



THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE SHORE
TRAIN MYSTERY

MURDER ON THE HASTINGS EXPRESS

ALAN SARGEANT

MURDER ON THE HASTINGS EXPRESS

THE FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE
SHORE TRAIN MYSTERY

He who wrote it ...

I graduated in Literature & Linguistics at Sheffield Hallam University in 1993 before making the unlikely transition to Information Systems a few years later.

Inspired by the extraordinary success of my former employers, the Drum and Bass Arena I launched Crud Magazine in Sheffield in July 1999. Whilst Crud never achieved the huge commercial success of the 'breakbeat' website, it became something of a refuge for solitary Internet misfits and industry professionals. The site was used primarily as a springboard for emerging writers and as a fuelling station for freelancers looking to maintain a healthy contact base. The magazine's mainstay James Berry went on to work for The Independent, Metal Hammer, Q Magazine. Priya Elan became fashion editor at The Guardian after a stint at the NME. Irfan Shah eventually went on to co-produce and write the critically acclaimed documentary, *The First Film* featuring Sir Tom Courtenay and Sarah Lancashire, whilst Veteran editor and reporter, Gary Hill who made several generous and significant contributions, continued to work for *Reuters* in New York where he retired in 2013. In 2005 I moved from Sheffield and embarked on a languorous life with my young family in the Highlands of Scotland, where I continue to dodge success on a regular basis. Not always by design.

Contents

Introduction

<i>The Man in a Brown Suit</i>	5
<i>Chapter 1: Capt. Brown's Story</i>	9
<i>Chapter 2: Section D & Russian Intrigue</i>	14
<i>Chapter 3: A Revenge Killing</i>	22
<i>Chapter 4: Just How Credible is Brown's Story?</i>	26
<i>Chapter 5: A Cousin at Mi5</i>	33
<i>Chapter 6: The Baroness Farina</i>	43
<i>Chapter 7: Russians in St Leonards</i>	54
<i>Chapter 8: A Russian Prime Minister in Kent</i>	66
<i>Chapter 9: Oil Matters</i>	77
<i>Chapter 10: Why Kill Florence Nightingale Shore?</i>	85
<i>Chapter 11: The Friends in St Leonards</i>	94
<i>Chapter 12: Surprising Revelations</i>	98
<i>Bibliography</i>	107
<i>Shore-Farina Family Tree</i>	109

Introduction

Brown: The Man in the Suit

MURDERERS & MONOCLES



If you happened to watch Tom Dalton's *Agatha Christie and the Truth of Murder* whodunit on Channel 5 or have read Rosemary Cook's *The Nightingale Shore Murder* then you'll know some of the story already. On January 12th 1920, the goddaughter and second cousin of 'Lady of the Lamp', Florence Nightingale enters the carriage of a London-to-Brighton South East Express train and some 90 minutes later is found beaten and left for dead in the same, sealed compartment as the train enters Bexhill-on-Sea, the resort on the East Sussex coastline whose rakish cadre of military retirees and 'Ginger Cat' tea-rooms are evoked so vividly in Christie's *ABC Murders*. There are no signs of a violent struggle, and the lady's suit case is found where it was originally placed in the rack beneath the seat. On her lap is an open book, and by her side an attaché case, its lock torn open and some of its contents partially displayed. Running down the left side of her face is a line of blood that drips on to her clothes. On her finger is a gold ring, and on her jacket, two brooches. According to a friend who saw her off that day, a dark-haired young man in a brown suit, about 30 years of age, had followed her into the compartment as the train left Victoria Station and had sat down in the far corner.¹ An amethyst pendant and other items of jewellery which had originally been reported

¹ *Dramatic Story at the Inquest*, Daily Mirror 05 February 1920, p.2

missing are subsequently found in a Dorothy bag and a dressing case at home. The weapon used in the assault has never been firmly identified or recovered.²

Despite the best efforts of Scotland Yard and a Home Office pathologist, the identity of the 55-year old War Heroine's murderer and his (or her) motive remain unknown to this day.

One of the most famous suspects in the case was the so-called 'Monocled Mutineer' Percy Toplis who would become the subject of a nation-wide manhunt in the weeks and months that followed the nurse's death.³ However, what many people won't know is that the first man arrested by Police was Ernest C. Brown⁴, a former Captain in the RAF and branch division President of the *Comrades of the Great War* in Glasgow. Both men matched the description of the 'man in the brown suit' who was alleged to have travelled alongside Florence in the train carriage that day.⁵

Until now, little about Ernest C. Brown was known, but an interview he gave to the American press in 1926 casts new light on the mystery, as Ernest admits to having been a suspect in a further two unsolved mysteries in a

² *Hastings Train Outrage, Missing Pendant Found*, Daily Herald, 16 January 1920, p.1. At the inquest the issue of the amethyst pendant, platinum ring with six diamonds (and a sapphire) and a wristlet watch had not been fully accounted for. If her friend's account is anything to go by, Florence was kitted out with enough bling to sink a battleship when she got on the train.

³ Toplis was also the subject of Alan Bleasdale's controversial war drama, *The Monocled Mutineer* in 1985, in which the dashing young impostor (and criminal) is depicted as having taken a leading role in the Etaples Mutiny of September 1917. In April 1920 he was found guilty in absentia for the murder of taxi-driver Sidney Spicer and pursued across Britain. He died in a police ambush in Penrith, Cumbria on June 6th 1920. He was linked by the *Worlds Pictorial News* to an Anarchist Club based in the East End of London.

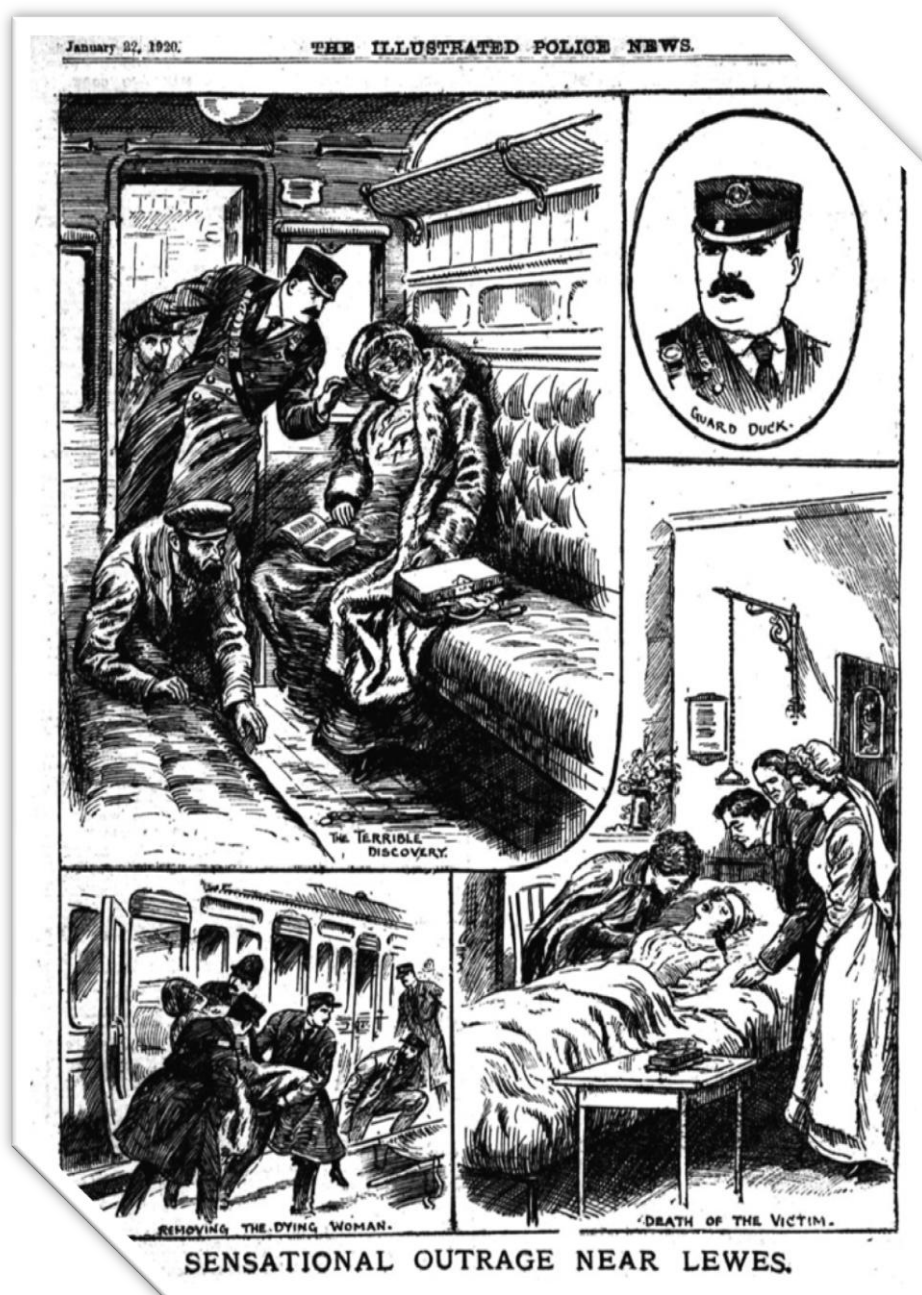
⁴ Getting a positive ID on Ernest C. Brown has proved difficult as there are very few references to his age in any press reports of the day. At the time of Florence Shore's death it was reported that a man of around 30 years of age was in custody.

⁵ *Train Outrage Mystery*, Aberdeen Press and Journal, 19 January 1920, p.5

period spanning four years.⁶ In each case, the scope and potential for espionage is substantial to say the least. His secondment to the *Inter-Allied Commission* as staff photographer in Constantinople in 1921 is particularly intriguing as this was a critical period politically and economically for Britain, Turkey and Russia. The fact that the brother of Florence Nightingale Shore had served as Military Attaché in Russia during the 1918-1920 Civil War, only adds to the layers of intrigue that starts with Brown's alleged arrest as a possible spy in a Faslane story in 1918.

But all this pales in comparison with an entirely fresh discovery; the news that Nurse Shore's cousin, Rafaele Farina, was a senior Intelligence Officer at Mi5 who would eventually play an instrumental part in an explosive espionage scandal that helped crash Britain's then-serving Labour government.

⁶ Brown's story appeared in the *Canton Daily News* (US) on Sunday, August 15 1926. The very same 1926 article, co-written by Brown and F. Gregory Hartswick appeared some months earlier in the *Washington Evening Star* in March 1926. The original Evening Star report featured no caricatures or illustrations. From what I can gather, the *Washington Evening Star* syndicated articles and interviews with the *Canton Daily News* on a regular basis.



‘Sensational Outrage’ – Illustrated Police News 22 Jan 1920, p.5 suggesting the attack was sudden with no violent struggle

Chapter 1

Capt. Brown's Story

IN AN OUT OF DEATH'S SHADOW THREE TIMES



Ernest C. Brown's story was told in the *Canton Daily News* by Frederic Gregory Hartswick, a graduate of the Sheffield Science School at Yale University. After a two year draft with the American Ambulance Field Service in France, Hartswick, a former editor at *Judge* ⁷, had found himself working features for the *New York World*. It was here that Hartswick honed his already considerable code-breaking skills, after being drafted in by the paper's editor, John O'Hara Cosgrave to produce "a code that can't be broken" for the groundbreaking expedition of the Norge Airship ⁸, led by another graduate of the *Sheffield Science School*, Lincoln Ellsworth. This 16-man adventure to the North Pole was being supported financially by the *North American Newspaper Alliance*. The sharp, witty and deeply imaginative Hartswick was an expert in the Playfair Cipher, used in modern cryptic crossword puzzles and cryptograms — and also by the British Military during the war. The men on the Norge voyage needed a way of disguising the crew's messages that was relatively easy to code and decode. The Newspaper Alliance needed to ensure that their regular stream of updates would be 'shrouded in an impenetrable mystery'. Hartswick was on hand to oblige. On March 29th 1926, the Italian-made airship was launched at a lavish ceremony presided over by fascist leader, Benito Mussolini at Rome's March 29 1926 at a ceremony at Ciampino

⁷ The Writer (US), Volume 29, 1917, p.74

⁸ *Almost Perfect Cipher System*, F. Gregory Hartswick, Esquire, April 1936, p.88, p.140

aerodrome. The race to produce a code took place in January 1926, and it was during this same period that Hartswick encountered Brown.

On March 28 1926, the evening prior to the Norge's launch, Brown's remarkable story was published in the *Washington Evening Star* whose editor, Theodore W. Noyes had long been opining Mussolini's "wise paternalism and greatness as a public statesman".⁹ The story's appearance in the *Canton Daily News* in July was a later syndication. Leaving Rome on April 6th 1926, the ship arrived at *RNAS Pulham Airship Station* in England on May 12th, where it was received by a party that included British Air Minister Sir Samuel Hoare, the former head of Mi5 in St Petersburg who had befriended Mussolini on his subsequent Military Intelligence post in Rome.¹⁰ Assisting the Norge's flight crew that day was Major George Herbert Scott¹¹, who like Brown had served with the Royal Naval Air Service at Greenock in Scotland during the final year of the war. As an aerial photographer during the war, Brown had served with Hoare's Air Ministry, was it possible that Brown had been commissioned as staff photographer to provide images on the mission or take shots during the expedition's dramatic launch? Was this how Hartswick had come into contact with Brown? His work in a similar capacity for the *Inter-Allied Commission* in Turkey some five years before made it a tantalising possibility.

On the surface of things, Brown's story for the *Washington Evening Star* offered a fairly straightforward narrative. In January 1918 whilst serving as an aerial photographer for the British Royal Flying Corps he had been arrested and charged under the Defence of the Realm Act for taking interior

⁹ Washington Evening Star, December 3 1925, p.6

¹⁰ Like George Makgill Hoare had been a founding member of the Anti Socialist Union.

¹¹ *Polar Airship Arrives*, Dundee Courier, April 12th 1926, p.5

shots of a C-Class C6 under the command of his friend, Lieutenant General Roe at the Faslane Naval Base in Scotland. After trawling the War Office records, I believe that the 'Lieutenant Commander Rowe' that Captain Ernest C. Brown refers to as his friend at the Faslane naval base near Greenock, is Lieutenant Commander Robert Charles Thornber Roe (born Surrey, 1885) who was commanding the C-Type Submarine, HMS C6 at this time.¹² According to the story told in the *Washington Evening Star*, Roe intervened on Brown's behalf and he narrowly avoided court-martial. The submarine under his command had been manufactured by Metro-Vickers. It was during this same period that the Admiralty was beginning to have grave concerns about the 'virtual monopoly of contracts' that Metro-Vickers enjoyed over arms sales to the navy. Corruption and bribery scandals, featuring US manufacturers and senior naval commanders were being heard at the Old Bailey shortly prior to Brown's arrest. As a major shipping crisis emerged at the Admiralty the Americans stepped up their efforts to land lucrative submarine contracts.¹³ As a result, senior Admiralty and SiS figures like Hugh Sinclair began to negotiate with controversial Greek-born Vickers arms dealer, Basil Zaharoff who was becoming increasingly useful in negotiating a peace (and trade) deal with Turkey.¹⁴

In January 1920, freshly recruited as Branch Secretary of the *Comrades of the Great War* in Glasgow, Brown was arrested in Hammersmith

¹² Service Records, R.C.T Roe, The National Archives. ADM 196/154/62. f. 62

¹³ *American Hustle for the Allies: How Submarine Contract was Carried Through*, Yorkshire Evening Post 16 May 1918, p.3. The man at the centre of the claims was Charles M. Schwab. see also: *Charles Schwab and the Shipbuilding Crisis of 1918*, Robert Hessen, Pennsylvania History: A Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies Vol. 38, No. 4 (Oct 1971), pp. 389-399, Penn State University Press

¹⁴ Brown's friend, R.C.T Roe later became Secretary of the PGA (Professional Golfing Association).

and questioned over the assault of Nurse Nightingale Shore after it was found that he matched the description of the man seen by the victim's friend and house-mate, Mabel Rogers. Two years later in January 1922, he was charged by Police in Turkey; this time for the murder of a military officer. Brown had found employment as a photographer with a Commission dispatched to Constantinople by the British and American Governments to record human rights abuses in Galata and Thrace. On each occasion, a representative of some authority or other would intervene and Brown would be released.¹⁵

In relation to Toplis and the Etaples Mutiny, the fact that Ernest C. Brown was a Branch President of the *Comrades of the Great War* in Glasgow is an intriguing detail. Harry Fallows — the only person ever to place Toplis at the scene of the crime — talks about flashing his *Comrades of the Great War* membership card in his handwritten formal statement to Hampshire Police, despite only having completed a few months active military service.¹⁶ Secondly, a genuine Etaples Mutineer, James Cullen — a founding member of the Communist Party of Great Britain — had his demobilization case taken up by Comrades of the Great War and discussed in Parliament by Winston Churchill. The man discussing Cullen's case with Churchill was the organization's founder — the ultra Conservative MP Wilfrid Ashley. Like Brown, Cullen was also from Glasgow.

¹⁵ The timeline provided by Brown is at best a little vague. He says he arrived in Turkey shortly before the *Mundania Conference*. This would have been October 1922. The atrocities in Thrace were first being reported in May 1921. As a response, an Inter-Allied Commission and Occupation was established to maintain the peace.

