace and thus prepare the way for a general world-peace.

XIII

Statement of ex-Minister Ottokar Czernin, published in the "Neue Freie Presse" of 17th January, 1920.

Ex-Minister Ottokar Czernin to-day publishes the following statement:

In connection with the French disclosures about the peace efforts of the spring of 1917, which have only just been brought to my notice and that only in the form of a summary, I have to make the following observations:

I. The French revelations do not distinguish exactly between the official and non-official measures, because naturally enemy countries could not be clear as to which steps were taken with and which without the knowledge of the respon-

sible Government. As I have already stated several times, the oral negotiations with Prince Sixtus of Bourbon took place in Vienna under my responsible direction. Their object was to prepare the way for a general peace for our group of powers as a whole. The French statements published mention two documents emanating from me. The first, that of March, lays stress, as is correctly stated, on the indissolubility of our alliance; the second, that of May, is alleged, according to the Austrian newspapers now before me, to contain my desire for a separate peace. It is plainly merely a question of wrong interpretation of the contents.

The real facts are as follows: In May, 1917, I gave His Majesty the Emperor, at his own request, a document composed by myself, which was to serve Prince Sixtus as an *aide mémoire* in connection with the oral negotiations which had taken place. It read as follows:

- (1) A one-sided surrender of territory by Austria-Hungary is out of the question; the idea might be discussed if compensation were given in the shape of other territory, provided that it is taken into account that the soil heroically defended by our soldiers and saturated with their blood is incomparably more valuable to us than any new territory could possibly be.
- (2) What guarantees are offered to us that at the Conference the integrity of the Monarchy (with the frontier rectifications now decided on) will be maintained?
- (3) A definite reply cannot be given until the above two points have been answered, when Austria-Hungary can enter into discussions with her allies.
- (4) In any event, Austria-Hungary is prepared to continue the conversations, and is still disposed to work for an honourable peace and thus prepare the way for a general world-peace.

This *aide mémoire* supplemented the oral instructions, and in (1) opposes one-sided surrender of territory to the allies of the Entente without compensation (at that time compensation by means of the annexation of Rumania or Serbia was spoken of), demands in (2) guarantees against the decisions of the London Conference, and declares in (3) that we cannot

enter into conversations with our allies until we have received their guarantees.

Of a desire to conclude a separate peace, there is not a word in the note, and the French interpretation, communicated to me after the breakdown of the negotiations, that the "guarantees demanded" were meant as a protection against attack from Germany, could only have arisen out of those other later-mentioned communications, then unknown to me.

In any case it is quite correct that tolerable peace conditions offered to Austria-Hungary by the Entente would have made it possible for us to work more successfully in Berlin for a general compromise peace. So long as the Entente adhered to the promises with reference to our territory given to their own allies, the military power of Germany was our only protection, and this military dependence naturally affected our political influence in Berlin. But even in the event of securing a revision of the London Agreement, the Austro-Hungarian Government never intended to betray Germany, but merely to work with greater elbow-room for a general peace.

II. During my period of office I never heard of a peace offer from the Italian Government. Moreover, the French statements published show that Sonnino did not abate any of Italy's claims to territory based on the London Conference. Nor had I any knowledge whatever of a peace offer made by Cadorna or Kerenski, which an Imperial letter is alleged to mention.

III. The Emperor's letters and notes now published were written entirely without the knowledge of the responsible Government. This is proved by two documents in my possession, the original copy of a Hughes conversation which took place between His Majesty and me on 10th April, 1918, when I was at Bucharest, and a letter from His Majesty to me from Baden, dated 12th April, 1918, in which two documents, both dating from immediately before my resignation, His Majesty takes my complete ignorance of the Imperial letters for granted, and communicates to me the view he held at that time, which is identical with that which His Majesty expressed in the two well-known telegrams on the subject to the Emperor Wilhelm. The letter of 12th April was supplemented by an oral command from His Majesty to continue support-

ing in all quarters the view he had communicated to me in writing. The issue of the *communiqués* against Clemenceau and the information given to the public and our allies during the few days in which I remained in office were based on the Emperor's communications.

OTTOKAR CZERNIN.

8th January, 1920.

