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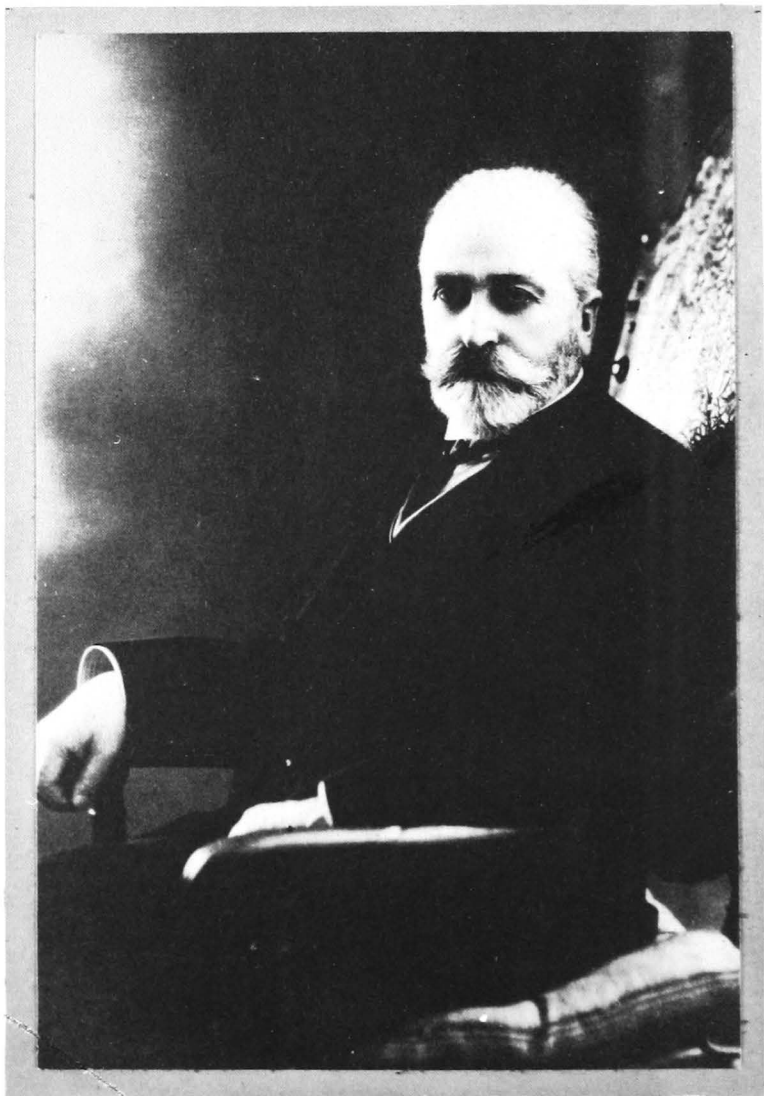
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Out of My Past
The Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov

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COUNT VLADIMIR NIKOLAEVICH KOKOVTSOV

HOOVER WAR LIBRARY PUBLICATIONS—No. 6

OUT OF MY PAST

THE MEMOIRS OF COUNT KOKOV'TSOV

Russian Minister of Finance, 1904–1914
Chairman of the Council of Ministers, 1911–1914

Edited by

H. H. FISHER

Translated by

LAURA MATVEEV

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EDITOR'S FOREWORD

IN PREPARING this edition of the *Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov* we have, with the author's consent and collaboration, condensed certain portions of the original manuscript relating largely to personal matters which might be presumed to be of secondary interest to the Western reader. The text here given, therefore, does not correspond exactly with the Russian edition, *Iz moego proshlago, Vospominaniia, 1903-1919* (Izdanie Zhurnala Illustrirovannaia Rossiia, Paris, 1933), published by arrangement with the Hoover War Library, but all changes have been approved by Count Kokovtsov.

Russian reference works do not always agree on dates and such other biographical data as have been included in the editorial notes. In many cases, though unfortunately not all, we have been able to check these data by reference to the persons mentioned or to members of their families, and I wish to thank those who have given this information. Dates of Russian events after July 1918 are new style.

I wish also to acknowledge the very considerable participation of members of the research staff of the Hoover War Library in the preparation of this edition, particularly Mr. J. E. Wallace Sterling, Mrs. Xenia Joukoff, Mrs. Elena Varneck, and Miss Jiřina Markova. Miss Markova has also seen the manuscript through the press and has prepared the index. I am also greatly obliged to Professor George Vernadsky for valuable suggestions regarding the notes. Finally, I desire to make grateful acknowledgment to Count Kokovtsov for his aid, his patience, and his unfailing courtesy during the preparation of this volume.

I am indebted to the following publishers for their kindness in allowing me to include certain illustrations in this volume: to Doubleday, Doran and Company, Inc., for a photograph of Count Witte from the *Memoirs of Count Witte*, translated by A. Yarmolinsky; to Sir Isaac Pitman and Sons, Ltd., for a photograph of A. I. Guchkov from *Russia and the Russians* by Harold Williams; and to the proprietors of *L'Illustration* for a photograph, "Voyage de M. Poincaré en Russie," which appeared in that periodical.