¹⁶ Harry Fallows, Statement prepared for Sergeant White of Hampshire Constabulary, April 29th-30th 1920.



IN AND OUT of DEATH'S THREE TIMES

**The Strange Case of
Capt. Brown, Thrice
Accused of Capital
Crimes of Which He
Was Innocent**

The additional fact that he wore a conspicuous brown greatcoat. And my own greatest was of a very decided shade of bright brown!

When I heard this charge I was dumb. I must have looked and acted like the pulled murderer on long. Dimly I heard one of the detectives ask, "Where were you Monday afternoon?" And for the life of me I couldn't remember. I proved by Sir Robert Balfour's check where I had been on the previous Saturday night where on Monday? For four hours I was mercilessly grilled, and still my blank memory refused to fill the gap that would save me from the hang-

Once again death has clutched at me and missed.

I was set free at once, of course, with apologies from the police. The murderer of Narsa Shore, by the way, was never to my knowledge captured.

A GAIN two years passed, and I came to January, 1922. At that time I was in Constantinople. I had gone there in 1921, just before the Mustafa Conference about the Mesopotamian boundary. I had been attached to the Allied Commission as civilian staff photographer, and had gone into Thrace to photograph some of the alleged Turkish atrocities with a committee of investigators. When the conference was over, I set up a photographer's studio in the Grand Rue de Pera, the European quarter of Constantinople. And January, 1922, found me making a fairly good living and enjoying life.

One evening I went to my favorite Greek restaurant for dinner. I was just beginning when six Turkish gendarmes entered. Without a word they came over to my table, and without even letting me finish my meal they hurried me away. I was taken to Basmali to the headquarters of Haki Fakas, who was Commissioner of Constantinople at that time. There I was charged with the murder of a Turkish officer at Uziata on Nov. 31, 1921. I was not allowed to give any evidence in my own behalf, but was hustled into a dungeon to wait for—what?

The dungeon was a dungeon. A dimly lighted, the walls slimy, the floor sticky with blood, the air so bad as to make breathing almost impossible. I was given mouldy bread and a little water, and my protests in my jailer, demanding trial or at least a hearing, fell on deaf ears. It seemed as though death had caught me at last, for I knew something of Turkish justice.

Then, one day, my luck came once more to my rescue. At that time the Allies had what they called the Allied Police Commission, composed of an American, an Englishman, an Italian and a Frenchman, whose duty it was to inspect the jails and investigate dubious cases. I knew of this commission, but expected no aid from them, for they did not know me, and the authorities could tell them any trumped-up story they liked. So when they visited my dungeon I paid little attention to them—till I saw the face of the English officer. Instantly I gave a cry of joy.

"Don't you remember me?" I cried. "I am here charged with the killing of a Turk on Nov. 31 last—and you know that I was at the Armenian Day Ball at the Embassy that night—because I nearly knocked you over on the floor while you were dancing! I'm Capt. Brown!"

The officer recalled the incident in a flash. During the dance I had accidentally tripped on the floor and fallen against him, throwing him off his balance. This accident and the subsequent apologies made us acquainted and fixed the date and time in his mind. He could prove a perfect alibi for me.

So for the third time I was set free of a capital charge. I did not linger in Constantinople. Officially the matter was set down as mistaken identity, but I heard unofficially that my photographs in Thrace had not pleased the Turkish High Command. And in Turkey, when those in authority are not pleased, almost anything is rather more than likely to happen. I took some friendly advice and made myself scarce in those parts.

SO THAT is why I shiver a little when the January of an even numbered year rolls around. Call it coincidence or what you will, but the facts I have related remain. Three times I have escaped death by the barest coincidence, three times the hand of the law has been about to close on my throat, when the blindest luck made it release its clutch.

But I may be free from the evil influence of the first month at last, January, 1924 and 1925, passed uneventfully and as I speak those words January, 1926, is just over. I hope

By Capt. Ernest C. Brown,
As Told to F. Gregory Hartwick

JANUARY is a bad month for me. Every time the first of the year comes along I get the shivers, particularly if the date of the year is an even number. For in the Januarys of 1918, 1920 and 1922 I came so near to death that I could almost feel the rope about my neck or the bullets in my heart.

In 1918 I was with the Royal Flying Corps as an aerial photographer. I used to earn a little extra money by writing war articles, illustrated with photographs for papers in England. These I mailed to the papers, subject of course to the censor's approval. The Labor Herald, a journal devoted to the interests of the Labor Party, was my best customer.

In the latter part of January, 1918, I happened to be near Greenwich, in Scotland, where there was a submarine base. Among the boats there was one of the so-called C-type, which was used to train merchant skippers in torpedo defense. The mechanics would go out in a lighter or tender, and the sub would fire dummy torpedoes at it, so that the men could get a notion of how a torpedo looked and moved in the water, and how to dodge it if possible. A friend of mine, Lord Commander Howe, R. N., was in charge of the boat at the time. He asked me if I would like to go down, and I jumped at the chance. I knew the air and the land, but I had never been under the sea. I was with the submarine most of the day, and in the evening left for Edinburgh, much pleased with my experience.

Shortly afterward I was arrested, charged with having taken and published photographs of forbidden matters. The charge was under the Defense of the Realm Act—the famous DORA of war times. I need not say that conviction of espionage meant a hanging, no less. I denied the charge, of course, but the evidence was black. Photographs of the interior of a C-type submarine, showing many secret devices, had been published in the Labor Herald; the paper had testified that they had been sent by Capt. Brown and that it had published them, thinking of course that the pictures had been sent by the censor.

I was taken before a general court martial. Things looked dark. I called on Lord Commander Howe, who testified that I had indeed been with him on a C-type boat, but that I had taken no pictures. I had not even had a camera with me. The authorities were puzzled. The Labor Herald insisted that the photos had been sent in by Capt. Brown, and that they had previously published photographs taken by him. Then a happy thought came to me.

You paid for those C-type photos," I said. "You'll find that the indorsement is not in my handwriting."

The check was brought, and it confirmed my statement. It was made out to and indorsed by "Capt. E. C. Brown," but the indorsement was in a hand totally different from mine. On this evidence and that of Lord Commander Howe I was freed.

It was later discovered that a sergeant in the Air Force had taken the pictures and sent my name, knowing that I was a frequent contributor to the paper and so assuring more certain acceptance.

TWO years later, in January, 1920, I came to London as Divisional Secretary of the Comrades of the Great War, an organization like your American Legion. I was to inspect the London posts and club houses and start a drive for funds.

I called on Sir Robert Balfour, the M. P. for Farnley Division of Glasgow, on a Saturday and received a check for five guineas from him. This check I did not deposit, but put into my pocket. On the following Thursday I went to one of the clubs. I arrived at about 7 in the evening. As I went into the office of the secretary to permit my credentials, I noticed that he looked at me in a peculiar way and immediately excused himself. He came back in a moment with two men. One of the men closed the door and put his back against it. The other looked at me for a moment, and then said: "Now then, Brown, who are you and what are you?" Suppose we step over to Police Headquarters and talk it over."

I went with him, of course, utterly mystified. At Headquarters I was put through a searching examination. I had a perfectly straight story to tell, naturally, and answered everything they asked me. But I insisted on knowing what I was charged. Inquire my dissatisfaction when I was told that I was held on a charge of murder!

On the afternoon of the Monday before, a nurse, Miss Shore, niece of the famous Florence Nightingale, had been assaulted and left for dead in a compartment of a car on the train going from London to Brighton. English railway carriages, as you know, are arranged with crosswise compartments holding several people, but cut off from the rest of the car. Miss Shore had been seen entering the train, and at London Bridge station a man had entered the compartment with her. Later, a guard had found her body huddled on the floor of the compartment, with the skull brutally fractured. The description of the man, vague though it was, tallied



Capt. Ernest C. Brown,
aerial photographer,
British Royal Flying
Corps

Rick's house. The detectives looked at me another significantly. The murderer was caught!

That night I spent in a cell, in the darkness of despair. If I could only remember! Sleep came to me at last, the sleep of utter exhaustion.

But in the morning recollection came like a flood, and I called to a guard, "Send the inspector here! I have something to tell him."

The inspector came immediately, with witnesses. I suppose he thought he was going to hear a confession. But I surprised him.

"When your men took my effects last night," I said, "they found in one of my pockets a blue slip of paper. That is the proof of where I was all day yesterday. I was in the reading room of the British Museum."

Visitors to the museum are required to sign a permit. This permit is in two parts, like a check and its stub. The permit and stub are time-stamped when you go in, and the attendant keeps the permit, giving you the stub. Both are also time-stamped when you go out. Even should you leave the room temporarily you must have the time-stamp. I had often checked at this ponderous red tape, but now I blurted it. I could account for every

Brown's full story as it appeared in the Canton Daily News Sunday on August 15 1926

Chapter 2

Section D and Russian Intrigue

WASHED FROM A GROYPE IN HASTINGS



As a member of the Anti-Socialist Union and the People's League Party, Wilfrid Ashley was very closely aligned with Sir George Makgill, a mysterious early intelligence figure who is believed to have founded Section D, a 'secret unity' of Mi6 with close ties to the higher echelons of the British Conservative Party and Ashley's anti-Trade Union movement. Extraordinarily, some 14 years prior to the attack on Nurse Shore, Charles Crossley, a senior representative of the *Citizen's National League* — a forerunner of Makgill and Ashley's *Anti Socialist Union* — featured in the death of Serge Gapon on a beach at Hastings, the resort on the South East coast of England where Florence was heading on the day she was attacked.¹⁷ The body of the powerfully-built Russian, said to be the brother of 'Bloody Sunday' revolutionary, Father Georgy Gapon, was washed from a groyne at Hastings on Sunday 11th March 1906.¹⁸ A few weeks later the body of his brother — the man who had led Russia's 1905 Revolution — was found hanged at a villa in Oserki, just outside St. Petersburg. The summer previously, Russian Revolutionary, Alexei Teplov, founder of the Free Russian Library in Whitechapel in London had told the *London Daily News* of farcical attempts by the Tsarists Secret Police, the Okhrana, to monitor his movement at

¹⁷ Hastings and St Leonards Observer 17 March 1906, p.10

¹⁸ Father Gapon led a peaceful worker's demonstration to the Tsar's Winter Palace on January 9th 1905. As the crowd approached, the palace guards opened fire, resulting in several hundred injuries and fatalities. Father Gapon subsequently escaped to Britain before being executed by Socialist Revolutionaries on the Russian-Finnish border in March 1906.

Hastings Pier, just yards from the sea groyne where Gapon's body had been discovered. Another revolutionary, Alexei Sheftel lived on nearby Priory Road, working the print of popular émigré journal, *The Anglo Russian* under the editorship of Joseph Prelooker. Just two years later, the daughter of Tsarist Police Chief, Aleksei A. Lopukhin would find herself at the centre of a sensational kidnap plot after a trip to London from her lodgings in Bexhill-on-sea too an expected and dramatic turn.¹⁹ The three-mile stretch of sand on the undulating coastline of East Sussex was certainly proving popular with Russian 'Whites' and 'Reds' alike. Within weeks of the girl going missing, the 24 year old print-setter, Alexei Sheftel vacated his lodgings at 7 Priory Road and headed for New York, where he lived out the rest of his life.

Charles Crossley, the visitor from London, had been seen talking to Sergei Gapon at the pier the previous evening. The man, clearly in a state of distress, had told him he was a captain in the Tsar's Imperial Guard and on his way to visit the Russian Consul in Folkestone. An attempt to deport the man under the Aliens Act by magistrates in Eastbourne the week prior to his death had been unsuccessful, when the British Home Secretary, Herbert Gladstone had declined to enforce the order. Crossley and his brother were the last men to see the Russian alive. Two days later, Crossley featured in another report, this time announcing the formation of a *National Anti-Socialist League* at the Junior Carlton Club in London's Pall Mall. The meeting was held under the presidency of Thomas Orde Hastings Lees, Honorary Secretary of 'prepper' association, *The National Service League*.²⁰ Among the League's most active and influential members was Makgill's friend, Sir Walter Long.

¹⁹ Daily Mail, Oct. 29, 1907/*Missing Russian Girl*, Bexhill-on-Sea Observer, 02 November 1907, p.3

²⁰ Pall Mall Gazette, 15 March 1906, p.9

Section D, an offshoot of Makgill's privately funded Industrial Intelligence Board (IBB) was tasked with flushing out the Soviet threat which was thought to have emerged in Working Mens' Unions in post-Revolutionary Britain. Despite its links to the upper ranks of civil society, Section D's methods were described as brutal and extreme even by those who used its services (Churchill's intelligence man, Desmond Morton, head of Section V at Mi6, among them). Makgill was assisted in the project by 'Room 40' Playfair Cipher specialist, Sir Reginald Hall, the former director of British Naval Intelligence. Hall, Ashley and Makgill would subsequently join forces with Théodore Aubert, the Swiss lawyer who would defend White Emigré, Maurice Conradi, charged with murdering Soviet ambassador, Vatslav Vorovsky — possibly on the orders of Alexander Guchkov — in Switzerland in 1923.²¹ The deeply mysterious Makgill is a chronically ubiquitous figure in tales of Edwardian intrigue and it's worth noting that at the time of Florence's death there were significant events taking place in Russia, where Florence's brother, Brigadier General Offley Shore had been serving as British Attaché to the Tsar of Russia's Imperial Forces in Tiflis (in modern day Georgia). Shore had remained at his headquarters as part of the Imperial network of spies and embassy staff until he was replaced by Colonel Geoffrey Davis Pike in spring 1918. A number of ministers within the British Foreign Office had been furious at Shore's refusal to share intelligence with anyone other than the War Office. None was more concerned than Senior British diplomat, Sir Charles Marling, the British Minister in Tehran, who seemed determined to have Florence's brother removed. A renewed Turkish offensive had threatened

²¹ *Theodore Aubert and the Entente Internationale Anticomuniste: An Unofficial anti-Marxist International*, Twentieth Century Communism (Vol. 6), Michel Caillat, 2014

allied efforts to safeguard the Baltic territories of Transcaucasia against advances by Lenin's Bolsheviks, the hard-line revolutionaries looking to extend control of Southern Russia. Tiflis was fending off attacks from all sides: from the Turkish Army to the south of the city, and Lenin's forces from the north.



Nurse Shore's brother Brigadier General Offley Shore, former Military Attaché in Russia

At this time, allied defences were being shored-up by a ragtag army of Armenian and Georgian nationalists who were demanding the immediate release of British-held funds controlled by Brigadier Shore to secure additional weaponry. The British Directorate of Military Intelligence had just signed-off on a plan devised by Oliver Locker Lampson to finance the Armenians using 20 million pounds sterling from funds held by Shore's Mission at Tiflis.

Despite being ordered to release them by Marling, Brigadier Shore, still head of the mission, stalled and refused to do so. In a telegram to the British Foreign Office dated December 21 1917, Marling, responsible for financing the local forces, complained that Shore was hesitating and urged the War Office to intervene.²² As a response, Captain Edward Noel, a respected and perhaps more cooperative member of the British Secret Service, was brought in. According to Timothy C. Winegard, professor of history at Colorado Mesa University, Noel's job was to monitor communications and ensure that all intelligence and funds were shared immediately whenever necessity demanded it and whatever the cost politically.²³ Protecting British and American interests in the Baku oilfields became priority number one (read: Michael Tillotson's 2018 *Times* article).

As the general situation in the Caucasus and Northern Persia continued to deteriorate, Marling and the *Eastern Committee* of the British Foreign Office²⁴ shifted the weight of their expectations on the energy and commitment of the Armenian and Georgian forces in defeating the advance of the Bolsheviks and the Ottoman Empire (the Turks). In a report dated October 11 1917, the *Eastern Committee* had remarked that British interests in the fate of the Armenians had passed from a "sentimental and humanitarian concern"

²² Telegram from General Offley Shore to Foreign Office, Dec8 1917 (conveyed to Marling) and Marling Telegram to Foreign Office, 21 December 1917, TNA F.O. 371/3018, F.O 371/3019, 241203/229217/17, 13 December 1917, TNA F.O 233320/235977/237859/224839/17

²³ *The First World Oil War*, Timothy C. Winegard, p. 159-160. See also TNA CAB/24/144, Eastern Report No. 46, 13 Dec 1917, p.5/TNA CAB/23/4, War Cabinet No. 294, 7 Dec 1917, p.4, TNA CAB/23/4 War Cabinet No. 298, 14 Dec 1917, p. 3-4. TNA CAB/23/4 War Cabinet No. 303, 20, Dec 1917, pp. 3-4.