XIV

AN OFFICIAL REPORT

(Summary)

Prague,
6th April, 1918.

The Royal and Imperial Police Commission of Prague.
No. 3761.

Meeting of the Bohemian Deputies of Greater Prague. Budget questions and attitude to be adopted towards the proclamation of His Excellency Count Czernin.

On 4th April, 1916, a conference was held in Prague . . . of all the Parliamentary deputies of Greater Prague under the chairmanship of Deputy Wenzel Klofáč. At the same time a meeting was held in the house of Dr. Karl Mattuš, a member of the House of Lords, at which were present Dr. Karl Mattuš, ex-Minister Dr. Josef Fořt, Josef Wohanka, Aulic Councillors Dr. Jaroslav Hlava and Dr. Karl Vrba.

Both meetings had been organized by mutual arrangement; the conference of Deputies was chiefly concerned with budget questions—at least this was what was given out—but the subject of both was the attitude to be adopted towards the last proclamation of the Minister for Foreign Affairs, Count Czernin. According to the reports, a lengthy debate was started, in which protests were made against the latest proclamation of Count Czernin, in so far as it affected the Czech

nation. This proclamation had roused all the Czech parties. The agitation of the deputies of the so-called Opportunist wing was obviously greater than that of the Radicals. Of the Opportunist wing, Dr. Šmeral and Dr. Fiedler, among others, took part in the debate.

The Radicals made fun of the proclamation: they declared that Count Czernin had shown his cards, and had allowed himself to be carried away by impotent anger and to be provoked by the Germans. Austria had done herself harm in the eyes of the whole world through his action. Germany itself had never officially taken such action against any people as Count Czernin had against the Czechs. It was absolutely undiplomatic and would merely strengthen the position of the Czechs before the international forum. Such speeches could not possibly have the designed and expected effect on the Jugoslavs, namely to alienate them from the Czechs, as the Jugoslavs had an even larger number of emigrants abroad than the Czechs, who were working for the Jugoslav state as the Czechs were working for an independent Czech state. Now the Jugoslavs would also have to take up a position with regard to the proclamation, and in this way the mass of the Jugoslavs, instead of being alienated from the Czechs, would be brought into closer union with them.

The Opportunists also criticized the latest proclamation. The form of it was quite inadmissible and precipitate. It had merely meant an enormous advertisement for Masaryk.

The work of the Opportunist wing, on the lines of an understanding with the Government by constitutional methods, was completely defeated, since those who still attempted conciliatory talk would forfeit their influence with the people and lose their confidence. The Opportunist deputies further maintain that the Czech nation has nothing more to lose: they have been undone by the senseless policy of the Government, and the radical policy is now the only one with any justification. The Opportunist deputies are bound to give tacit support to this radical policy, and even if there should be a change in the Government's present open attitude of hostility to the Czechs, it would convince no one, as we should know that it was not a real change.

A radical policy alone, moreover, will preserve peace at

home, because it diverts the attention of the people away from hunger and poverty, and is acceptable to them. Count Czernin is inciting to pogroms, inflaming the Germans against the Czechs, and abandoning the Empire to national and even anti-dynastic agitations and tumults.

This was the tone of the speeches of Drs. Šmeral, Fiedler, Franta, and Tobolka.

As we also learned from a confidential source, Dr. Mattuš, a member of the Upper House, expressed the opinion that Count Czernin's hatred for the Peace Party at Court could clearly be read between the lines of his proclamation. This Peace Party is reported to be supported by Their Majesties. The deputies had certain knowledge of this, and were also aware that His Majesty the Emperor had long been under the influence of the Peace Party, and had got his information from the Peace Party. This is known from an authentic source.¹ For those in the know, the proclamation of His Excellency Count Czernin means the complete victory of the Berliners, that is, the War Party at Court, and in consequence a complete breach with the nationalities. . . .

According to confidential information, Dr. Karl Mattuš expressed such views; he wished to go his own way, all the more so because one could see that the Czechs were no longer being governed from Vienna, but from Berlin, the branch establishment of His Excellency Count Czernin.

A radical deputy to the Reichsrat, according to a confidential communication from Klofáč, another Reichsrat deputy, stated that the Government, by such speeches as that of His Excellency Count Czernin, was turning the Czech nation on to the street.

