





PRICE ONE PENNY.

*+* 8095. e. 25  
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# THE CRISIS IN FINLAND.

*7<sup>th</sup> London* ISSUED BY THE  
PARLIAMENTARY RUSSIAN  
COMMITTEE.

NOVEMBER, 1909.

LONDON:  
ALEXANDER AND SHEPHEARD, LTD., PRINTERS,  
ROLLS BUILDINGS, FETTER LANE, E.C.



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To collect and spread trustworthy and impartial information relating to events in Russia, and particularly to the progress of the Constitutional Movement; and to cultivate friendly relations with all Russians who are working for the social and political amelioration of their country.



# THE CRISIS IN FINLAND.

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ALL travellers passing from Russia into Finland must have noticed the strange contrast presented to them. From St. Petersburg the frontier is only thirty miles away but how great is the change in the aspect and manners of the people! When the towns of Viborg and Helsingfors are reached, we feel that we have emerged into Western Europe, where personal freedom is assumed, and where the inhabitants do not live in perpetual terror of what the Government, the officials, or the police may do to them next. Of all the various parts of the Russian Empire, Finland has hitherto been the freest and the happiest—one might almost say the only free and happy region.

## HISTORY.

The reason of the difference lies in the country's history rather than its race, for where the Finns come under the direct domination of the Russian Government they are not in advance of the average Russian peasants around them. As is well known, they spring from the same stock as the Magyars, and they are to be found in various parts of Russia, especially between Lake Ladoga and the Arctic Circle, as well as in Finland, from which they seem to have driven the Lapps about the seventh century. For many generations Finland formed a separate and autonomous Duchy under the Swedish Crown, and it was Gustavus Adolphus, in the early seventeenth century, who first established the Finnish Diet. After the wars with Sweden which secured the site of St. Petersburg to Peter the Great, the Finnish province of Viborg was ceded to Russia (1721), and for a time became incor-



porated in Russia proper; but the great change for Finland as a whole did not come till 1808, when Alexander I. of Russia declared war on Sweden at the dictation of Napoleon, who hoped thus to complete the "Continental system" or boycott of British trade throughout Europe. Finland was occupied by the Russian army, and at BORG, on March 27th, 1809, the Tsar, taking over the title of Grand Duke of Finland, swore in presence of the Diet to preserve all the rights of the old constitution as under Swedish rule. In the following September Sweden concluded the Peace of FREDRIKSHAMN, renouncing all claims over the Grand Duchy.

### THE DIET OF BORG.

It is important to notice the distinction between the Treaty of Fredrikshamn and the Diet of Borg. In his ominous speech before the Duma in May, 1908, M. Stolypin, the Russian Prime Minister, appealed to the Treaty of Fredrikshamn as justification for the Tsar's infringement of the Finnish Constitution, quoting the clause in which Charles XIII., as King of Sweden, after renouncing his rights over the various provinces of the Grand Duchy, further adds:—

"These provinces, with all their inhabitants, towns, ports, villages, and islands, with their appurtenances, privileges, and revenues shall hereafter under full ownership and sovereignty belong to the Russian Empire and be incorporated in the same."

In the same Treaty there is, however, another clause, in which the King of Sweden absolves himself from "performing the otherwise sacred duty of making reservations in favour of his former subjects" on the distinct ground that the Tsar had already "given evidence of his clemency and justice by generously and of his own spontaneous act assuring to them the free exercise of their religion, rights, property, and privileges." This clause obviously refers to the Diet of Borg, and assumes that the engagements there entered into between the Tsar and Finland remained binding in spite of the subsequent Treaty.