²⁴ The *Eastern Committee* featured Lord Curzon, General Smuts, Lord Hardinge, Robert Cecil, E.S Montagu, General Dunsterville and Sir Mark Sykes. see: *Papers of the War Cabinet's Eastern Committee*, British Library: India Office Records and Private Papers.

to a “grave material concern”. The Ottoman plan to unite the all Turkic, Tatar, and Uralic peoples of the Caucasus was paying off, dramatically raising the stakes and urgency of the Armenian Question”. In an attempt to appease the Turkik subjects, Russia’s new Prime Minister, Alexander Kerensky urgently renounced the plans of the former Tsar to annexe Constantinople and the Turkish Straits and began putting plans in place to grant much greater equality and autonomy to the Muslims of the region.²⁵ Kerensky’s plans were of course a major blow to the *Eastern Committee* at the British Foreign Office. It was felt that the only real weapons against the Turks had been the “racial vitality” of the Christian Armenians whose loathing of the Turks had only been excited further by the scale and ferocity of the massacres they endured in 1915 and 1916. In Committee’s estimation, the Armenians were the only ethnic group large and reactionary enough to repel the Ottoman and Bolshevik menace.²⁶ Undeterred by Kerensky’s pledges, the British and the French forged ahead with plans to raise an all-Armenian guerrilla unit to raise the energy of Russia’s rapidly disintegrating forces and stave off the Turkish advance. Florence brother, General Offley Shore is said to have approached the High Commissioner of Armenia who explained Kerensky’s opposition to the idea, believing the number of Armenian fighters in the region was simply not sufficient to deal with the threat.²⁷ The 150, 000 or so Armenian troops

²⁵ These were the sea passages around the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus (at the opposite ends of the Sea of Marmara). The Constantinople Agreement was a deal negotiated by Britain, France and Imperial Russia in March 1915 which would see Constantinople and the Dardanelles handed to the Tsar’s Imperial Russia in the event of an allied victory. The plan was thrown into disarray when the Tsar was overthrown by Kerensky’s Provisional Government in February 1917 and ditched entirely by Lenin’s Bolsheviks.

²⁶ Political & Secret Files, India Office, London, files 10/623, P4/122, Eastern Report, no. XXXVII, Caucasus, October 11 1917 and FO371/3016/204952, Foreign Office to Spring-Rice, October 25 1917.

²⁷ TNA, FO371/3016/209437/204952, General Offley Shore to Department of Military Intelligence, October 28 1917

fighting alongside the Allies were scattered throughout the Russian Empire, and since Kerensky had no plans to annexe Constantinople, he had no interests in concentrating their forces in this one area.

Shore's hesitation in releasing the funds came at a staggering cost to Britain and Imperial Russia. The price paid by Armenia was greater still. Within weeks of Shore's refusal to arm the Armenians through British held funds in Tiflis, a further 2,500 Armenians and 20,000 Azerbaijanis lay dead. The Bolsheviks had seized control of Baku. Within weeks General Shore had been replaced by Brig-General Lionel Dunsterville.

Marling was one of the Bolsheviks' fiercest British opponents. The triumph enjoyed by the Revolutionaries in removing Nicholas II was encountering a counter-challenge by Tsarist loyalists who were now enjoying Britain's full support. Marling's plan was simple: remove Lenin and the Bolsheviks from power and restore the Russian monarchy under the leadership of his friend, the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich. Pavlovich, who had been exiled by the Tsar over the murder of Romanov confidant, Grigori Rasputin in 1916, had struck-up a close personal bond with Marling and both men would have regarded Brigadier Shore as something of an obstacle in their attempts to restore a Tsarist regime. As far as Marling was concerned, Shore and the War Cabinet's refusal to recognize the urgency of arming the Armenians and the Georgians had considerably undermined the allied efforts and Churchill's 'secret war with Lenin'. Sadly, the man who replaced Nurse Shore's brother Offley as the Head of the British Military Agency in Tiflis — Colonel Geoffrey Davis Pike — was murdered by Bolsheviks just eight months after his arrival. It is something of a tragic irony that he should have been born to a

long serving military family at Lunsford Cross in Bexhill on Sea, where Nurse Shore was discovered unconscious in a third-class train carriage.

Chapter 3

A Revenge Killing?

OUTRAGE AND BETRAYAL



Just days before Florence Shore's murder in January 1920, General Kolchak, the White Russian leader that Britain and America had been supporting against Lenin's government of Bolshevik revolutionaries, was handed over to the Bolsheviks and ceremonially executed. In the immediate aftermath of Russia's October Revolution, a full scale civil war had erupted between the 'Whites' — supporters of the Tsar — and the 'Reds' — supporters of Vladimir Lenin. For two years the Whites were supported by allied forces, but the complete withdrawal of British troops in October 1919 and American troops the following January, would leave Kolchak and his troops exposed. As a result, the General had been forced to surrender. The exit route Britain had promised the beleaguered General had been removed too. Kolchak's hopes of escaping across the border to the British Mission had been scuppered and his capture and execution marked a 360 degree turn in the coalition government's relationship with the Soviet. Obligated by the terms of the peace treaty which came into effect on January 10th 1920, just two days before Nurse Shore was attacked on the train, Lloyd George was preparing to talk trade with Lenin and ditch all prevailing military efforts to remove his Soviet government. The *Committee on Russian Affairs*, the pro-Interventionist lobby that had been pushing Lloyd George to take launch a full scale military offensive against the Soviets, and which had included influential members of British military intelligence in Petrograd like Harold Williams, Sir George Buchanan, Rex

Leeper and Sir Bernard Pares, was left barking with fury, seeing it as nothing less than treachery.

The man that Makgill and the *Committee on Russian Affairs* appear to have been preparing as the Tsar's replacement in Russia was none other than the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich — friend and ally of Sir Charles Marling who had been none too quietly backing the fresh Romanov bid for the throne. When news arrived of Kolchak's capture and execution, Pavlovich was in exile in London and it is possible that the attack on Florence could have been a revenge attack by White Russian Tsarist loyalists for the appalling betrayal of Kolchak and Imperial Russia.

During these same months, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich had just been receiving word of the violent death of his stepbrother and other members of the Tsar's extended family. The details were grim. Bolshevik guards had taken rifle butts to the heads of Prince Vladimir Paley Pavlovich, the Grand Duchess Elizabeth Feodorovna and four other members of the once mighty Romanov family and left them for dead inside a mine-shaft. The injuries sustained during the attack were brutal and merciless. Reports of the incident suggest the injuries suffered by the royal victims were not unlike those sustained by Florence in the attack on the train. Reporting the attack on Nurse Nightingale Shore on January 22 1920 the *Illustrated Police News* painted a chilling scene. Florence had been found "disfigured, unconscious and soaked in blood from a gaping wound in the head". "Outrage rather than robbery" was considered to be the motive.²⁸

²⁸ *Murdered Nurse*, Illustrated Police News 22 January 1920, p.2

Home Office pathologist Dr. Bernard Spilsbury recorded that Nurse Shore had received three separate blows to the head ‘possibly by a revolver butt’. One wound had passed completely through her scalp, a second revealed bone exposed beneath the wound, and a third showed a large fracture to the skull. Her injuries were every bit as horrific and every bit as emphatic as those inflicted on Prince Vladimir and his family. If the three blows had been dealt to subdue the victim during the commotion of a robbery, the level of violence was clearly disproportionate to the threat that someone of Florence’s age and stature would have presented.²⁹

The White Russian exiles in London and Paris were the first to feel the full bloody weight of being sold out by the allies; visas were obstructed, relief efforts undermined and the trappings of diplomatic privileges were to be stripped from them overnight. The Bolsheviks may have taken their considerable wealth and properties but it was the crippling mechanisms of British bureaucracy that had robbed them of hope — the only real resource the movement needed at this time.

Winston Churchill, who had invested so much of his time, skill and reputation supporting the ‘Whites’ expelled a mighty sigh of resignation. He was powerless. Britain still had in excess of 2,000 troops in Russia, many of them prisoners. In his view all the ‘all the harm and misery in Russia’ had arisen out of the wickedness and tyranny of the Bolsheviks. The policy he had always advocated was the ‘overthrow and destruction of that criminal regime’.³⁰ Despite the War Secretary’s protests, Prime Minister Lloyd George and the Cabinet had made their decision. The following February, Churchill was

²⁹ *No Light on Train Crime*, Nightingale Shore Inquest, Bexhill-on-Sea Observer, 24 January 1920, p.3

³⁰ *Churchill to the House of Commons*, Manchester Evening News 19 November 1920, p.4

removed from the War Office, and Long was removed from the Admiralty. The Conservative-Liberal Alliance that had got Britain through the war was about to be well and truly shattered.

BLUDGEONED TO DEATH.

FATE OF THE CZAR'S RELATIVES.

PERM MASSACRES.

Perm and its vicinity was destined to witness tragedies full of horror. Many members of the Romanoff family had been interned there, including the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, sainted sister of the Empress, venerated by grateful Muscovites while Alexandra was disliked. The Grand Duke Sergius Mikhailovitch, former master of the ordnance, and quite remote from politics, Prince Igor, Prince Constantine, all three brilliant young men, the sons of the late Grand Duke Constantine Constantinovich, none of them concerned with political matters, and Prince Vladimir Pavlovich Palei, son of the Grand Duke Paul and step-brother of the Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich. This youth of 17 had given promise of being one of the world's greatest poets. The murder of the Romanoffs at Perm took place exactly 24 hours after the murder of the family at Ekaterinburg.

KILLED BY RED GUARDS.

ostensibly involved, the tsar and tsarina, the verdoy, Red Jewish autocrat of all the Russians directed the dispersal of them.

Chapter 4

Just how credible is Brown's story?

A MURDER IN THRACE



Was Ernest C. Brown the regular man of mystery he makes out to be in the interview with the *Washington Evening Star* and *Canton Daily News*? Well, despite the fact that several episodes that Brown mentions are a little too difficult to verify at time of writing, the story he tells of his time with the Inter-Allied Commission in Turkey and being arrested for the murder of a Turkish Officer in Galata in November 1921 certainly chimes with real life events — and it is also directly linked to other real or imagined Soviet plots. The relative obscurity of the event and the fact it was published in reputable title, also lessens the probability of outright invention even if the timeline he provides in his interview with Hartswick is somewhat vague.

Brown's third and final arrest in Galata in January 1922 appears to have coincided with something called the 'Harington Plot', a tense diplomatic crisis that took place in Turkey between July and September 1921. The story centred on a Soviet-backed plot to assassinate General Charles Harington, the British Commander-in-Chief and Chairman of the Inter-Allied Commission. Galata at this time was dominated by refugees escaping the Bolshevik advance in Southern Russia. According to a report by the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* in November 1921, the 'best blood of Russia' — the White Russians — had taken over the businesses and 'dispossessed innumerable Turks and Greeks'. Russian was the predominant language and all the best restaurants and all of the shops seemed to be Russian. A Russian Generalissimo, the Grand Duke

Nicholas Nikolaevich, now without arms, means or power, had even anchored his yacht there.³¹

Brown claims to have arrived with the Inter-Allied Commission at a time when Thrace — then occupying a bottleneck region between Turkey and Bulgaria — was the subject of alleged massacres. According to eyewitnesses, the Turks had invaded the disputed area, massacred Greeks in the villages before looting from houses and committing all manner of appalling horrors. In March 1921, The *Daily Herald* of London was duly reporting that Turkey had refused to accept the terms proposed at the London conference and was demanding the return of Thrace.³² The role of The Inter-Allied Commission was to try and unravel the tangle and restore peace. As civilian staff photographer it was Brown's job to provide visual evidence of the atrocities. Curiously, the murder of the Turkish officer for which Ernest C. Brown was subsequently arrested took place on November 11th — the day of the Armistice Day Ball at the British Embassy — the day that it was being reported that Turkish Nationalists in Adrianople were planning fresh raids on Thrace.

"Now then Mr Brown — who are you and what are you? Suppose we take step over to Police Headquarters and talk it over."

*— The Strange Case of Capt. Brown, Thrice Accused of Capital Crimes,
Canton Daily News, August 192*

One man who may have had a significant impact on the Commission's arrival in the region was billionaire arms-dealer, Basil Zaharoff who had strong

³¹ Sheffield Daily Telegraph 03 November 1921, p.2

³² Daily Herald 22 March 1921, p.3

family links to Thrace and whose stakes in armaments manufacturer, *Metro-Vickers* had given him considerable leverage over Britain's military capabilities and the reach and effectiveness of its secret service. Curiously enough, Zaharoff was also one of the many curious passengers over the years to have boarded the Orient Express, whose real-life snowdrift stay in Thrace in December 1929 inspired Agatha Christie's legendary novel.

Brown's arrest in January 1922 also just happened to coincide with the publication of a series of photos presenting the 'Tragic Plight of Russian Refugees' in the Turkish capital.³³ The photographs were published in London's *The Graphic* newspaper and appear to have been commissioned by Ariadna Tyrkova-Williams³⁴ and Michael I. Rostovtzeff's White Russian *Refugee Relief Association*, at that time operating from Fleet Street in England.³⁵ After his stint with the Inter-Allied Commission, Brown had stayed and found a studio in Grand Rue de Pérá, a street choked with refugees who now ambled aimless and shamefaced over its winding, desultory dust plains. According to reports, some 110,000 Russians had arrived in the city after General Wrangel's defeat against Lenin's strengthening forces in the Crimea. The White Russian Army had evacuated and landed here. The publication of these pictures would have been seen as a provocative move from the Brits, and Brown confesses in his interview that his earlier shots of Thrace 'had not pleased the Turkish High Command'.³⁶

³³ The Graphic 28 January 1922, p.9

³⁴ Ariadna Tyrkova Williams was the wife of anti-Bolshevik journalist Harold Williams. Both were leading members of Britain's pro-Interventionist, White Russian pressure group, the *Committee on Russian Affairs* (see page 18 of this article).

³⁵ *Russia's Greatest Enemy?: Harold Williams and the Russian Revolutions*, Charlotte Alston, Bloomsbury I.B. Tauris, 2007

³⁶ Canton Daily News Sunday, August 15, 1926, p.43

Brown was duly hauled before General Refet Pasha (Refet Bele) at his HQ in Istanbul — chief architect of the Greek Genocide and by October that year and the newly appointed Governor of Thrace.³⁷



Red Plot in Turkey, Nottingham Evening Post 07 July 1921 p 1

The plot against Harington, which proved to be unfounded, had been ‘unearthed’ by British Intelligence, or, as I think is far more likely, the men working for Sir George Makgill’s famously unmanageable and unaccountable, *Industrial Intelligence Board*. According to legend, the so-called ‘Harington

³⁷ Aberdeen Press and Journal 25 October 1922, p.6

plot' had centred around a scheme to spark a mutiny among Muslim troops serving as part of the British Imperial forces and then blame it on Lenin's Bolsheviks.³⁸ The desired outcome was that Britain would withdraw support for the Turkish Revolutionaries and revoke the *Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement*, signed, much to the anger of Churchill and the *Committee on Russian Affairs*, by the Lloyd George government in March 1921. Curiously, among those leading questions about the plot in the British House of Commons was *Comrades of the Great War* founder and George Makgill ally, Colonel Wilfrid Ashley.³⁹

Reports in the press at the time hint at various reprisals and agent provocateurs and it's certainly the case that a good number of arrests were made by Turkish police. Was Ernest C. Brown one of those arrested? In an extraordinary move, Refet Pasha — the man who had Brown arrested for the murder of a Turkish officer — accused Liberal statesman, Damat Ferid Pasha, Andrew Ryan of the British Embassy and Sait Molla of the *Friends of England Society*, of devising the plot to derail ongoing trade negotiations between Britain, Turkey and Russia. Brown could certainly have been helping things along, especially if he'd been in the employ of Makgill and the *Industrial Intelligence Board*.⁴⁰

³⁸ *Turkish Plotters Seized*, The Scotsman 22 September 1921, p.6

³⁹ Boris Johnson's grandfather, Ali Kemal Bey was hung as result of the tensions and counter-plots that arose from the events in 1922. Ernest C. Brown was Branch Secretary in Glasgow of Long's *Comrades of the Great War*.

⁴⁰ Ernest C. Brown gave his interview to the *Washington Evening Star* a short time before Makgill's sudden death in October 1926. His death terminated the existence of his *Industrial Intelligence Board* overnight.

The final irony is that it was the Reading Room at the British Library that proved so central to Ernest Brown's alibi. The room's status in all manner of spy capers is legendary and his story regarding his alibi is confused to say the least. In the *Washington Daily Star* article of 1926, Brown tells F. Gregory Hartswick that he was cleared of any involvement in the Shore Nightingale murder as a result of a time stamp on a Reading Room permit stub. However, in an interview published by the London *Sunday Post* on January 18th 1920, Brown claims he had been released solely on the word of a Reading Room attendant, who had some vague recollection of Brown visiting the room that week. In this report Capt. Ernest C. Brown states unequivocally that the stub he had retained from his reading room session had NOT been dated.⁴¹ In all fairness, it's a significant revision that provides a more credible alibi.

Sadly, Brown was released from custody on the very day that Shore succumbed to her injuries. Any chance of a positive ID from the victim was gone. Florence had died without regaining consciousness.

⁴¹ Mr Brown's Alibi, Sunday Post, 18 January 1920, p.2

THE TRAGIC PLIGHT OF RUSSIAN REFUGEES

HARD FATE IN CONSTANTINOPLE. EXCLUSIVE TO "THE GRAPHIC"



IN THE QUEUE FOR FOOD DISTRIBUTION
at the Rest-House for refugees.



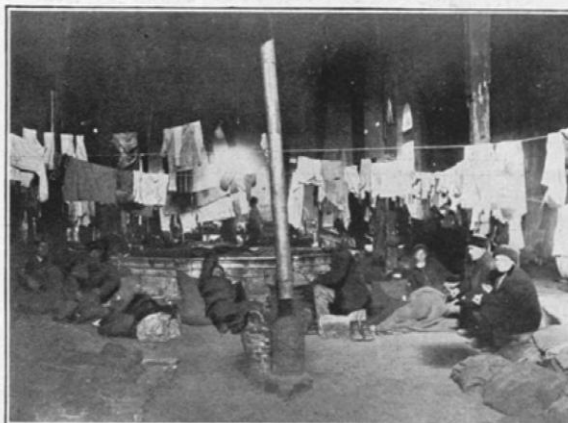
A PRIVILEGED REFUGEE
sleeping in an empty room.