It was resolved to summon a meeting of the Czech Union at Prague in the course of the next few days, which, in agreement with all the political parties, should take the measures necessary to avert the threatened disaster. The meeting should also define its attitude to the recklessness and folly of

¹ There never was a "Peace Party" at Court. The Emperor was resolved on peace. His policy was and always remained a peace policy. He had no need of being influenced in this direction. It was Count Czernin alone who abandoned his formal peace policy at Brest, under the influence of the gentlemen from Germany, and went over to the camp of the Prussian "victory peace" generals.

His Excellency Count Czernin, as well as to those who were inciting His Majesty the Emperor against the Czechs.

XV

An Unofficial View

Budapest,
14th April, 1918.

Interest is for the moment concentrated entirely on the Czernin-Clemenceau affair. Czernin's proceedings are absolutely incomprehensible to our circle. One gets the direct impression that his object is to injure the Emperor as much as possible. What an unheard of proceeding it is for a minister to provoke a scandal and then take refuge behind the person of the sovereign. We used to think that it was the function of the minister to protect the sovereign, even if the sovereign acted without the approval of the minister. This does not apply to Czernin, Tisza, etc., who have thrown loyalty to the winds. Otherwise there would be no understanding the denial of something by "Imperial Order" in an official *communiqué*.

Do you know what is being said about it in Tisza's circle? They are saying that Czernin has left the Emperor in the lurch; he refuses to take any more responsibility for him. In these circles and in Pan-German circles in Hungary, the view is held that there is now nothing left for the Emperor to do but abdicate. Of course! If the Emperor Karl had done something contrary to the interests of the Monarchy, these gentlemen would have been unanimous in praising him; but he has mayhap wounded Pan-German national feelings, and that demands a heavy penance.

The attitude of the newspapers is the most characteristic. The article was confiscated in the *Pester Lloyd*; the Tisza Press maintains silence or inserts little treacherous paragraphs; the socialist and radical Press, on the other hand, expresses the warmest sympathy with the Emperor.

I consider that too much fuss is being made about the affair. Suppose the Emperor did write the letter in the form in which Clemenceau published it. What then? It happened in March, 1917. Up to that time the Germans did not give a fig for our Italian interests. The change did not come till the autumn of 1917, by which time the Emperor's attitude to Alsace-Lorraine had also changed. The policy of the alliance is not a question of sentiment but of practical interests. A minister devoted to the Emperor was bound to argue in this way, whereas Czernin argued like a minister of the German Empire, who wants to get his poor devil of an ally out of the mess he is in, but actually keeps pushing him in deeper all the time.

Now for our domestic affairs.

Tisza bluntly rejected the compromise proposal last Wednesday, because he has made an arrangement with Czernin by which Wekerle is to remain in office for two or three months longer, in order to carry through the unpleasant requisitions and other matters of a similar kind; Czernin will then help Teleszky, or, it may be, Tisza, into the saddle. But on Thursday, when it became apparent that Czernin was as good as gone, the Tiszaists began to tiptoe away, and to start flirting again with the absolute necessity for a compromise. They at once found support among some of the Government people, especially the new Food Minister, Prince Windischgraetz. The latter is well known to be merely the puppet of Szterényi, the Minister for Commerce, who in his turn is the puppet of Berlin. Prince Windischgraetz intrigues here and in Vienna—extremely clumsily, it is true—and demands nothing less than the complete shelving of the question of electoral reform. I do not think that Prince Windischgraetz is aware of the motives of the men behind him; he is much too simple. To me these motives are quite clear.

Since the Emperor Karl has been on the throne, the reform of the electoral law has always been represented as his desire, as originating with him. This has won him enormous popularity with the mass of the population, which explains the present manifestations of sympathy with him.

If the question of electoral reform is now shelved, it would mean a loss of popularity for the Emperor, which is in the

interest solely of Berlin and of the Pan-Germans both here and in Austria. Therefore, at any price, we must keep electoral reform in the forefront, refuse to conclude any compromise with Tisza, and entrench the Emperor with the masses, who will afford him far greater security than all the Junkers with their revokable loyalty.

It is to be hoped that Vienna is keeping its head up.

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