The Finns themselves maintain that, while the Treaty of Fredrikshamn defines Finland's international position as part of the Russian Empire, with no separate voice in international affairs, her own relations with Russia were once for all defined at the Diet of Borgo. In this view they are supported by international jurists such as Professor Ernest Nys, of Brussels, who writes:—

“The Estates of Finland had accepted the offers made them by the conqueror—offers in which Alexander I. had anticipated the rights confirmed to him by the subsequent Treaty of Peace. In regulating the relations between Sweden and Russia, the Treaty only legitimatises the situation created by the Act of Borgo. It follows that the position of Finland in regard to Russia is defined by the Act of Confirmation of March 27, 1809, and by the oath of allegiance of March 29” (taken by the Diet at Borgo).—*Le Gouvernement Russe et la Finlande, par Ernest Nys, p. 5.*

#### FINLAND'S RIGHTS.

In all internal affairs, and in all relations to Russia, whether they concerned the interests of Russia or of Finland alone, the Finns have always claimed to form an autonomous Grand Duchy, whose Grand Duke happened also to be the Tsar of Russia. Where interests clashed, as sometimes in the commercial relations between the two countries, a joint committee of Finns and Russians might be appointed, and in his capacity as joint sovereign the Tsar and Grand Duke was expected to watch over the welfare of his Duchy and his Empire equally. It gradually became the habit in such cases to submit the Finnish proposals also to the Russian Minister concerned before submitting them to the Tzar. But, in reality, all FINNISH LEGISLATION REMAINED AUTONOMOUS, being proposed by the Diet of four estates (nobles, clergy, citizens, and peasants), and sent in the form of a petition to the Grand Duke through the Finnish Secretary of State for Finland, residing in St. Petersburg.



## YEARS OF PEACE.

Anxious to conciliate the Finns after the war with Sweden, Alexander I., in 1811, restored to Finland the PROVINCE OF VIBORG, which had been occupied by Peter the Great, as we saw, and since that time it has been in every respect on the same level as the rest of Finland. He also gave the name of Senate to the Council of Ministers, who are appointed directly by the Tsar, and include the Governor-General, but otherwise must be Finns by birth and breeding. Their numbers have varied between ten and a little over twenty, but the necessary quorum is only five—a point which has lately become of some importance. Their function is pretty nearly equivalent to our Cabinet's.

Such a constitution obviously had its weak points, being a peculiar mixture of autocracy, oligarchy, and representation by classes; but it appears to have worked very well for almost eighty years under the Tsars as Grand Dukes, while Finland became, as was said, the most prosperous and contented part of the Russian Empire. The population now numbers nearly 3,000,000, of whom about 90 per cent. are Finns, and 98 per cent. Lutherans, under the Archbishop of Abo, the former capital. Finnish and Swedish are the official languages, and the education throughout the country is highly developed on national lines.

Until the Bobrikoff *régime* Finland trained her own local army of about 5,000 to 6,000 men, and the power of the Tsar was limited to questions of peace and war, treaties, pardons, appeals, and the appointment of officials, who had to be Finns.

## THE BOBRIKOFF REGIME.

This comparatively happy state was interrupted in 1899, when the Russian Prime Minister, Plehve, supported by Pobiedonostseff, Procurator of the Holy Synod, which directs the Russian Church, determined on the "RUSSIFICATION" of the Duchy. General Bobrikoff was appointed to carry it out, and for five



years Finland lay under the tyranny. We need only dwell upon the period in so far as it illustrates the present situation. The chosen instruments of Russification were the introduction of the Russian language as official, and of compulsory service in the Russian Army in all parts of the Empire. The assault upon autonomy was foreshadowed by a manifesto of 1898, declaring that all Finns were bound to protect and advance the Russian Empire to the same extent as other Russians. On February 15th of the following year (1899) Nicholas II. issued a manifesto distinguishing between questions of local Finnish legislation and Imperial questions reserved for the decision of the Tsar himself. The result of this manifesto was to remove from the legislative power of the Finnish Senate and Diet all questions in which Russian interests of any kind might be implied. A Military Service Bill was next laid before the Diet demanding an annual contingent of 36,000 recruits to serve five years with the colours in any part of the Empire, at a cost of about £800,000. The preamble to the Bill declared that "Finland enjoyed special institutions by the gracious consent of the Tsar, owing to her peculiar conditions of life, but that the Tsar was autocrat over Finland, as over all Russia, and had the sole right of deciding on all matters of general interest and importance to the Empire, as well as of defining what these matters were."