PRIMITIVE CULINARY ARRANGEMENTS
Cooking in the open near the group's "washing."



ABODE FOR A FAMILY
A single strawed-off cubicle.



LIVING-ROOM, SLEEPING-ROOM, WASHHOUSE AND DRYING-LOFT
Scene in the ground floor of a building allotted to refugees.



OFFICERS HAY-MAKING AT FARM COLONY

The happy thought which induced two Roumanian girls in London to give a Christmas dinner to hapless Russian children, as noted on another page, serves to remind us that this is not the only country with Russian refugees. Some thirty thousand Russian men, women and children, homeless, and in the last stage of destitution, wander about the streets of Constantinople, sleeping



AN INTERIOR VIEW OF THE REST-HOUSE FOR REFUGEES

under bridges or in the open. To relieve them the Russian Refugees Relief Association (173, Fleet Street, E.C.4) has appealed to the British public. The money subscribed has enabled the Union of Zemstvo to render a little more habitable a large dilapidated building, in which are about 1500 refugees. Some refugees have leased Turkish farms, but money is needed for equipment.

These photos, almost certainly by Ernest C. Brown appeared in The Graphic, 28 January 1922

Chapter 5

A Cousin at Mi5

THE FARINA AND HOBKIRK FAMILIES



As strange as it may seem there is another dimension to this story that is every bit as intriguing. Perhaps more so. It transpires that Rafaele Farina, the first cousin of Nurse Nightingale Shore, was a senior British Intelligence officer.⁴²

On Sunday 11th January 1920, the night prior to the attack on the train, Florence had visited Rafaele's mother in Tonbridge, an idyllic Tudor market town some 30 miles south of London. The Baroness Farina was Florence's aunt on her mother's side. The reason for her visit, which lasted some several hours, is not recorded. At the time of Florence's death, Farina was serving on the 4th Floor at 4 Queen's Gate under Major George Joseph Ball as Head of Mi5's G4 Russian Section. Here he dealt with a regular flow of political exiles, revolutionaries and slippery agent provocateurs. Farina's next post was Head of Station for Mi6 in Latvia, whose membership of the Russian Empire had collapsed with the 1917 Revolution.

From February 1921 to March 1931, Farina fronted the Passport Control desk in Riga, by far the most prolific of the Baltic Stations operating under Mi6. Here he would be responsible for collecting special intelligence relating to Latvia and Lithuania. Mi6 — or SiS as it was known in those days — had been intimately allied with the passport control system for years. His

⁴² The British National Archives, KV1/52, Vol. IV, M.i.5 H Branch Report, Organisation and Administration

first boss in Riga was Reginald 'Rex' Leeper, previously employed by the Foreign Office at the Political Intelligence Department now and serving as First Secretary of Legation from Valdemara iela 7.⁴³ On Leeper's departure to the News Department of the Foreign Office, Farina became attaché to Soviet-obsessive, Edward Hallett Carr. Between them Carr and Farina ran many of the British agents and sources within the Bolshevik regime in Moscow. Farina left the Riga desk in March 1931 when he was succeeded by Harold Gibson, but his ten-year tenure there was not without incident.

In 1924 Farina had been responsible for bringing the explosive Zinoviev Letter to the attention of Mi5 and Special Branch. The so-called 'Red Letter', marked 'very secret', provided instructions to British Communists to mobilise its forces within Ramsay MacDonald's Labour Government in support of the Anglo-Soviet treaty. The treaty, which had endured years of tough negotiations, was due to be ratified within weeks of the General Election scheduled that October. The Letter packed additional punch; the success of any subsequent armed insurrection would require the cooperation of the armed-forces. Zinoviev's message on this point was very clear: 'agitation-propaganda' was to be extended to the armed forces. When the green light for revolution was given, it would be "desirable to have cells in all the units of the troops, particularly among those quartered in the large centres of the country, and also among factories working on munitions and at military store depots".⁴⁴ The Letter, or so it had had been claimed, had been signed on headed notepaper by Grigori Zinoviev, president of the Comintern, the Soviet

⁴³ Rex Leeper was also a member of George Buchanan's pro-Interventionist lobby, the Committee on Russian Affairs which demanded full scale military engagement with Lenin's Bolsheviks in support of White Russian liberals and monarchists.

⁴⁴ *Moscow Orders To Our Reds*, Daily Mail, Saturday, Oct. 25, 1924

International organisation and addressed Arthur McManus of the *Communist Party of Great Britain*.

On October 25, 1924, four days before the election, Lord Rothermere's *Daily Mail* splashed the devastating headline across its front page: '*Civil War Plot by Socialists' Masters: Moscow Orders To Our Reds; Great Plot Disclosed*'. The Labour Party's very first Prime Minister, Ramsay MacDonald lost by a landslide number of votes to Stanley Baldwin and the Conservatives.

But the letter wasn't real. The letter had been faked.

A subsequent investigation by the British Foreign Office discovered that the 'order to our Reds' had been a clever and audacious counterfeit produced by an Intelligence source in Riga. Worse still, it had been Nurse Shore's cousin Rafaele Farina who had ensured that the letter had entered the intelligence system and been received safely into the hands of Mi5 controllers in London. Despite his apparent failures to ensure the integrity of human intelligence, Rafaele remained at the Mi6 desk in Riga for a further seven years. How was this so? Simple; either the contents of the Zinoviev Letter were known to be perfectly true, or known to be perfectly false — that's how so. Farina was just doing his job. If some members of Mi6 had been involved in a dirty-tricks campaign to derail the Anglo-Soviet Trade Treaty as was being claimed, then the most likely scenario is that Farina had been under specific instruction to deposit the intelligence into the hands of Mi5 by his Mi6 superiors, Hugh Sinclair and Desmond Morton with the knowledge and cooperation his Riga boss, Reginald 'Rex' Leeper, whose propaganda work for the Political Intelligence Department of the British Foreign Office was legendary. To push home the likelihood of this, it's worth pointing out that Leeper took up his post as Chief of the British Legation alongside Farina on

September 22nd 1924.⁴⁵ The incriminating letter that had been passed to Farina's desk was dated September 15th 1920⁴⁶, the week prior to Leeper's arrival. A report and translation had been compiled by Farina in Riga on October 2nd and on October 9th a decoded telegram was received at SiS headquarters in London.⁴⁷ It was duly handed on to Joseph Ball, W.B. Findlay (one of Makgill's men) and Churchill's trusted aides, Desmond Morton and Hugh Sinclair.

With Leeper at the helm, the letter (which might otherwise have been dismissed) was spared many of the usual rigorous protocols of Intelligence screening and analysis in Riga and was eventually leaked to a reporter of the Daily Mail. The most likely route was through Farina's ex-Mi5 section chief, Sir Joseph Ball, who several years later would ditch his desk-job at Mi5 for a plum role in the Propaganda Department at Conservative Party Central Office.⁴⁸ Either way, it was all carried out within weeks of Leeper taking up the post in Riga. It seems pretty clear; Farina kept his job because he was simply following orders.

But what was Farina's relationship to the Nightingale Shores? What were the familial connections? If you've read Rosemary Cook's excellent book on the Nurse Nightingale Shore murder then you will have come across some of these names already.

⁴⁵ *The Foreign Office List and Diplomatic and Consular Year Book for the United Kingdom*, Harrison and Sons, 1949, p.281

⁴⁶ *The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy that Never Dies*, Gill Bennett, OUP Oxford, 2018, p.1

⁴⁷ *The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy that Never Dies*, Gill Bennett, OUP Oxford, 2018, p.46

⁴⁸ Gill Bennett quite rightly keeps her mind open regarding the source of the leak to the Mail as once it had been decoded in London it was being dutifully copied by various individuals and departments.

Rafaele Farina was the half-brother of Offley and Florence's cousin, Brigadier Clarence John Hobkirk, another member of the family who had pursued a long and distinguished military career, serving first with the Essex Regiment and then as Britain's Military Attaché in Rome during the war. After sustaining an injury Clarence was declared medically unfit and was retired from active service shortly after Florence's death in 1920. For those of you who have read Rosemary Cook's *The Nightingale Shore Murder*, you may recall that it was Clarence who acted as executor in both Florence and Offley's wills. On their deaths in 1920 and 1922, the sister and her brother had left large sums in securities to be paid to Clarence and his brother, the landscape artist and figure painter, Stuart William Tatton Hobkirk. If the probate record are anything to go by, Florence may have also left Stuart the diamond pendant that Police had assumed to be missing.⁴⁹ By 1924 Stuart was living at 16 Church Road, St Leonards — just a two-minute walk from Warrior Square Station, where Florence had due to meet friends on the day she was attacked.

If Florence had bequeathed anything to their brother, Rafaele it's certainly not recorded.

Born in Switzerland in 1877, Rafaele Lewis Julian Farina was the son of Italian exile, Baron Luigi Farina and Margaret Leishman — subsequently restyled the 'Baroness Maretta Robina Farina Firras' — sister of Nurse Nightingale Shore's mother, Anna Marie Leishman of 18 Drummond Place in Edinburgh New Town. Luigi was her second husband. Margaret's first husband, John Hobkirk, the father of her two boys Stuart and Clarence, had died shortly before her marriage to Luigi in Rome in 1878. Reports in the

⁴⁹ *The Nightingale Shore Murder*, Rosemary Cook, p.186

British Press suggest that Luigi Farina, who had once been dragged into a disreputable spat in Germany with Henry Labouchère Liberal MP, was one of



Rafaele Farina Middle Row, far right in civilian clothes with G Branch on Armistice Day November 1918 on roof of Mi5 HQ. G Branch. Section Head Lt Colonel Sealy Clark, front row, centre, Sassoon J. Sassoon 3rd from left, middle row — thanks to Phil Tomaselli for additional IDs and background

an illustrious stream of visitors conveying his wishes to General Garibaldi at Stafford House during the Italian revolutionary's one and only visit to England as the guest of the Duke of Devonshire.⁵⁰

During this period, the fortunes of the Nightingale Shore family were taking a nosedive. The Shores had returned from a tour of Dresden and

⁵⁰ London Evening Standard 14 April 1864, p.3

Holstein to news of a massive loss of shares in the family stake-holdings. By 1878, Florence's father Harrington Offley Shore had accrued debts of over £100,000 and was facing bankruptcy.⁵¹ It wasn't the first time and it wouldn't be the last. In October 1879 it was announced that *Colonial Trusts Corporation Ltd*, which had controlled the family's stakes in the Midland Railway Company of Canada and various collieries around the globe, was being wound down after a two year investigation.

Luigi Farina's fortunes were no less grave. He had arrived in England in 1860, shortly after his father, Baron Rafaele Farina had been expelled from Naples for taking part in the so-called 'Count d'Aquila Conspiracy'.⁵² According to the press of the period, it appears that Luigi's father, the newly appointed Prefect of Police, had conspired with Prince Louis to depose the Spanish Bourbon King of Naples, Francis II in advance of General Garibaldi's arrival. The plot — which was as vague then as it is now — was to then scuttle the ship carrying Garibaldi — the great 'liberator' of the revolution — before he and his army could ever set foot in the capital and reunite the divided Italy. Within days of the alleged plot being exposed, the Prince and his fellow conspirators had fled to France and then to England, their land and properties confiscated. As Churchill may have said: it was a riddle inside a mystery inside a coup d'état — wrapped-up in a revolution.

Cousin Rafaele had begun his Secret Service career at the Ministry of Information, a post that had taken him as far away from his hands-on science career as he could get. Graduating with a 1st in 'Assaying' from Camborne Mining School in 1899, Farina had spent the first years of his adult working

⁵¹ *The Affairs of Harrington Offley Shore*, Western Times 30 October 1879, p.3

⁵² *Resignation of Farina*, Morning Advertiser, 11 January 1861, p.4

life as a mining engineer for *Orsk Gold Mines*⁵³ before being recruited into a notorious investment scandal featuring Lord Derby, Lord Knollys and senior members of the Royal Household. Formed in 1905, the *Siberian Proprietary Mines* had only weak concessions to mine gold, and within two short years its shares had collapsed.⁵⁴ Timely buying and selling, however, ensured that its senior shareholders profited handsomely from the scheme. The company would subsequently become another casualty of the Russian revolution. Prior to this engagement, Farina had been in the employ of the *Transbaikal Gold Mines* of the Altai Mountains in Siberia.⁵⁵ His reports for the *Institute of Mining and Metallurgy* described gold veins of varying quality. Some were ‘porous, friable and highly oxidised’, whilst others were of the ‘hard white quartz type’.⁵⁶ However, despite his freedom to travel, Farina wasn’t footloose and fancy-free. In 1903, he had married Isabel Anna Baird Smith, the granddaughter of Richard Baird Smith, the Chief Engineer of the East India Company and hero of the Siege of Delhi and the Indian Mutiny.

In 1914, Farina was on his way to the Caucasus, a mountainous yet mineral rich region extending over Russia, Georgia and Azerbaijan.⁵⁷ His Russian language skills had earned him the responsibility of managing much of the underground work of the *Caucasus Copper Company* in the Batumi region of Georgia, an area that was constantly under threat of Turkish invasion. He returned to England in 1915. A congenital issue with his leg saw him declined entry into active service and he was enrolled into the *Department*

⁵³ *Russia's New Era*, R.J. Barrett, The Financier and Bullionist Ltd, p.180

⁵⁴ *Edward VII (Penguin Monarchs): The Cosmopolitan King*, R. Davenport-Hines (2016) Penguin Books

⁵⁵ *The Mining Magazine*, August 1911, Vol.5, No.2, p.137

⁵⁶ *Nature*, Nature Publishing Group, February 22 1906, p.398

⁵⁷ *Mining Magazine*, Volume 11, 1914, p.355

of Information, responsible for publicity and propaganda.⁵⁸ Eventually, Farina's experience and knowledge of the region and impressive language skills would bring him to the attention of Mi5 and it is here that his story begins in earnest.⁵⁹ The type-written letter in the picture on the next page sees Desmond Morton of Mi6 discussing the formation of Leonid Krassin's *All Russian Co-operative Society* with Florence's cousin in October 1920.⁶⁰ Other files indicate that Farina was working at the Russian Section of Mi5 as early as August 1918, when he was attached to G4 branch, a small but rapidly expanding team of four officers and four secretaries tasked with putting together a blacklist of Russian émigrés.⁶¹ Farina wasn't to know at this stage that several of these émigrés were just yards from where his cousin Nurse Shore was heading on the day she was attacked.

Extraordinarily enough, another tight skulk of crepuscular Russian exiles were also in the vicinity of Farina's mother back in Tonbridge, the aunt that Florence had visited on the afternoon and evening prior to the attack. Was it at all possible that Florence had been followed from the house in Tonbridge back to London? And from London to St Leonards on Sea? Had Farina's prominent security role made Florence a vulnerable target and was he present in the house on the afternoon of her visit?

⁵⁸ *The Zinoviev Letter The Conspiracy that Never Dies*, Gill Bennett, 2018, OUP/Mi6, Keith Jeffrey, Bloomsbury, 2010, p.188-191

⁵⁹ The British National Archives, KV1/52, Vol. IV, M.i.5 H Branch Report, Organisation and Administration

⁶⁰ Leonid Krassin (1870-1926) was Soviet Russia's Minister (Commissar) for Trade and Industry.

⁶¹ *The British National Archives*, KV 2/568 – KV 1/44, National Archives

M.I.5. (Mr Farina)

Reference our GX 6239 of 1.10.20.

Our mutual friend is continuing his operations in order to discover some further particulars with regard to the ARCOS Co., and reports as follows:-

" I called on the ARCOS people again on October 5th, and as before, their waiting room was full of the most repulsive looking individuals, all Jews. I was unable to see any of the directors named on the firm's notepaper, but had another interview with A.P. SWERDLOFF ^{Plat 8. (150)} head of the heavy chemical department.

[Swerdloff] told me, under cross examination, that Krassin is one of the directors of Arcos, and that Arcos did a lot of the buying for Krassin's Mission in Bond Street. They did not compete with Bond Street, but buy such articles as the latter do not handle.

I should be very glad to know if the above is of any interest to you, in order to thank our informant.

[Signature]
Major

S.I.S.

9.10.20.

Mr Farina

Have you seen
maj: in relation a
hospital supply
to last para?

1/11/20 *[Signature]*

(File KV 2/818, National Archives)

Chapter 6

The Baroness Farina

MYSTERIOUS GOINGS ON IN TONBRIDGE



Shortly after 12.30 on the afternoon of Sunday January 11th 1920, 24-hours before the assault on the train, Florence had visited Rafaele's mother, the Baroness Farina at her home at 88 Hadlow Road in Tonbridge, some 30 miles south of London. The Baroness was her aunt on her mother's side and had been maintaining the not-altogether legitimate title of 'Baroness' ever since her marriage to Rafaele's glamorous and footloose father, Luigi. Even though her friend Mabel Rogers claims that Florence knew of her trip to visit friends in St Leonards on Sea some days in advance, Florence didn't continue to the resort after visiting Tonbridge. Instead, that same Sunday evening, Florence took the 7.30 train back to London, before setting off again on the Monday for St Leonards. It was an unusual move in the circumstances, as Tonbridge was already more than half-way to St Leonards on Sea. *The Hastings Line* operated by the LB & SC Railway Company linked London and Hastings via Tonbridge, Lewes and Bexhill. I think many readers would agree that it would have saved time, energy and money for Florence to have travelled from Tonbridge to St Leonards on that same Sunday evening or to have stayed at her aunt's house in Tonbridge overnight and to have grabbed a head start the following day. What was so important that she first had to go back to London? And what was so important that she first had to visit the Baroness?