H. H. FISHER

STANFORD UNIVERSITY, CALIFORNIA
March 26, 1935

AUTHOR'S PREFACE

I WAS nineteen years of age when I graduated from the Imperial Alexander Lyceum (1)* in December 1872

On the advice of three outstanding legal authorities of the time—A D Gradovsky (2), N. S Tagantsev (3), and S V Pakhman (4)—I had intended to devote myself to an academic career, selecting state law as my special field. To this end I had decided to enter St Petersburg University as a law student, to complete in the shortest time possible the entire course of studies, and to try my luck at getting Master's and Doctor's degrees and the corresponding academic standing. In this decision I was warmly supported by my father, who promised to assure my financial well-being for the entire period of my studies, he also insisted that I abandon the idea of earning my own livelihood meanwhile, as my academic work would be sure to suffer from any additional occupations.

Fate, however, decreed otherwise. Scarcely two months after I graduated from the Lyceum and transferred my Lyceum diploma to the University, where a special resolution was adopted concerning me, my father died suddenly. For some time our entire family found itself in very strained financial circumstances. I was forced to abandon my plans and tread a road common to all Lyceum graduates of that time—to seek government employment.

On March 10, 1873, I was admitted as a candidate for a civil service position in the Department of the Ministry of Justice, at first in the statistical, later in the legislative, finally in the criminal office. And for forty-four years, until March 1917, I continued without interruption in state service.

The February Revolution of 1917 put a stop to my official career. In a simple decree the Provisional Government, which had supplanted the Tsarist régime, abolished the State Council (5), of which I had been a member for more than twelve years, and like many others I found myself cast overboard, wondering what to do. Six months later, again submitting to the general fate, I lost all my modest

* The numbers in parentheses refer to editorial notes at the back of the book. Footnotes are by the author.

savings and all my possessions. Then, in November 1918, in order to save our lives, my wife and I left our country without hope of ever seeing it again.

The road I traveled during my forty-four years of state service had many turnings and not a few ups and downs. The eleven years from 1879 to 1890 I spent as Senior Inspector and Assistant Head of the Central Administration of Prisons. This was the period when this branch of administration was being radically reorganized according to the principles worked out by a most outstanding statesman of that period, State Secretary K. K. Grot (6). I recall this period of my activity with much satisfaction; it gave me an opportunity to acquire a great deal of diverse information as to our civil service. It was thanks to this experience that on many occasions during my subsequent work I found myself better informed than many of my colleagues.

The six years from 1890 to 1896 I served in the Imperial Chancellery, occupying the positions of Assistant State Secretary, State Secretary, and Assistant Imperial Secretary (7). These years gave me an opportunity to study the problems of budget and state economy, thus preparing me for the next six years, 1896 to 1902, when I served as Assistant Minister of Finance, Count Witte (8) being Minister of Finance at that time.

After a short interval of two years, 1902–1904, during which I occupied the position of Imperial Secretary, I returned to the Ministry of Finance to remain there for ten years as Minister; during the years 1911 to 1914 I was also Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

The later years of my active work, 1903–1918, have had little light shed upon them. There are but few memoirs giving an accurate and well-founded account of what happened during that period; most of the eyewitnesses and responsible workers have died without having published or probably even written their memoirs. Thus a whole epoch, which merits at least a description, may simply go unrecorded unless an attempt is made to say a truthful word about it.

It seemed to me, therefore, to be my duty to preserve from oblivion and untruth a record of the events of my experience, if for no other reason than that I still retain a clear memory of all that happened and that, by a happy accident, I have preserved all the brief notes I made at the time. These notes are not accompanied by detailed comments, but they are in chronological order and thus form a record of the events which arrested my attention. They have served

as a source from which I have compiled my memoirs, providing me with an almost day-by-day account of that which I saw and felt, and which even now reminds me of my past and prevents sad actuality from blurring, much less obliterating, it

I clearly understand that the conditions of my existence since 1914 have been hardly favorable to my efforts to give my memoirs the scope and character which I had in mind when I first began to systematize my notes and documents. First the World War, then the Bolshevik Revolution, then exile! All these have deprived me perhaps of serenity of mind and even of the possibility of preserving complete detachment in regard to the past, without which even a simple story of what has happened may appear insufficiently well balanced or even insufficiently interesting as compared with the events which have since taken place

Therefore, I have decided to limit the scope of my memoirs to the later period of my life and work in my country, since I not only witnessed but actively participated in public affairs and must bear a certain responsibility for events of that time

I do not intend to write the history of my time. I wish merely to tell of the work in which I participated directly. I want to compile a log of my travels, as it were, stopping to discuss separate phenomena which I met on the way, giving unadorned and accurate snapshots of them

I have tried to avoid all generalizations and broad conclusions. The only thing I have endeavored to keep in view throughout my entire story is to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth. Therefore, my memoirs are unavoidably tinged with personal coloring. This is their great defect, but also perhaps to a certain extent their virtue

V N KOKOVTSOV

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