On account of their opposition to this decree, all the Finnish nationalist newspapers were suppressed, emigration redoubled, and seven British vice-consuls resigned. In the following year (1900) orders were issued for introducing the Russian language, and fourteen out of twenty-one Senators resigned. In July, 1901, the Military Bill was declared law. Passive resistance was maintained throughout the country. The clergy and local authorities refused to publish the demands for recruits. Sixty per cent. of the young men refused to serve. Cossacks were quartered upon the towns with the usual result of violence. The



emigration in 1903 rose from a little over 3,000 to more than seven times that amount. The country was reduced to confusion and extreme distress, and still the recruits refused to come in.

In June, 1904, the GOVERNOR-GENERAL BOBRIKOFF WAS ASSASSINATED by a young Finn named Eugen Schaumann, who committed suicide immediately afterwards, and in the following month Plehve himself was also assassinated in St. Petersburg. Prince Obolensky succeeded Bobrikoff as Governor-General; the Diet was summoned again, and renewed its protests against recent encroachments upon the Constitution.

### THE REVOLUTION OF FREEDOM.

But tyranny and protests alike were overwhelmed in the outburst of freedom throughout the Russian Empire in 1905. The issue of the Tsar's Manifesto of October 30th, which was greeted as the new basis of Russian liberties, was followed in Finland by a general strike, which almost at once produced the MANIFESTO OF NOVEMBER 4TH, restoring the Finnish constitutional rights and repealing all intervening legislation. The Military Law of 1901 was annulled, the Russian gendarmes and troops withdrawn, the powers of the Senate restored, the Manifesto of 1899 suspended "till the questions therein treated shall be settled by legislation."

The Senators, being instructed to frame a new constitution, proceeded to carry out the popular will as expressed in mass meetings, and in 1906 laid before the last meeting of the old Diet a scheme for a NEW DIET of 200 members, elected by universal suffrage of all men and women over twenty-four years of age, on condition of residence only. Under this scheme the country was divided into constituencies returning a multiplicity of members running up to twenty or more, and the principle of Proportional Representation was adopted in the election of those members. The electorate was thus increased to about 40 per cent. of the population. The elections are triennial, and the sessions last a



minimum of three months each year. This new Suffrage Act was sanctioned in July, 1906, and in the next month freedom of speech, liberty of the Press, and the right of association and meeting were guaranteed. The new Diet (which included nineteen women) met in 1907, and consisted of eighty Social Democrats, twenty-four Swedes and other groups of Old or Conservative Finns, New Finns, Agrarians, and the "Christian Labourers." One of their first acts was to vote a contribution of £800,000 to the Russian Army.

### THE REACTION.

It seemed as though a better time were coming for Finland even than that she had enjoyed before the Bobrikoff tyranny. But the forces of reaction were already gathering strength in Russia, and the new Premier of the Council of Ministers, M. Stolypin, was not the man to make head against them. Under his government reaction triumphed; two Dumas were dismissed, the Russian franchise was narrowed so as to secure a vast majority of reactionaries; all the rights promised by the October Manifesto were nullified. Having stamped down the national movements for freedom in Poland, the Baltic Provinces, and the Caucasus with every form of suppression; the reaction naturally set eyes on Finland, so close to the frontier, so happy in its newly-recovered freedom, and for the moment the most democratic State in Europe. It accused Stolypin of "separatism," of favouring subject nationalities, and affording a city of refuge to the champions of liberty.

M. Stolypin bent before these demands. Though the Finnish Diet had voted a military contribution, the Tsar renewed his claim to the right of fixing the amount himself, and in April, 1908, the Diet was dissolved. IN MAY, STOLYPIN MADE A LONG SPEECH IN THE DUMA defending the policy of interference in Finland. Though he began with the usual declaration that



there was no intention of infringing Finnish autonomy, and added the ironic paradox that "in Russia might can never go before right," he claimed the same autocratic power of control that had formed the basis of the Bobrikoff *régime*. On the constitutional side he founded this claim on a clause in the Treaty of Fredrikshamn, on the true meaning of which we have already commented.