Florence must have been keen. That weekend, London had seen its worst storm of the winter so far. A severe gale had sprung up on the Saturday evening and continued into the small hours of Sunday morning. When Florence arrived at her aunts on the Sunday, several of the low lying roads around Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells were under water as the banks broke on the River Medway. Trees had been uprooted, chimneys toppled, and local cup-ties had been postponed. The north of the country had been hit even worse, with several inches of snow seeing football fans being turned away Sunderland, Darlington and Newcastle. On the Sunday the road between Tonbridge and Maidstone was impassable and rail lines had been disrupted. The weather had been so bad in the south that the London Paris Air Service had had to be abandoned. In nearby village of Penshurst twenty fields were under water. The Eden Valley was completely flooded.⁶² By the Tuesday, Tonbridge Police were still trying to solve the mystery of the death of fifty-sixyear old George Eddings who had been found dead in a ditch on the main road between Marsh Green and Edenbridge. One theory they were pursuing is that he may have been knocked into the ditch by a passing motor car during the recent storms.⁶³ At a figurative level, the situation couldn't have been any more apt. Despite the obvious challenges, however, Florence had been intent on visiting her aunt on the Sunday morning, dashing back to London on the Sunday evening, before steaming off again to St Leonards on the Monday.

St Leonards was not the desolate, groggy sand-scape you might have thought it was at this time of year. Seaside resorts in January tend to have all the miserable charm of a wet ashtray the morning after the night before. The fires of fun and mayhem have ended and only the sopping mulch of ashes

⁶² Evening Mail, January 14 1920, p.6

⁶³ *Found Lying in a Ditch*, Daily News, 14 January 1920

remains. Collectively they're like a dull throbbing headache along the contours of Britain. St Leonards was a little different. The buckets, spades and parasols may have been locked firmly away in the cupboard during the winter season but the enormous outdoor roller-skater rink would drag in scores of post New Year revellers from the capital and neighbouring districts. There was also a daily programme of music from the Julian Clifford Orchestra banging out from the Palace Pier as the wild waves of the English Channel splashed and roared a burly percussive rhythm against the cast-iron piles beneath. The novelist and philosopher Aldous Huxley once remarked that during the winter months there was more dazzling music being performed on St Leonards' pier than there was in the West End of London.⁶⁴ If Florence had been around on the Thursday she would have been treated to Clifford's arrangement of Vasily Kalinnikov's *Symphony No.1*. Trained at the Leipzig Conservatoire under Józef Śliwiński, Clifford had retained strong ties to both Polish and Russian composers and could boast the pianist Ignacy Paderewski and the ballerina Anna Pavlova among his friends. The previous Tuesday had also witnessed the annual extravaganza, the *Masked and Fancy Dress Twelfth Ball*. A bevy of groovy flappers in masquerade masks would come roaring through the town, sequins and beads rattling as they mingled with the powered-up men and women in Georgian fancy dress, with the night concluding as always with a rapturous, firework display. To outsiders the spectacle would probably have looked like the visual or spiritual equivalent of a ritualistic letting blood in readiness for the epiphany that followed. An orgy of music and the sparks of clanking champagne glasses would a rousing New Year message through the streets. There was a charge here, a current of energy. There was life.

⁶⁴ *Temporaries and Eternals: the Music Criticism of Aldous Huxley, 1922-23*, Michael Allis Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013, p.215

But it wasn't all high-culture and high-jinx. Shortly before Florence was due to arrive, the resort had suffered one of its worst fires in years and doctors were warning of a rapidly escalating flu epidemic. The offices of the local *Hastings & St Leonards Observer* news room had their own tragedy to tell when it was learned that one of their former editors, Capt Robert E. Eversden of the RAF's 47th Squadron, had been shot dead accidentally by a sentry whilst at an aerodrome in South Russia.⁶⁵ The one thing the resort certainly wasn't in January was sleepy.

The coroner at the inquest into Florence's death quite rightly quizzed Mabel on her own unexpected stop at Tonbridge the evening she learned of her death. On the night of Monday January 12th, Mabel had been sitting in a theatre in Covent Garden when she learned of the ferocious assault on Florence. The production being performed, ironically enough, was Shakespeare's blood-thirsty revenge tragedy, *Hamlet* with Sir John Martin-Harvey reprising his role as the grievous Prince and Frederick Ross as his father's ghost. A tap on Mabel's shoulder during the interval was followed by some shocking news; Florence had been attacked and lay in a coma. Mabel had made her way to the hospital in Hastings but in a statement she made at the inquest, she claims she was only able to get as far as Tonbridge Station. Mabel — superintendent of the *Carnforth Lodge Nursing Home* in Hammersmith, London — had left on the 11.20 pm train from London and disembarked in Tonbridge at 12.00 am. She arrived at the hospital in Hastings some three hours later. The entire journey that Florence would have taken to Hastings that day would have lasted around two-hours twenty minutes in total, so arriving at the half way point in Tonbridge should have taken about one

⁶⁵ Hastings and St Leonards Observer 10 January 1920, Hastings and St Leonards Observer 17 January 1920, p.6,

hour and ten minutes at the very most (at some point in the 1920s there was 90-minute route between London and Hastings).

Did Mabel meet with Baroness Farina prior to ‘motoring’ to the hospital?

At the inquest it was not immediately clear why Mabel could only get as far as Tonbridge before managing to ‘motor on’. Did Mabel have to wait more than an hour for a connection? The train from Victoria Station that Florence Shore had taken earlier in the day was a direct connection to Hastings. It was an Express train. Surely the night-duty staff at the ticket office would have warned Mabel about such a wait. Did Mabel ‘motor on’ to Hastings accompanied by the Baroness in a car? And if so why? In terms of speed and safety, the train would evidently have been the quicker and more practical option for both of them. Mabel’s statement at the inquest is short on detail, and the phrase ‘motored on’ is a little vague, and side-stepped the issue of what mode of transport she actually used entirely.

“I caught the 11.20 train but found I could only get as far as Tonbridge and motored on.”

You stayed there the night, I suppose?’

“No, I motored on”

What time did you get (to Hastings)?

“About 3 o’clock”

— Mabel Rogers describing her journey to the hospital at the Inquest

According to the *Daily Herald*, Scotland Yard had now started to explore the possibility that the assailant had jumped off the train at Lewes and boarded

another train standing in the station bound for Tonbridge.⁶⁶ It's a minor point but worth mentioning in light of Florence's trip to her aunt in Tonbridge the night before.

Within twelve months of Baroness Farina arriving at 88 Hadlow Road, the former Russian representative to Paris and Berlin, Lt. General Sergei Belosselsky Belozersky had arrived with his American-born wife, Susan — daughter of American Civil War Hero, Charles A. Whittier — at 20 Hadlow Road, just 200 yards from the Baroness.⁶⁷ Like so many Russian exiles seeking sanctuary on Britain's shores, the Prince was fiercely critical of the both the Bolshevik regime and the liberal and left-wing elites that showed too much in the way of tolerance. The first man in his crosshairs was General Hubert Gough, the outspoken former Chief of the British Mission in North West Russia: "*General Gough is of the opinion that Soviet Russia has committed no unpardonable crime. Apparently he has forgotten, amongst other things, the murder of Captain Cromie at Petrograd, and the doing to death of several brother officers of his. If he had, all I can say is that we Russians have longer memories.*"⁶⁸ Gough had made the mistake of blaming the series of violent executions breaking out across the Russian states not on the Bolshevik government but on the 'bandits' who they were failing to control. The various Soviet enclaves set up in Lenin's name were, Gough alleged, nothing of the sort. It wasn't the government that were responsible; it was an absence of government. The people of Russia had decided who they

⁶⁶ Daily Herald 16 January 1920, p.1

⁶⁷ Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser, 28 July 1922, p.2/*Good Night, Beloved Comrade: The Letters of Denton Welch to Eric Oliver*, Denton Welch, 2017, University of Wisconsin Press, p.14/ <https://tonbridgepeopleandancestry.blogspot.com/2021/03/1921-1951tonbridge-resident-prince.html>

⁶⁸ *The Gough Controversy*, Globe 04 March 1920, p.5

didn't want, even if they weren't entirely sure who they did want. Our policy on Russia, Gough said brusquely, was based on "false principles". Not only had we "no right to interfere with Russia, but when we did interfere, it was in a partisan manner." Churchill had sought only to restore the Tsarist regime that the people hated. It was Gough's belief that there should now be "free and full intercourse with Russia." A few months earlier in February 1920 Gough had made a plea to the British Prime Minister for peace to be made with Russia. In a letter by a dozen or so other military commanders asked that Western Powers try not to be influenced by the "fear of Revolutionary propaganda" and to help restore the economic stability that Europe now needed, and which rested on the resources the Soviet had. In their estimation, "the longer peace is delayed the more certain it becomes that the German influence will be re-established in Russia." ⁶⁹ The publication of Gough's 'memorial' in *The Times* on February 23rd was followed by an 'anonymous' letter on March 3rd — most likely from the pen of Prince Belosselsky Belozersky — rejecting Gough's claim that the Soviet was the 'will of the people'. Below his letter was a similar one by Aylmer Maude, the uncle of George Shanks, the man who had only that month unleashed his full 90-page translation of *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* on the unsuspecting English public. Maude's own contribution was a little more razor-sharp, describing Gough's view on interference as an "efficacious plea to divert attention from the true issues". ⁷⁰

As it was, both parties, The Prince *and* the Baroness, were still on Hadlow Road in August 1921 when news of an imminent breakthrough in the

⁶⁹ *A Plea for Peace with the Bolsheviks*, *The Times*, Feb 23 1920, p.19

⁷⁰ *Letters, A White Russian, Aylmer Maude, White Russia*, *The Times*, March 4 1920, p.10

Nurse Shore Nightingale mystery was published in the local newspaper.⁷¹ A ‘certain’ Chief Detective Inspector who specialised in murder cases had made a statement to a Sunday journal that ‘developments of a sensational character’ would be announced shortly.⁷² The statement, curiously enough, would also coincide with news that Florence’s cousin Rafaele Farina was to leave his post at Mi5 in London to take up an appointment at the Mi6 desk in Riga. His move came just a few weeks after plans had been put in place to set-up a memorial in honour of his murdered cousin. The announcement about the memorial was made in a January edition of *The Gentlewoman* newspaper, founded by *Primrose League* chairman, Joseph Snell Wood.⁷³ It was printed below a full page advertorial paid-for by Lady Egerton’s *Russian Relief Fund* at Bedford Square, a charity set-up for the relief of all Russian subjects fleeing Bolshevik persecution in Europe and America. In the end, no further statement, sensational or otherwise, was ever made by Police, but it is interesting to note that it this was the same *Russian Relief Fund* that was being championed by new Tonbridge residents, Prince Sergei Belosselsky Belozersky and his wife.⁷⁴

There’s little doubt that the Russian Prince would have been under tight observation by Farina and his team. This was a high-value Russian asset, and friendly or not, his activities locally and abroad would have treated with the utmost gravity. According to letters and communications in the Churchill

⁷¹ *Princess Belozersky of Tonbridge*, Sevenoaks Chronicle and Kentish Advertiser, 28 July 1922, p.2

⁷² *Nurse Shore, Baroness Farina*, Tonbridge Sevenoaks Chronicle, August 1921, p.2

⁷³ *Plea for the Russian Refugees/It is Proposed ... Nurse Florence Nightingale Shore*, Gentlewoman 29 January 1921, p.152. Joseph Snell Wood died in December 19120 and was replaced by his son, H.C.P Wood as editor. The Russian Relief Fund, set-up in 1918 was affiliated to the Russian Red Cross Society.

⁷⁴ £3000 portrait, Kent & Sussex Courier 28 July 1922, p.2

Archives, Churchill had been in regular contact with Belozersky during the closing stages of the Russian Civil War, where Sergei served as adviser to General Yudenich, commander of the Northwestern White Army.⁷⁵ The story of the couple's arrival in Tonbridge and their work for the Russian Relief program was covered in the *Sevenoaks Chronicle* the following year.⁷⁶ Some ten years later, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich, the man who Sir Charles Marling and Britain had been grooming as the Tsar's replacement, would attend Susan's funeral at Tonbridge Parish Church.⁷⁷ Just twenty years previously, the *Canton Daily News* had run a story on Dmitri's 'infatuation' with Susan. The Tsar is alleged to have punished Dmitri by sending him on a six-month 'sabbatical' in Egypt.

In December 1929, another funeral took place, this time for the 28 year-old wife of Oliver Locker-Lampson, the former British military commander who had served as the Ministry of Information's representative in Russia. It was Locker-Lampson who had devised the plot to arm the Armenians against the marauding Bolshevik advance. And it had been the hesitation of Nurse Shore's brother Offley that is alleged to have prevented the plot's success. Oliver, who had at one time had lived at Robertson Terrace in Hastings, was an old intelligence colleague of Reginald 'Rex' Leeper — Farina's first boss in Riga. Leeper's department had acted as liaison between the British Foreign Office and the Secret Intelligence Service in Russia during and shortly after the 1917 Revolution. It was Leeper's arrival in Riga in

⁷⁵ Churchill Papers, Official: War and Air: memoranda, notes, and other correspondence on Russia, CHAR 16/24, 16/10, 16/11, 16/26, 16/45 (May 1919 - Dec 1919), Lieutenant-General Serge Belosselsky-Belozersky

⁷⁶ *Princess Belozersky of Tonbridge*, *Sevenoaks Chronicle* and *Kentish Advertiser*, 28 July 1922, p.2

⁷⁷ *Late Princess Belosselsky*, *Kent & Sussex Courier* 14 December 1934, p.15

September 1924 that had also set in motion the whole Zinoviev Letter debacle we touched on in an earlier chapter.

In the years that followed it was alleged that Oliver's Armoured Car Division had been complicit in a Guchkov-funded attempt to remove Prime Minister Kerensky from power by the leader's military commander, General Kornilov.⁷⁸ Kornilov denied the accusations. His attempt to wrest control was merely a desire to "strengthen the hands" of Kerensky's Provisional Government in carrying out its administration and to restore the rule of law over a quickly fragmenting military. It was not, he insisted, an attempt to restore the Romanovs but a way of preventing the return of Vladimir Lenin and a catastrophic maximalist power grab. Despite his protests, several Romanov heirs were arrested — among them British-favourite, Grand Duke Dmitri Pavlovich.

Oliver Locker-Lampson's experiences in the region in the immediate aftermath of the revolution made him a fierce anti-Bolshevik, and his mammoth twenty year stint as MP for Birmingham Handsworth is marked by a steady schedule of anti-Communist protests and praise for the fascist movements of Hitler and Mussolini. Consoling him at his wife's memorial that day was his old friend, Sergei Belosselsky Belozersky of 20 Hadlow Road. Oliver's wife had become a regular attendee of the Russian Church on Buckingham Palace Road, and an uplifting service in Russian and English had been organized by her husband. Captain Alexander Soldatenkov, former secretary of the Imperial Russian Embassy in London also attended.⁷⁹

⁷⁸ *Inside the Enigma: British Officials in Russia, 1900–39*, Michael Hughes, 1997, Bloomsbury Publishing, pp. 110-112

⁷⁹ Daily Mail, Dec. 31, 1929

A few years later, Locker-Lampson would give evidence before Justice Avory in a libel action case brought by Princess Princess Irina Alexandrovna against MGM Pictures, the movie company who had portrayed her — inaccurately, or so it was claimed — as one of Rasputin’s lovers. Commander Locker-Lampson stunned the court with not one but two claims: the first that he had been involved in a plot to save the Tsar and his family, and the second that he had been personally invited to murder Rasputin by the ultra-nationalist monarchist, Vladimir Purishkevich.⁸⁰

In a deeply ironic twist, Oliver’s cousin, Miles Lampson, former British Ambassador to Hong Kong and Egypt, would die at the very same East Sussex Hospital in Hastings as Florence Nightingale Shore.

⁸⁰ Dundee Evening Telegraph, 02 March 1934

Chapter 7

Russians in St Leonards

COUSIN RAFAELE GETS ON THE CASE



If the arrival of a semi-invisible cadre of Russian exiles in Tonbridge wasn't enough — especially given what we now know about Farina's position at Mi5 — then the fact that other émigrés had taken up positions in St Leonards on Sea, makes Florence's journey there in the first two weeks of January all the more unusual. More perplexing still, is that these same individuals had already appeared on Farina's radar at Mi5.