### THE PROTOCOL OF JUNE, 1908.

The purport of the speech was soon revealed. Within two or three weeks (June 2nd, 1908) a "PROTOCOL" or rescript from the Tsar was issued without the knowledge of the Finnish Diet, Senate, or even their Secretary of State in St. Petersburg, laying down that every question or proposal with regard to Finland must first come before the Russian Council of Ministers, who should decide whether it was only of local interest or concerned the Empire, and that the Governor-General should communicate on all proposals of legislation and administration, not with the Secretary of State for Finland as heretofore, but with the Russian Prime Minister. This "protocol" in reality transferred the legislative and administrative authority from the Finnish Diet and Senate to the Russian Ministry. Not only did it interpose endless delays upon the course of government, but in practice it has been found that almost any local proposal, such as the making of a high road or the compulsory attendance of children at school, can be interpreted to involve Imperial interests and justify the interference of the Russian authorities.

The Finnish Senate immediately replied with a protest (June 19th, 1908), which the Tsar rejected. The Diet met in August, and the Governor-General Baeckmann opened the session with the expression of the Tsar's deep sorrow that the Finnish population had not developed a sentiment of solidarity with



Russia, nor realised the justice of the obligations imposed on them by the Russian Empire, of which Finland formed a sovereign possession. In answer, the Speaker of the Diet maintained the right of Finland to independent administration, and the Diet proceeded to petition the Tsar after the example of the Senate. In December the Senate repeated its protest.

When the Diet met for its second session, on February 18th of the present year (1909), the Governor-General gave the Speaker orders to restrict his speech to a simple expression of loyalty to the Tsar. Nevertheless, the Speaker, M. Svinhufvud, inserted the following passage:—

“While the Diet returns to its labours, the people of Finland are saddened by the knowledge that their affairs are reported upon to our august Monarch in an unconstitutional and pernicious manner. Trusting that the humble representations previously made by the Diet and Senate will receive gracious consideration, the Diet requests the Governor-General to convey to His Imperial Majesty the Emperor and Grand Duke their sentiments of humble respect and fidelity.”

In consequence of this address, the Diet was at once dissolved (February 22nd, 1909), the Tsar complaining of its “improper opinion on the decision of the Council of Ministers as to the manner of procedure in dealing with Finnish affairs which concern the interests of the Empire.” A few weeks later (March 29th) the Tsar rejected the petitions of the Diet and the Senate together. Thereupon the Procurator-General and the Judicial Committee (or Court of Appeal) in the Senate resigned. On the day on which the Tsar rejected the petition, Dr. Hjelt, leader of the Constitutional party in the Senate, and his four colleagues in the party had also resigned in consequence of the Tsar’s claim that a Bill (Landlords and Tenants) sent up to him by the recently-dissolved Diet need not legally receive his consideration. The Senate was, therefore, now reduced to six members—only one above a bare quorum—all belonging to the Old Finnish or Conservative party.



### THE JOINT COMMITTEE.

After a general election, the new Diet met in June, 1909; but it was evident that there was no change in the opinion of the constituencies, for the Diet's first measure was to frame an address to the Tsar, protesting against the Protocol of June 2nd, 1908. The purport of this address is given in the following clause:—

“The people of Finland adhere to the Constitution, which is the safeguard of their existence and progress; but this does not imply any desire to weaken the tie with Russia. On the contrary, this tie will gain in strength the more secure Finland can feel in her political situation. The internal independence of Finland cannot disturb the unity of the Russian Empire. This has been proved by the experience of a whole century, and in working for the development of its independent civilisation Finland can no more cause trouble to the Empire than the destruction of her people can benefit Russia.”

The Diet then adjourned till September. Meantime, the Tsar, by M. Stolypin's advice, had appointed a Joint Committee, consisting of a Russian chairman, five Russian members, and five Finnish members, to attempt the definition of Finnish questions affecting Imperial interests, and the best form of Finnish representation upon these questions; the chief proposal laid before the Committee being that Finland should send four delegates to the Duma, and two to the Imperial Council of State. The Committee is still deliberating (November, 1909), and in Finland it is observed as ominous that Russia holds a permanent majority, and that the most prominent of the Russian members is M. Deutrich, Assistant Governor-General of Finland under Bobrikoff, and a determined opponent of Finnish autonomy. M. Kharitonoff, Comptroller of the Empire, is chairman, and Archbishop Johansson is the leading representative of Finland.

### RESCRIPT FOR MILITARY TAXATION.

But without waiting for the decisions of this Joint Commission, and without consulting either the Diet or Senate, the Tsar in



September (1909) suddenly issued a RESCRIPT imposing on Finland the payment of 20,000,000 marks (£800,000) as a contribution to Imperial military expenditure for the two years 1908-1909 together, and an addition of 1,000,000 marks for every year till the total annual contribution of 20,000,000 should be reached in 1919. On news of this, the remaining six members of the Senate tendered their resignation, though they belonged, as we saw, to the Old Finnish party, which had hitherto attempted to work in harmony with Russia. The Tsar, however, refused to accept their resignations, because, in that case, Finland would have been left without a Ministry at all. General Langhoff, the Secretary of State for Finland, hastened after the Tsar from St. Petersburg to Livadia, in order to propose to him a list of new Senators that might be acceptable to the Finnish people; but his list was rejected in favour of M. Stolypin's nominees, and it is believed that General Langhoff will himself resign.

### THE NEW SENATORS.

Of M. Stolypin's five nominees, only one, Count Berg, fulfilled the constitutional conditions that Senators should be Finns, born in Finland and understanding the Finnish and Swedish languages; and he was among Bobrikoff's agents. One of the others was a Russian Admiral, who had been dismissed from the service under very dubious circumstances; another, also a Russian Admiral, was a notorious reactionary, ignorant alike of Finnish and Swedish, and born and educated in Russia, though a Finn by descent, like his colleague. Another, Col. Kraatz, a naval engineer, though born in Finland, and knowing some Swedish, has confessed himself so ignorant of the laws and language of the country that he has abstained from voting during the proceedings. The fifth, an old Russianised General of Finnish birth, seems merely to have been thrown in to make up a quorum.



On October 25th (1909), this composite Senate assembled, under the presidency of Governor-General Baeckmann, and it was found that one of the members being of the Russian Orthodox Church, the oath had to be administered to him by a Russian priest instead of the usual Lutheran pastor. The Tsar's rescript on the military contribution was then read. Dr. Charpentier, who was present as Procurator-General, protested that the Senate had no right to promulgate such a decree without the consent of the Diet; the five Old Finnish members (the sixth was absent) refused to take any part in the proceedings, on the plea that their position was only temporary; Col. Kraatz abstained for the reasons above mentioned; and the rescript was accepted only by the vote of the Governor-General and the four remaining Senators, who at the same time refused to record the action of the other Senators in the minutes. The measure excited the utmost indignation in Helsingfors and the rest of Finland, not on account of the contribution or its amount (as we saw, the same amount had already been voted by the Diet soon after the introduction of adult suffrage), but owing to the entirely unconstitutional methods by which it was imposed. On November 17th the Diet refused to assent to the Tsar's demand for the contribution, and on the following day the Diet was dissolved.

#### SUSPECTED ANNEXATION OF VIBORG.

Even more serious than this illegal imposition of military taxation was the persistent rumour that in the middle of October (1909), the Russian Government had the intention of SEVERING THE PROVINCE OF VIBORG from Finland and annexing it to Russia proper. As we have seen, Viborg was restored to Finland by Alexander I. in 1811, and has since been an integral part of the Grand Duchy, enjoying equal liberties, rights, and education. Its population numbers nearly



500,000; it contains six towns; its area is about a seventh part of the country, and its education stands on the same high level as the rest of Finland's. But all the more on that account have the Russian reactionary parties and their supporters among the Black Hundred, aimed at destroying its independence, especially since it possesses the line of frontier nearest to the Russian capital. It is significant that the "Octobrists," or so-called constitutional Conservatives, in the Duma have also given their support to the measures in regard to Finland.