It transpires that in June 1920, shortly after the murder Florence en-route to St Leonards, Farina was making follow-up enquiries with Hastings Police about several mysterious Russians living at an address in St Leonards on Sea. After liaising with Hastings Police, Farina learned that one of the Russians residing at the address was a prominent White Russian called Count Paul Ignatieff, the last Tsarist Minister of Education and a close friend of the murdered Tsar Nicholas II.⁸¹ The Count had served as a member of the Provisional Government shortly after the Tsar's abdication on March 5th 1917. Ignatieff had warned about the dangers of dismissing the Russian First Duma of 1906. As an alternative he had recommended reviving an old form of parliamentary representation evolved from the local government schemes of the Zemstvos. The Tsar's replacement, Prime Minister Kerensky

⁸¹ KV 2-2407, Personal Files, Count Paul Nikolaievitch Ignatieff, Extract, June 17 1920 & Extract June 23 1920, Farina to Chief Constable of Hastings.

rewarded the Count's commitment to social and political reform by making him head of the Russian Red Cross, a role that would eventually bring him into contact with various Western figures looking to reconstruct and rehabilitate Russia in their own progressive image.

S.I. Form O.6. EXTRACT.

Relating to Ignatieff

Extracted from Sle P.F.S. 2670. GOUTCHEROV. No. (36).

Author of original M.I.5. Place and date of origin 17th June 1920

Extract made by L.F.M.E. on (date) June 29th 1920.

Copies sent to _____

Dear Mr James.

I should be much obliged if you could let me know what Russians are living at Woodmancote, Woodland Vale Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea. I do not wish them to know that they are the subject of an enquiry.

Yours sincerely,

(34) R.F.

S.I. Form O.6. EXTRACT.

Relating to IGNATIEFF. Count

Extracted from Sle P.F.S. 2670. GOUTCHEROV. A No. (36).

Author of original C.G. HASTINGS. Place and date of origin June 23rd 1920.

Extract made by L.F.M.E. on (date) June 29th 1920.

Copies sent to _____

SECRET.

Russians: "Woodmancote" Woodland Vale Road. St. Leonards-on-Sea.

Sir,

I beg to acknowledge the receipt of your letter (S.2670/M.I.5.2/3) of the 17th inst., and to inform you that as the result of discreet enquiries made it has been ascertained that the above mentioned address is a private nursing home, under the proprietorship of Miss Silverman. There is only one alien staying there:- viz- Count IGNATIEFF, Russian Subject, who has been there for about ten days, undergoing a rest cure. This alien has stayed at this address on several former occasions for short periods, and whilst here is attended by Mr Redmayne of Charles Road, St. Leonards-on-Sea. Count IGNATIEFF has purchased The Kilm Farm, Hollington. (East Sussex County District) from Colonel Tappin of Cravenhurst Park, St. Battle, but will not occupy the farm until September 1921. His wife, who resides in London, visits him occasionally at the home.

I am,

Sir,

Your obedient servant,

A. Palmer, Supl.
(For Chief Constable.)

The wife of Paul's cousin in Paris, Count Aleksei Ignatiev, had already made inroads here and was well liked in English circles. Like Florence, at the outset of the war the Countess had found herself assisting the French Red Cross, the family having already made the acquaintance of Dr Alexander MacDonald Westwater of Edinburgh Royal Infirmary whilst assisting the Red Cross in China. After the Bolshevik Revolution of October 1917, the Count had narrowly escaped execution and was forced to flee Russia with his family.

The address at the centre of Farina's enquiries was Woodmancote — a private nursing home on Woodlands Road in the Silverhill district of St Leonards, about a fifteen minute walk from Warrior Square Station where Florence was due to arrive.

According to the KV2 files at the National Archives, some of the correspondence intercepted by Mi5 suggests the Count was spending much of his time between France and Turkey, the country of his birth. This is interesting in light of Ernest C. Brown's claim that just twelve months after being quizzed about the murder of Florence Nightingale Shore, he was arrested on murder and espionage charges in Constantinople, the Turkish capital.

The Ignatieff family's association with Turkey was strong. Paul had been born to Count Nikolay Ignatieff, an aggressive, ultra-Conservative militarist who had previously served as Aide de Camp to the Romanovs and as Ambassador in Constantinople during the years 1864-1877.⁸² At the Constantinople Conference of 1876, some 45 years earlier, Lord Salisbury and the Count's father, General Nikolay Ignatieff had walked arm-in-arm down the tortuous Rue da Pera in the European Quarter of Constantinople discussing the international issues of the day. Curiously, Ernest C. Brown found himself walking down these same streets in 1921 when he joined the *Inter-Allied Commission* as staff photographer.

In 1919 Count Paul made an application to the former Vice Consul of Russia in London, Ernest Gambs to relocate from Paris to England. The Count was making tentative enquiries into buying the nearby Tilekiln dairy. In the KV2 files there is a letter dated September 1919 in which Rafaele Farina apologies for not being able to help the Count secure additional British visas

⁸² Count Nikolay Ignatieff had also served as Russian's military attaché in London, during which he was able to provide a far-reaching report on Britain's military capabilities in India (and stole a new cartridge that had been in development at the ordnance works of the British Army). A report in the New York Times in 1905 reported rumours, circulating in St. Petersburg, that Nikolay had been arrested on suspicion of launching a rebellion against the Tsar.

for his friend and brother-in-law, Prince Boris Vassilitchikoff and his family in Paris. However, by July 1919 Farina can be seen informing the Ignatieffs of the Home Office decision to issue visas to all his immediate family members, including his five children and brother, Nicholas. His cousin Alexis was not so lucky. A rather terse note dated July 15 1919 states simply that Colonel Count Paul Alexis Ignatieff was ‘probably’ the subject of a Mi5 Blacklist, No.12489.

On the face of things, it looked like something out of John Buchan’s *The Thirty Nine Steps*: decorated World War I heroine and sister of Brigadier General is murdered on her way to a quiet seaside resort currently under the scrutiny of her Mi5 cousin for harbouring high-value Russian assets and possible enemies of the state. All it needed was a German u-boat turning up at Glyne Gap Beach and Agatha Christie’s ‘Colonel Race’ bounding across the sand flats of St Leonards waving a railway timetable.

To add a further layer of intrigue, it was Baroness Farina — Rafaele’s mother — who was one of the first to visit Florence in hospital. The Baroness had arrived within hours of Mabel and seized immediate control of the narrative as the press mob descended on Hastings. The press conference began with a series of candid interviews. “I cannot think of any motive for the attack other than robbery” she speculated, before bearing tribute to Florence’s “self-sacrificing life”, her life-threatening injuries and the disappearance of several items of expensive jewellery.⁸³ Her account differed from the statements made by the first witnesses in several respects. Interviewed by the *London Observer* on Friday 15th January the Baroness the cases she had been travelling with had been broken open and all the valuables stolen. However,

⁸³ *Niece of Baroness*, Daily Mirror 15 January 1920, p.3, *Baroness Tells Story of Miss Shore’s Life*, Leeds Mercury 15 January 1920, p.9

the earliest newspaper reports describe how the cases ‘were apparently as originally placed’ and her hat was still placed on top of one of the portmanteau boxes.⁸⁴ This was supported by the platelayers who were the first to discovered the body when they entered the carriage at Polegate. The workers said there were no signs of resistance and the only indication of a struggle were a pair of broken glasses that lay on the floor of the compartment. The fact the newspapers also reported the presence of ‘the man in the brown suit’ suggests that the press had received this information from Police, as the only eyewitness to any of this was Mabel, now glued to Florence’s bedside in hospital. The men also reported the ‘open book’ that still lay in Florence’s lap, contradicting any suggestion of a violent struggle. There was blood evidence on the seat where she sat but nowhere else in the carriage. In fact “everything about the carriage seemed to be in perfect order”⁸⁵ The Baroness also claimed to have warned her niece against sitting alone in an empty carriage: “Miss Shore visited me on three or four occasions; and the last time, strange to say, I cautioned her about travelling alone ... how I do wish she had taken my advice.” In Christie’s novels it isn’t uncommon to find the lead suspect trying to direct the course of an enquiry by leaving trails of dubious intent. There had been a long-standing tradition in detective novels to have the narrator portrayed as the most trustworthy character; the detective’s right-hand man. Christie’s 1926 novel, *The Murder of Roger Ackroyd* totally bucked that trend when the author’s fictional Belgian detective, Hercule Poirot revealed that the

⁸⁴ *The Nightingale Shore Murder, Death of a World War One Heroine*, Troubadour Publishing, Rosemary Cook, p.172

⁸⁵ *London Train Mystery*, Globe 13 January 1920, p.9., *Nurse Discovered with Scalp Wound*, Manchester Evening News 13 January 1920, p.5., *Train Mystery*, Westminster Gazette 14 January 1920, p.2. The workmen were quick to acknowledge that the body (and the book) could have been repositioned by the assailant after the assault.

murderer was none other than his most trusted assistant, Dr James Sheppard — the man giving all of the nudges and the one leaving all of the clues.

It's an extraordinary proposition; Florence Nightingale Shore, the first-cousin of Mi5's Head of Russian Section was brutally murdered on her way to a prosperous British seaside resort that may have been harbouring enemies of the state. But what had led Mi5 to this discovery?

The file relating to Count Paul Ignatieff — and extracted by Rafaele Farina on June 29th 1920 for his enquiry into Woodmancote nursing home in St Leonards on Sea — had been pulled from a Personal File on someone by the name of 'Goutchkov' (File PF/R2670). This basically means that the Woodmancote nursing home address is likely to have been found in communications between 'Goutchkov' and a person of interest. The 'Goutchkov' the extract refers to is General Alexander I. Guchkov (often spelled Guchkoff). This was the same Alexander I. Guchkov who is alleged to have financed the coup d'état against Kerensky and the assassination of the Soviet Ambassador, Vatslav Vorovsky. A former banker and mercenary who had fought on a voluntary basis for General Smuts against the English in the Second Boer War, Guchkov would become Minister of War for Kerensky's short-lived Provisional Government after the February Revolution in Russia. For a time, he also headed Russia's Red Cross in Germany. His natural distrust of liberal reform under Russia's 'Kadets' dated back to the Revolution of 1905, and it was with a great deal of caution that he went along with the plans of Kerensky, naturally preferring a constitutional monarchy (featuring another Romanov, not Nicholas) and slow, gradual reform. As much as he saw the need for change, he saw no reason for those changes to be radical. His

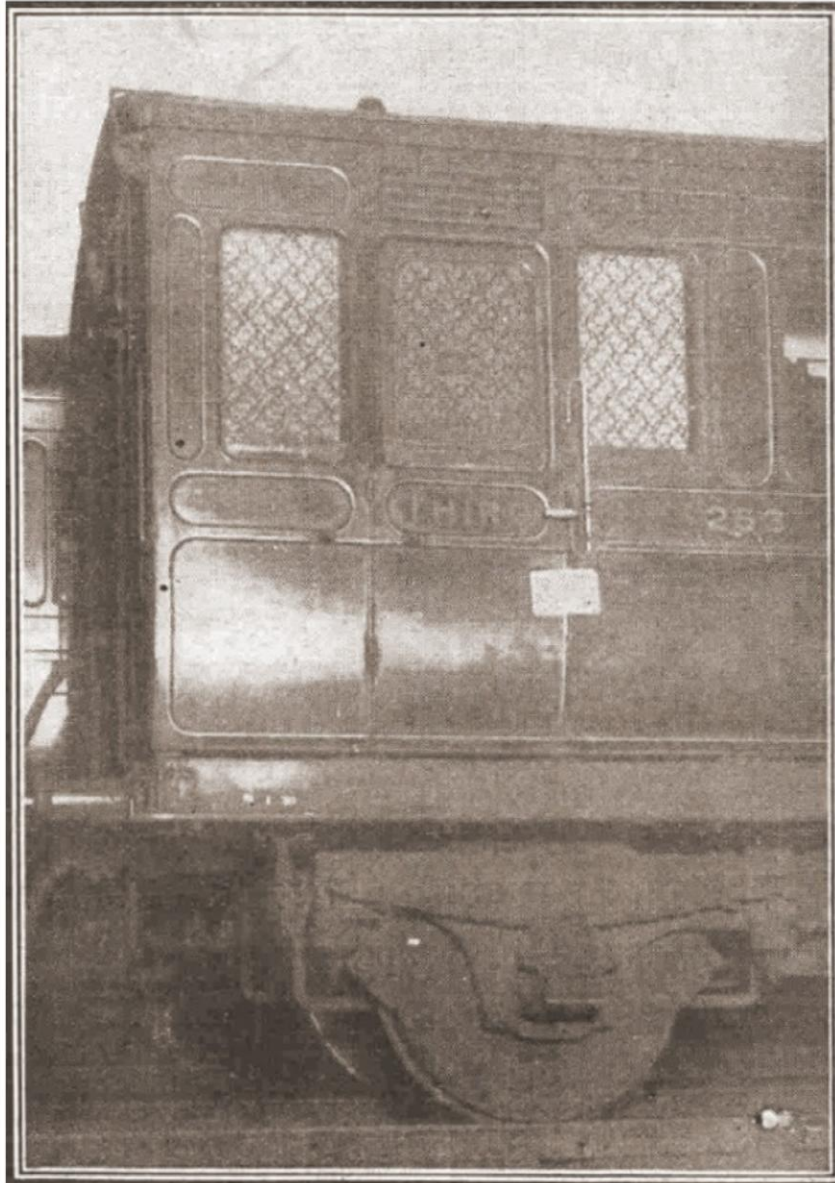
acceptance of the role under Kerensky was simply a reflection of his desire to stabilise Russia's war efforts.⁸⁶

After the triumph of Lenin and the Bolsheviks in Russia's second October Revolution, Guchkov, like Count Ignatieff, found himself living in exile, settling first in France and then Berlin. Despite this he remained active militarily and politically. From his bases in France and Berlin, Guchkov became personally responsible for the funding of the counter-revolution launched by Generals Deniken, Yudenich and Kolchak. By rights, his influence should have ended there. But it didn't, far from it. Shortly after Kolchak's defeat and execution in January 1920, Guchkov would become the chief protagonist in a web of intricate conspiracies to retain the support of White Russia's British and American allies. He was also at the centre of plots to bring down Lenin and the Bolsheviks. However, the Guchkov Circle's links to General Bredow of the German Army, and to German Military Intelligence polarized him from the Ignatieffs whose refusal to release funds to Yudenich and Kolchak had contributed to their defeat.⁸⁷ Word on the ground in Britain and America was that the White Russian movement would trade with Germany once it had triumphed over the Reds. Naturally, Britain wanted to beat Germany and her allies to those trading opportunities.

If any single person was in a position of sending a message out to Britain over the capture of General Kolchak the week prior to the attack on Florence, it was Guchkov. His daughter Vera, who married Scottish linguist Robert Traill, would eventually become a member of the KGB. In 1975 Vera was alleged to have told the US State Department's, William Gleason

⁸⁶ *Alexander Guchkov and the End of the Russian Empire*, William E. Gleason, American Philosophical Society, 1983

⁸⁷ *Sovietism is Anchored Russian Soul*, Indiana Evening Gazette, 23 April 1921



The sealed train carriage in which Nurse Shore was attacked

that her father had financed the assassination of Soviet Commissar Vorovsky in Geneva in 1922.⁸⁸ Supported by ‘Ace of Spies’ Sidney Reilly, Guchkov is also believed to have funded other anti-Soviet plots. These may well have included the Zinoviev Letter in which Florence’s cousin, Rafaele Farina featured, the fake ‘Harington plot’ in Constantinople and the murder of Florence Nightingale Shore. Guchkov had the means, he had the motive and the funds necessary to carry it out.

Why would Guchkov do this? Maybe in an attempt to frame left-wing anarchists and subversives (like the Bolsheviks or Kerensky) and gain the sympathy and support of British Intelligence services. Or maybe it was an act of revenge for the failures of Offley Shore (the brother of Florence) to assist the Armenian cause and the subsequent capture and execution of his good friend General Kolchak. One look at other press headlines at the time of the attack on Shore bears testimony to the analogous nature of developments in Russia. Alongside the headline, ‘Who Attacked Nurse Shore’ on page seven of *The Daily Mail* on Thursday January 15th, was the sensational and almost deafening: ‘*Plans To Overthrow Civilisation: Peril of Bolshevik Advances*’. The outlook was just as ominous elsewhere. On the left of ‘Attacked on a Train’ report in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* the very same day, was the story of Kolchak’s disappearance and the collapse of White Russian forces. The *Daily Mirror* was just as sensational. Beneath the bold letter headline: ‘*Train Crime Mystery: Quest for Young Man in Brown Suit*’ they ran a dramatic warning of a ‘Red Peril’ that was rapidly sweeping east. Kolchak had been captured and a dangerous military situation was gathering pace.⁸⁹ Worse still,

⁸⁸ *Alexander Guchkov and the End of the Russian Empire*, William Ewing Gleason, American Philosophical Society, 1983, p.78

⁸⁹ *Red Peril Sweeping Eastwards: Koltchak Captured?*, *Daily Mirror* 16 January 1920, p.3

news was now arriving that Lloyd George's coalition government was considering lifting the blockades on Russia and opening trade negotiations with Lenin. This plan of 'reconciliation with the Soviets' would have dealt a considerable blow to Guchkov and his British allies. The framework that allowed these discussions to take place had come into effect just 48 hours prior to the attack on Nurse Nightingale Shore. The ratification of the *Treaty of Versailles* took place on January 10 1920 (Florence's birthday), and on January 16 1920, the *Allied Supreme Council* had met in Paris to announce the resumption of trade with Russia that would allow the exchange of goods. As far as Churchill and the pro-Interventionist lobby in Britain were concerned, White Russia had been betrayed; the millions of Russians lives lost fighting on behalf of the allies had meant nothing to the British. The Whites had triumphed over Germany only to lose their place in the world. It was a truly shoddy state of affairs.

Count Paul Ignatieff featured in several other Guchkov intercepts over the years. In 1934 Mi5 intercepted a letter between Guchkov and Anatole Vasilievitch Baikaloff — a former member of the Revolutionary Socialist Party who Mi5 would later come to regard as possible Nazi-sympathizer. A report compiled at this time describes how Guchkov was advising Baikaloff — an associate of former Prime Minister Kerensky — that his friend Dr. Ewald Armende, should get in touch with Ignatieff in Canada.⁹⁰ Remarkably though, whilst Guchkov features prominently in Baikaloff's Mi5 security file, Guchkov's own security file — PF/R2670 — has never been made publically

⁹⁰ The British National Archives, KV 2/2407, Count Paul Nikolaievitch Ignatieff

available. We know it existed but it seems not to have been declassified. It may well be that it's been destroyed.⁹¹

The Zinoviev Letter, in which Farina had played a central role, was similarly inspired by White Russian and Conservative plans to scupper trade negotiations with Soviet Russia. Besides Farina, it later transpired that the key players in the drama included Conrad Donald Im Thurn — a former associate of Farina's at Mi5 — Jim Finney (aka W.B Findley), another employee of Sir George Makgill and several White Russian extremists linked to the deeply mysterious, 'Bratstvo Russkoi Pravdy', a dedicated brotherhood of émigrés launching a counter-revolution from Berlin. Those investigated and charged over the forgery included former Russian Ambassador to Paris, Vladamir Pavolich Orlov, Alexander Gumansky, Boris Kadomtsev and Alexis Bellegarde.⁹²

When the historians Oleg N. Carev, Nigel West and Oleg Tsaryov trawled through the KGB Archives they stumbled upon a file that implicated Guchkov in the scheme. In a report dated November 11th 1924, the KGB's Berlin Rezydentura (Foreign Embassy) sent a report to Artour Artouzov and Genrikh Yagoda of Russia's Secret Police which asserted that the letter had been "fabricated in Riga by Lieutenant (Ivan) Pokrovsky — who worked with Biskupsy, connected to Guchkov".⁹³ The findings of Russia's Secret Police would eventually chime with those of Germany and Britain; the letter had

⁹¹ see: The National Archives, The Security Service: Personal (PF Series) Files, KV2: <https://discovery.nationalarchives.gov.uk/details/r/C14997>

⁹² Red Letter Sensation: Forged in Riga, Daily Herald 25 March 1929

⁹³ *The Crown Jewels: The British Secrets at the Heart of the KGB Archive*, Nigel West, Oleg Tsaryov, Yale University Press, 1999, p.40

been fabricated in Riga by the White Guards Intelligence Organization featuring Pokrovsky, Orlov and Gumansky.

As far as murder motives go, there is however, a third option, a good deal more complex, and every bit as cunning.

Chapter 8

A Russian Prime Minister in Kent

SECRET CIPHERS AT RUST HALL



At the time that he was looking into the activities of Count Paul Ignatieff at the nursing home at St Leonards on Sea, Nurse Nightingale Shore's cousin at Mi5, Rafaele Farina, was making simultaneous enquiries about another Russian official, Alexander Kerensky in the Tonbridge area — the temporary home of Farina's mother, the Baroness.

Florence at this time had just been demobilised, moving from the nurses' hostel in Boulogne in October 1919, to the *Hammersmith and Fulham Nursing Association* based at Carnforth Lodge sometime in November 1919. It's highly unlikely Florence knew anything of her cousin's Mi5 enquiries, much less the activities of mysterious émigrés like Kerensky, who just two years previously had been the most powerful man in Russia. Nevertheless, the once most powerful man in Russia could now be found crashing over at a friends' house, just a few miles from Shore's aunt. The threats and the dangers that Florence thought she had left abroad were emerging now as shadows much closer to home.

The Files KV 2/658 and 2/659 at the National Archives in London feature a letter written by Farina to Chief Constable Charles Prior asking for confirmation of Kerensky taking up residence at Rust Hall off Langton Road — the home of Near East expert and author, Simon Henry Leeder. Travelling from Constantinople sometime in the winter of 1919, Kerensky's first known

address in England had been Connaught House, 9 Montague Street, opposite the *British Museum* in Russell Square (KV2/659). After liaising with the Divisional Superintendent in Tonbridge, Chief Prior confirmed that Kerensky was still in residence at Rust Hall but was shuttling regularly between Tonbridge and London.

In many ways, Tonbridge was an unusual place to stay. Author Stephen Gary once described it as a small town set in quiet fields of “mustard and apples, hops and wheat” ensconced by instantly recognizable oast houses. The grinding motor of political machinations that could be heard whirring out from the city was absorbed by its teeming avenues of neatly kept shrubs and hedgerows. This was no place to court excitement. But for Kerensky, still in-hiding, it was out of harm’s way and would have suited his typically agrarian Socialist sensibilities.

Kerensky, who had served as Prime Minister in Russia’s provisional government for little more than five months, was there with his close-friend and interpreter, Dr. Jakob Osip Gavronsky, who had represented the Kerensky government in London. The doctor’s Regent’s Park address — 7 Cambridge Terrace — would also provide Kerensky with a more convenient central London base. But who was Kerensky?

Like Guchkov, Kerensky had played a critical role in the formation of a government in the aftermath of Russia’s February Revolution before being forcefully supplanted by Lenin and the Bolsheviks in October 1917. Both men had been members of Russia’s State Duma. One was a wealthy industrialist with a progressive yet monarchist mindset and the other a revolutionary socialist unable to maintain his premiership in the face of mounting pressure to

end the war with Germany. Whilst Kerensky was narrowly able to stave-off a coup d'état by his frustrated military commander, General Kornilov, he was no



Nurse Florence Nightingale Shore

match for the Marxist hardliner Lenin, whose promise to end the war with Germany would win him the armed support of the people. Kerensky fled first to Scotland, then to London and by January 9th 1920 was alleged to have been telling *Central News* in America that the British should 'abandon Kolchak and Deniken and raise the blockade'.⁹⁴ In his view the ongoing meddling and

⁹⁴ Birmingham Daily Gazette 10 January 1920, p.1

sanctions meted out by the West was antagonising the Russian people; Allied Intervention wasn't defeating Bolshevism, it was strengthening it. The British War Office had one agenda, the British Foreign Office had another.⁹⁵

The reactions of Guchkov and Kerensky to Western intervention in the Russian Civil War after the Armistice of November 1918 couldn't have been more different; Guchkov was all for it and Kerensky and his former Ambassador Dr. Govransky were vehemently against it. In an address to the House of Commons on June 30th 1919 Dr. Govransky described how Kolchak had 'usurped' the authority of Nikolai Avksentiev and the *All-Russian Government* who had united against the Bolsheviks.

Kerensky had his doubts about the British, but the British had even graver doubts about Kerensky. A letter from Rafaele Farina to Commander Ernest Boyce dated just two weeks after his cousin's murder on the London to Hastings 'Express' was querying a possible hook-up between Kerensky and Ignatieff in St Leonards. In a letter addressed to Kerensky in Paris written on the January 25 1920, the Paris-based Vladimir Zenzinov writes, "*I have not yet thought out how to approach Ignatieff re: the necessary telegram to you (?)*".⁹⁶

According to an entry in Kerensky's Mi5 case file dated November 1919, the opinion of Farina had already been expressed in no uncertain terms: "*Has been recently in Berlin and is now reported to be in league with the Germans to the detriment of allied interests and to influence Russian public opinion against Admiral Kolchak's government.*" Within hours, a letter was dispatched to the Postmaster General from the British Home Office

⁹⁵ *Interview with Kerensky*, The Guardian, 30 Jan 1920, p.9

⁹⁶ The British National Archives, KV 2/659, Count Paul Nikolaievitch Ignatieff

demanding the interception and inspection of ‘all postal packets and telegrams’ addressed to Kerensky in London and Tunbridge Wells.⁹⁷ Whilst many of their suspicions were likely to be unfounded, at least in part, hardcore anti-Socialists like Sir Walter Long, George Makgill and Wilfrid Ashley were given all the excuses they needed in pursuing a hard-line Tory agenda.

Whilst the International Press speculated about his whereabouts, Kerensky kept a low profile in England, quietly negotiating the release of his wife Olga and their two boys Oleg and Gleb. Unlike Kerensky, Olga and the children had failed to escape when the Bolsheviks took control of Moscow. Now they were being retained as leverage in negotiations with the West; guests of Lenin and the Cheka at the notorious Katorga labour camp. The head of Lenin’s new Secret Police, Felix Dzerzhinsky was unambiguous about the matter: ‘As long as they in our grasp,’ he wrote, ‘Kerensky cannot do much harm abroad’.

Sometime between September and October 1920 Mi5 intercepted a cipher table sent by the Soviet’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, Georgy Chicherin to the exiled Kerensky in London. The table was to be used by the Russians in decoding encrypted messages between the Soviet’ trade delegations in Europe and the Near East. It was a critical time politically and economically for all parties concerned, but publicly, at least, Kerensky and Chicherin sat on opposite sides of the fence. Despite being former allies, the Prime Minister had been Lenin’s fiercest critic outside the White Russians. However, a former member of the Tsar’s Secret Police, still in deep-cover in Moscow, was reporting that Kerensky was frequently alluded to at the Kremlin, and it was his belief that he was “now taking an active role in

⁹⁷ The British National Archives, KV 2/658, Alexander Feodorovitch Kerenski

helping the Bolsheviks carry out their sinister designs”.⁹⁸ In all fairness though, it seems entirely more likely that Kerensky was acting as mediator in Chicherin’s trade negotiations with the West, and that the release of his family and the British and French prisoners had become central to unlocking a successful outcome for all sides. Kerensky’s family were eventually released by Soviets in October 1920, arriving in Newcastle on false passports, their heads shaved and wearing wigs. News of their dramatic ‘escape’ came within days of Britain publishing a draft Trade Agreement with Lenin’s Soviet.⁹⁹ The release of 62 British prisoners followed, but with little or no fanfare in the press.

The home where Kerensky was in-hiding — Rust Hall — had been co-financed and extended as a V.A.D Hospital during the war by Rachel Beer (née Sassoon), daughter-in-law of German-born banker, Julius Beer. Rachel’s nephew, Captain Sassoon Joseph Sassoon (1885-1922) had found himself working alongside Nurse Shore’s cousin Rafaele Farina at Mi5’s G Branch.¹⁰⁰ As a recruitment choice it was either reckless or inspired; Sassoon’s maternal grandfather was Russian Philanthropist, Baron Horace Günzburg, former-treasurer to the Tsar and supporter of Kerensky’s Socialist Revolutionary Party.

Routinely described by the Press as the ‘Rothschild of Russia’, Günzburg had been in a circle of key British ally for years. In 1906, Günzburg in partnership with Arthur Balfour Haig, Basil de Timiriazeff (Russia’s Minister of Commerce) and Frederick William Baker (Chairman of the

⁹⁸ The British National Archives, KV 2/659, Alexander Feodorovitch Kerenski

⁹⁹ *Trade With Red Russia*, The Times, October 5th, 1920

¹⁰⁰ The British National Archives, KV1/52, Vol. IV, M.i.5 H Branch Report, Organisation and Administration

Venture Corporation) had founded *Russian Mining Corporation Ltd* at 3 Princes Street in Mayfair. Its objective? To acquire and turn to account “mines and mining properties, rights, concessions and privileges within the Russian Empire.”¹⁰¹

Sassoon’s proximity to the Kerensky Government became even greater still when his uncle, the Baron Alexander Günzburg (brother of his mother, Louise), was made President of the Commission that had been duly dispatched to Europe and America by Kerensky in July and August 1917. By contrast, another member of the family, Sir Philip Sassoon had, by February 1920 become Private Secretary to the British Prime Minister, David Lloyd George — still regarded as little more than traitor by Europe and America’s Diaspora of White Russians and their madding Tory conspirators. More bizarrely still, one of the friends that Nurse Shore was intending to visit in St Leonards on the day she was murdered was Miss Clara Kelbe, sister of George Gustave Kelbe, a senior figure at the Imperial Bank of Persia on whose board Sir Phillip Sassoon sat. In fact, it was the grandfather of Philip and Sassoon Joseph — the Persian Banking Grandee, David Sassoon — who had provided much of the collateral to set-up the Imperial Bank of Persia in the first place. He had also contributed significant amounts to founding Schröder & Co, where Kelbe’s father had been senior partner.¹⁰²

Where Schröder & Co was concerned, the rumour mill was already grinding, the company having already come onto the radar of Section D founder, Sir George Makgill. His own view was that Schröder bank barons John Henry William von Schröder and Bruno von Schröder had been part of

¹⁰¹ Westminster Gazette 01 December 1906 p.19

¹⁰² *The Gang Around George*, Communist, 11 November 1920, p.5

an elaborate German plot to undermine Britain's military capabilities since the early 1900s. In his 1916 article for the British Empire Union, *Britain in the Web of the Pro-German Spider*, later published in the *Daily Express*, Makgill's grievances are loud and clear: "*Was ever a great empire so humiliated by its rulers? A Hungarian loan was floated by Baron von Schroder, who at the same time assured the Kaiser of his abiding devotion, and who a few months later, after war broke out, was naturalised by our British Cabinet.*" ¹⁰³

Did Kerensky's stay at Rust Hall have the backing and support of senior government and industry figures? Were David Lloyd George and the Foreign Office involved in complex multi-national deals flying quietly beneath the radar of Mi5? It's possible. Lloyd's once mighty coalition government was falling apart at the seams, with the once steady ballast provided by Churchill threatening to sink the ship completely as his weight lurched instinctively to the right. His view of Soviet expansionism, aggravated by his long-standing contempt for Socialism ("the philosophy of failure, the creed of ignorance, and the gospel of envy", as he was wont to repeat) very nearly resulted in his resignation, first in February 1920 and again in November when the draft of the Anglo-Russian Treaty was drawn-up by Parliament. Egged on by General Gough, a failing economy and an increasingly unstable Europe, Lloyd George had been left with no option but to start talking trade with the devil, and nobody, certainly not Vernon Kell at Mi5 or Mansfield Cumming at Mi6, saw any long-term benefits to this arrangement. Lloyd George fended off the rebellion by saying that he had no intention of formally recognising Lenin's government. The Liberal PM's only desire was to end the famine that was currently crippling Central Europe and turning thousands of desperate

¹⁰³ *Britain in the Web of the Pro-German Spider*, Daily Express, 9 November 1915.

Russians into blood-thirsty subversives and bringing it to the brink of Revolution — and nowhere more so than in Britain.¹⁰⁴ The food shortages that had started the Revolutions in Russia were spreading west. It seemed inevitable that it would bring with them the same thrashing waves of unrest.

If Kerensky and his people were working quietly with Lloyd George from the relative obscurity of Rust Hall on the finer points of a trade deal, we might never know. Captain Sassoon's Mi5 service was cut tragically short, when at the age of just 36, Sassoon died at his home in Paddington. The date was February 7th 1922. It came just one day after Russia's new intelligence agency, the GPU was formed. Meanwhile, the numbers making up the Tonbridge Circle just kept on swelling.

When Florence arrived at her aunt's house in Tonbridge on the Sunday, news was breaking out in Berlin that the Tsar's brother, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich who had been tipped to replace him after the February Revolution in Russia, had escaped from a Bolshevik prison in Perm and had arrived safe and sound in Irkutsk.¹⁰⁵ By September he had moved to Siam. None of it was true, of course. The Grand Duke had never made it out of Perm, having already been ritually executed by a gang of renegade Bolsheviks. They had who had arrived at his hotel with fabricated warrants to have him question, ferried him to another location and then shot him at point blank range in the head with home-made bullets. Subsequent attempts at cover-up were duly hatched by Bolshevik leaders, who saw no wisdom in further alienating the western allies before they'd even had a chance to talk trade,

¹⁰⁴ *Churchill Adventurous Policy Cast Overboard, Premier Wants Peace with Russia*, Daily News (London) 11 February 1920, Birmingham Daily Gazette 11 February 1920, p.4/Thomas Jones, *Whitehall Diaries*, Volume I, 1969, p.94

¹⁰⁵ *The Bystander*, Tuesday 14 January 1920, p.6

quite clearly seeing them as potent bargaining chips in future negotiations. Reports of the Duke's safety had suited everyone, even the Whites. As long as there was a Romanov alive, so too were their hopes of restoring the monarchy and their 'rightful' place in Russia. A Home Office review of monthly developments that month had attributed the collapse of Kolchak's forces to both his weaknesses as a leader and the "extreme reactionary tendencies of his supporters", who for the part consisted of "old regime officials, speculators, war profiteers and adventurers" whose only real objectives were "self-advancement and the re-establishment of a monarchist regime".¹⁰⁶ News of the Grand Duke's escape would have energized a movement now suffering its greatest blow to date: Kolchak had been captured and was almost certainly facing execution. Like Anastasia in the years that followed, the Grand Duke Michael Alexandrovich was, at a symbolic level at least, being kept artificially alive. A correspondent had described the grave situation as "the phantom Army of a phantom government fleeing the phantom of another army."¹⁰⁷ The news of the Grand Duke's miraculous recovery couldn't have come at a better time. If they could, they would have propped him up in his doubled breasted tunic and his Kiver Skako head-gear, and have him charge through the Urals on horseback, head flopping lifelessly to one side as he rode through the valley of death with all the flamboyant menace of the headless horseman. The truth was no good to anyone. The story itself would keep them alive.