The rumours were naturally strengthened by the construction of fresh batteries on the fortress island of Sveaborg, which dominates Helsingfors, by the increase of the Russian garrisons in Finland, and the introduction of a full regiment of Cossacks, who were distributed among the four principal towns of Helsingfors, Viborg, Fredrikshamn, and Tavartohus. The excuse for these movements was an imaginary fear of an armed rising against the new military taxation, though the chief attempt to introduce arms into the country had failed with the wreck of the "John Grafton," and it was quite certain that no armed resistance could be thought of. The Russian Government has since emphatically denied any intention of annexation, and it appears that the final step is, for the moment at all events, postponed. The annexation of Viborg would involve a revision of the Finnish commercial treaties, especially with Great Britain, the readjustment of Finnish finance and a reconstitution of the law courts. For the present, therefore, it seems probable that aggression may not go beyond the form of the appointment of a Russian Governor and Russian officials in Viborg, without any definite alteration of frontier. Though the scandal would then be avoided, and the unity of Finland nominally maintained, it need hardly be said that the result for the province itself would be much the same.



## PARTIES IN FINLAND.

As it has been lately asserted, even in English newspapers, that the cause of Finland's troubles lies in the divisions between her own political parties, we may here take some notice of the parties themselves. Originally, the dividing line lay between THE FINNISH AND THE SWEDISH PARTIES, of which the Swedish (including the Young Finns) has been claimed as the party of progress and intellectual development. After the time of Alexander II. these parties ceased to be racial in the main, and the Swedish party split into the political sections of the Swedish Constitutionalists or Liberals, and the Activists (among whom many Finns were also included) who were prepared for the assertion of independence by any means. The Finnish party, on the other hand, divided into the Old Finns, who endeavoured to preserve the liberties by yielding to any Russian pressure, and the Young Finns, or advanced Nationalists, who ultimately look for independence for Finland like the independence of Denmark. Between the Swedes and Finns lies the Social Democratic party, with the largest number of representatives in the Diet, quite independent of race, and representing the doctrines shared by Social Democrats in all countries. It is untrue to say that the divisions between these parties render a patriotic and satisfactory government impossible. The feeling between them is not so strong as the feeling that exists between our own parties in Great Britain, nor is its expression so violent as ours sometimes becomes. In the face of the common enemy they are united, and the action of the Old Finnish Senators in resigning office has been welcomed by the Swedish party as an assurance of ultimate reconciliation.



## SUMMARY.

This brief sketch of Finland's relations to Russia during the last hundred years has shown the rights and concessions on which the autonomous position of the country depends for legal sanction. It has shown the first attempt at Russification under the tyranny of Plehve and Bobrikoff, and how that attempt collapsed. It has shown the aptitude of the Finns for free and democratic forms of government, as was seen after the revolution of 1905. Finally it has shown the renewed endeavours of the Russian reactionaries to suppress the ancient liberties of Finland, and to reduce the country to a mere department of Russia's administration. It has been sought to accomplish these objects by conferring on the Tsar's Council of Ministers in Russia the ultimate control of Finnish affairs, in so far at least, as they can be interpreted to concern the Empire; by appointing Senators unsympathetic to Finnish nationality; by imposing a military taxation without consulting either the Finnish Senate or Diet.

In common with the Finns of every party and many leading jurists of Europe, we believe these measures to be unconstitutional, as being opposed to the rights conceded at the Diet of Borgo and the established liberties of the Grand Duchy. Finland may not be absolutely destroyed in the immediate future; her inhabitants have an inexhaustible stock of passive resistance; and much as the Russian Government desires to urge them into violence, we may hope they will maintain their dogged attitude of stolid desperation, rather than throw themselves into futile attempts at armed resistance. Something like the great movement of 1905 may be required to lift her out of her present insecurity. Otherwise she will come to be counted among the small nationalities that are swallowed and disappear into great Empires, leaving the human interest and variety of the world the poorer for their departure. In the case of Finland such a destiny



would be all the sadder on account of the high stage of civilisation she has reached through her own efforts, and on account of the freedom and happiness she has hitherto enjoyed in comparison with other peoples who are now included within the unwieldy area of the Russian Empire.

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