In the first week of January, 50 year old Tonbridge resident, Colonel Frank Harris had overseen the organisation of the annual *Rat Week*. Poisons had been provided to deal the escalating rat menace. Every house owner in the

¹⁰⁶ *A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in Foreign Countries*, Report No. 15, CAB 24/96/73, p.31

¹⁰⁷ *A Monthly Review of Revolutionary Movements in Foreign Countries*, Report No. 15, CAB 24/96/73, p.32

district was furnished with the necessary traps and “other destructive agents” and asked to make every special effort to drive them from the district.¹⁰⁸ For Farina and Mi5, the methods may have been different but the principle was much the same.

¹⁰⁸ *Rat Week in Tonbridge*, Kent & Sussex Courier 09 January 1920, p.2

Chapter 9

Oil Matters

COMMISSARS AND CONCESSIONS



Shortly after the death of Captain Sassoon in February 1922, Farina and Mi5 discovered that Russian agrarian economist and alleged rightist, Aleksandr Chayanov was communicating to Berlin from a nearby address in Tonbridge, his utopian ideals of the countryside being gently yet adeptly sculpted by Britain's regular volley of rain showers and the vital organs of its streams and rivers pushing through its peasant soils.¹⁰⁹ Chayanov had arrived in England with Alexander Mikhailovitch Ignatieff, Chief of the Trade Department, to negotiate the terms of the so-called 'Urquhart Concession' — a lucrative Anglo-Soviet deal that would help re-establish the vital mining concessions promised to Britain (and America) by the short-lived Kolchak government in Omsk. A terse and stubbornly unequivocal entry about Krassin's mission made by an Intelligence asset in Russia reads simply: *"It would be a mistake to allow Krassin's mission to go to England ... [they] talk reasonably about the developing of Russian resources and giving large concessions to British capitalists. They're sweet reasonableness and their enthusiasm for their own special branch of technical work will convey quite the wrong impression to English capitalists."*¹¹⁰ Among those 'English Capitalists' hoping to regain at

¹⁰⁹ *Aleksandr Chayanov and Russian Berlin*, Frank Cass, ed. Frank Bourgholtzer, 1999, Letter 7, to Yashchenko Alexander Semenovich, p.65. His other address was in the neighbouring village of Hildenborough (in the Parish of Tonbridge) where he stayed in the council's new Labourer's Cottages (affordable housing).

¹¹⁰ British National Archives, KV 2/573, Krassin's Mission, 31 May 1920

least some of those lost concessions was our old friend Sir Walter Long who had originally invested £500,000 of debenture stock in *Anglo-Russian Trust Ltd.* In January 1920 as discussions turned to establishing trade with the Soviet, Long had increased that stock by an additional £3,000. The wisdom of his investment was duly raised in the House of Commons by Britain's very own home-grown Bolshevik, Cecil L'Estrange Malone: "*The First Lord of the Admiralty is also the trustee for the British Admiralty, the trustee for the British Imperial Navy, and he is also trustee for imposing the blockade on Russia. Is it right that that gentleman should hold this dual position?*" ¹¹¹

The irony in all this ran deep; it was Sir Walter Long, as First Lord of the Admiralty, who had imposed the very blockades on Russian ports that Kerensky was demanding to be raised. The squeeze he was placing on Russia was linked — and none too discreetly — to Long's own private fortune.

And there was another thing. A little earlier in May 1918, Long had set up and chaired the *Inter-Allied Petroleum Executive* with the US, Britain, France, and Italy all enrolling as members. Sir Henri Deterding of Royal Dutch Shell ran the whole thing, but it was difficult not to notice that it was a Signor Farina who assisted the company's Professor Bernardo Attolico and Signor Galli at the Italian Mission in London. ¹¹² Was this Signor Rafaele Farina? The former mining and minerals specialist — and cousin of Nurse Shore — subsequently recruited to Mi5? The director of Mi6, Mansfield Cumming had written in his diary as early as December 14th 1914 that Russia would be the most important country to Britain in the post-war future and that to influence plans and develop trading opportunities they "should sow seed &

¹¹¹ Malone, August 10 1920, House of Commons Hansard

¹¹² *Final Report of the United States Fuel Administrator, 1917-1919*, H.A. Garfield, George Edwin Howes, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1921, p.103

strike roots now”.¹¹³ The man that Cumming had placed as the head of their Intelligence Operations in St Petersburg was Samuel Hoare, Conservative MP and long time associate of Sir Walter — Long and Hoare’s father having both served on the board of the *Equitable Life Assurance Society*. Strangely, the Society’s American counterpart, the *Equitable Life Assurance Society* of the United States, had just won significant concessions to conduct business in Imperial Russia. As a result, Cumming’s man in New York, Sidney Reilly (Ace of Spies) hunkered down at the company HQ at 120 Broadway, knitting together the various threads that tied the Russio-Asiatic Bank to the recently restructured munitions wing of the *Russian Supply Committee*, both of which shared the premises. On closer inspection it seemed that Sir Walter Long was not the only man within the Admiralty and MOD who may have been profiting from his ‘dual position’ as chief of war and chief of industry.

Long’s Oil Executive was concluded in November 1918. It had been a resounding success. As its closing dinner Lord Curzon made his memorable boast: the ‘allies’ he told the diners, ‘had floated to victory on a wave of oil’.¹¹⁴ Chayanov on the otherhand had probably wished he’d stayed in Tonbridge as the future wouldn’t prove as kind. Despite his contribution to the Anglo-Soviet Trade Agreement he was arrested in 1930; part of an imaginary plot to overthrow of the Soviet Government. Seven years later he was arrested again. 24 hours after that he’d been tried and shot.¹¹⁵

The race to recover millions in oil revenues lost as a result of the Bolshevik takeover in October 1917 was revived again in 1926 when news of

¹¹³ *The Secret History of MI6*, Keith Jeffrey, p.101

¹¹⁴ *How Petroleum Helped to Win the War*, Kent Messenger & Gravesend Telegraph 07 December 1918, p.2

¹¹⁵ *Death Demanded for Five Prisoners*, Daily Herald 09 March 1931, p.8

an alleged Anglo-German plot broke in the press. The man at the centre of the scandal was none other than Oliver Locker-Lampson, the friend of Sergei Belosselsky Belozersky who lived on the same quiet residential street in Tonbridge as Nurse Nightingale Shore's aunt, the Baroness Farina. It was yet another attempt to free Russia. The 'program of liberation' this time around was said to have been devised by former German military strategist, Max Hoffmann and 'Oil Baron', Sir Henry Deterding of Royal Dutch Shell. Hoffmann, who had spent five years in Russia prior to the war, was certainly no friend of Kerensky, who had personally ordered the last Russian offensive against Germany in July 1917. The 'Kerensky Offensive' as it became known, proved to be counter-productive. Hoffman launched a successful counter-attack. The collapse of Russian resistance had weakened Kerensky's leadership and the Bolsheviks emerged as victors. Within weeks, Hoffman had cultivated ties with White Russian forces and cooperated on a Royalist restoration in Russia.

Details of the plot had been revealed during a court case in Berlin. Two Georgian patriots in league with a group of German fascists had been charged with forging Soviet money.¹¹⁶ During the course of the trial it was claimed that the British Foreign Office, and in particular Commander Oliver Locker-Lampson, had secretly conspired with Hoffman during the first half of 1926 to clear out the Bolsheviks from Tiflis (Georgia) and the Caucasus. The report submitted to the Court in Berlin described how England and Germany had joint economic interests in the liberation of the Caucasus, which would additionally block Soviet expansion into Turkey, Persia and India. Germany was to provide military and technical leadership. Britain, for its part, would assist by heaping diplomatic pressure on Poland and Romania to cooperate.

¹¹⁶ *New Anti-Soviet Charges: Forged Russian Notes*, Daily Herald, 02 February 1929, p.10

The liberation of the Caucasus would, it was hoped, lead to the exploitation of the region's mineral resources.

The claims being made in Germany were denied to various levels by all parties. Whilst Sir Henri Deterding accepted that Hoffman approached had him previously about such a scheme, he claimed that he had nothing at all to do with it. Interviewed by the *Daily Mail* shortly after the death of his wife, Oliver Locker Lampson said that although he was "always ready to take reasonable steps to help destroy Bolshevism in the world" he was 'in no way associated with General Hoffman and his memorandum'.¹¹⁷ Hoffmann had died shortly after the plot had been hatched. His widow remained somewhat vague about her husband's involvement, neither confirming nor denying any of it. If the allegations being made by Germans were true, it would prove to be just one in a succession of bold attempts that Lampson — the man of action — would stage over the years to 'Clear Out the Reds'.¹¹⁸

By June 1919, dire predictions were being made about Britain and America's fuel shortages. In a paper 'The Oil Resources of the British Empire' Professor John Cadman warned of the country's increasing dependency on America for fuel. At this time Britain was producing only about 2.5% of the world's oil. If Persia (present day Iran and Iraq) could be brought under British influence, as was discussed at the San Remo peace conference in April, that figure could have been increased to about 4.5%.¹¹⁹ British reliance on American crude couldn't be relied upon forever. In 1919, the U.S. Geological Survey had predicted that America's oil fields would have been

¹¹⁷ *Anti Soviet Plot*, Daily Mail, February 05 1930, p.13

¹¹⁸ *MP in Free Fight*, London Daily News, 02 March 1928, p.8

¹¹⁹ *Oil Shortage Peril*, The Times, June 5 1920, p.11

practically exhausted by the mid-1920s. Since Winston Churchill had shifted Britain's battleships to petroleum in 1912, the concern had moved from being a purely commercial and domestic concern to a defence concern. Under Alexander III & Nicholas II Baku in Southern Russia had overtaken the US as an oil power. By 1916 it had become known as Black City with 2,000 oil wells, and 200 refineries. However, just as we have seen in Libya since 2011, the Tsar's failure to establish stability in the Baku region had meant oil prices had been in a constant state of flux. Bolshevik activity during the 1905 Revolution and tensions between the Azeris and Armenian of the region had resulted in declining production and rollercoaster oil prices.¹²⁰ The editor of Petroleum World described it as 'the most awful blow that has fallen on the industry since oil has been pumped from the earth and expressed the fear that whole of the vast fields may be reduced to ashes'. 'Boss of the Black Sea', and future Soviet-leader Josef Stalin had played a fairly busy role in the banditry and terrorism that that plagued the Baku oilfields during this period. Simon Sebag Montefiore's 2008 biography, *Young Stalin* does an admirable job of showing how Stalin and the Bolsheviks were effectively holding the world to ransom. Rothchild's oil executive Dr Felix Somary was left with little option but to contribute funds to the Bolshevik cause to ensure the smooth production and distribution of supplies from Baku's refineries.¹²¹ We have seen much the same collaboration between billionaire oil barons and the Islamic rebel militias assaulting Libya's Oil Crescent today. Like Stalin, the Libyan rebel militias that have been carrying out assaults outside the control of the Government of National Accord had been operating a protection racket that was having

¹²⁰ *Baku Oil Field Annihilated*, The Telegraph September 9 1905, p.9, September 12 1920, p.10

¹²¹ *Boss of the Black Sea: Plutocrats, Protection Rackets and Piracy, Young Stalin*, Simon Sebag Montefiore, pp.201-209

profound economic impacts globally between the years 2016 to 2018. After installing himself as leader of the refinery storehouse workforce in Batumi, Stalin's regular schedule of strikes and arson attacks meant he held the balance of power at a very early stage. As Batumi was the 'gateway to Europe' as far as Russia's oil output was concerned, the Rothschilds would have very little option but to capitulate. Exactly the same threat was to resurface in April 1918 and by December that year Britain turned its military attention to Baku, whose escalating chaos threatened to carve new destructive routes into Persia. Prior to Lenin seizing power in 1917, about 20% of the world's oil came from the districts around Baku, at this time a part of the Russian Empire. After temporary British seizure in 1918, in which General William Thomson was installed as governor it was reclaimed by the Bolsheviks. The Americans had found this doubly frustrating. Shortly before the Bolshevik uprising had got underway in July 1917, reports had begun to emerge from Reuters that there was a "scheme to transfer" Russia's vast mineral resources to America. It coincided with news of a further \$100,000,000 loan to Russia from the United States Government. The Soviet power-grab in October 1917 saw the whole deal crumble and the debt cancelled. What made it worse is that the fortunes of Russia's oil wealth were shifting in Germany's favour. Within months of Russia and Germany signing the *Treaty of Brest-Litovsk*, some were beginning to feel that Germany would be prepared to accept any peace deal provided she was free to exploit Russia's "inexhaustible mineral resources".¹²² Journalist Dr. David Soskice claimed that Lenin had told the Soviet Executive Committee that Russia was pledged to pay a 6,000,000,000 rouble indemnity to Germany. To pay it, it would be necessary to hand over practically exclusive rights to exploit its minerals. An entry in the weekly Home office

¹²² *The Resurrection of Russia*, Edward Legge, The Graphic, August 31 1918, p.234

‘scare bulletin’, the Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, was beginning to express concerns that both the oil and coal crisis were issues likely to be seized upon by home grown militants.¹²³

By January and March 1920, prompt action was being requested of the Lloyd George Government to deal with steeply rising car taxes and a debilitating petrol crisis. A new Revolutionary cry was being feared: *Peace, Land, Bread ... and now Oil.*¹²⁴

¹²³ *Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom*, Report No. 37, January 15 1920, CAB 24/96/58

¹²⁴ *Motor-Taxes and Petrol Crisis*, *The Times*, March 31 1920, p.14

Chapter 10

Why Kill Florence Nightigale Shore?

CAUGHT IN THE QUICKSAND



In many ways it may seem as if too many shady characters had now taking up position on the *Cluedo* game board. ‘Hows’, ‘wherefores’ and ‘with whats’ could be found tumbling from every corridor and secret passage of the tale. Let’s be clear about one thing though; it wasn’t some small pewter icon that had finished-off the nurse; it was something much more deadly. Our strongest line of enquiry was probably Ernest C. Brown, “in and out of death’s shadow three times” if his story in the *Washington Daily Star* was anything to go by. But if the death of the nurse was in any way linked to her cousin’s work at Mi5 or her aunt’s activities in Tonbridge, then what might anybody have gained by committing such an act? Some explanations, though speculative, are not implausible. Killing Nurse Shore may well have been an attempt to manipulate her cousin Rafael Farina at either a practical or emotional level, jamming the young agent’s ability to process the intelligence that was arriving daily on his desk at 74 Queen’s Gate and compromising his judgement. The intelligence that led to Mi5’s discovery of Count Paul Ignatieff in St Leonards on Sea had also been routed through a personal file on Guchkov. Was this a deliberate attempt to put the Count in the frame for the murder? Or were agents loyal to Kerensky sowing seeds of distrust that might further undermine Britain’s confidence in White Russia? The execution of another Red Cross and Queens worker, Edith Cavell in October 1915 had served as a potent propaganda drive against Germany to boost recruitment. Cavell and British

Intelligence Officer, Dr Thomas Tollemache Jackson Bull had been accused of running a network of spies from a nurses' training school in Belgium. Bull escaped with a six-month stretch of hard labour. Edith was shot at dawn. John Buchan's War Propaganda Bureau at Wellington showed no shame in capitalising on the sheer scale of the horror expressed by the world's public to ramp-up efforts against the Germans. From 1915 to 1918 it was the story that just kept giving. If it had been possible to pin the murder of Nurse Nightingale Shore's on some fiendish Bolshevist plot against the establishment, a similar hue and cry might well have erupted against Lenin's Soviet, which was enjoying increasing recognition in Europe. Had that been the logic employed by some sinister maverick forces operating in the shadows of the White Russian circles in England? It was fanciful but not impossible given the considerable stakes at the time. A 'scare bulletin' from the British Home Office on February 9th 1920 would express concerns that a 'more moderate view of the Bolsheviks in Russia' was taking shape in Britain. Within "extremists circles" there was also a growing belief that a Soviet Britain was now within reach.¹²⁵ Extraordinary challenges demanded extraordinary solutions. Just as Florence lay gasping for breath in Hastings, 24-year old clerk George Shanks was putting the finishing touches to his translation to *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion*, a notorious work of fiction, first published in Russia in 1905, that had been cynically revived as 'fact' as part of pro-Interventionist efforts to undermine support for the 'Jewish' Bolsheviks, channelling Britain's vast reserves of ancient anti-Semitism into the path of a brand new threat. It was just a case of conflating the two in the imaginations of the public. Trying to convince the British Home Office of the dual threat was their new Director of Intelligence, Sir Basil Thomson, who buoyed up The

¹²⁵ Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. Report No. 37, February 5 1920, CAB 24/97/81

Times of London review of Shanks' *Jewish Peril* on May 8th with a warning that the "Jews of East End London" were fomenting rebellion over Britain's the brutal offensive being carried out by 'The Whites' in Poland.¹²⁶ Thomson had quietly assured the government that a more aggressive policy against the "Jewish alien" would be a popular signal among the electorate. In the heading, 'What the Working Man Thinks' in his bulletin of May 6th, Thomson cheerfully reported that an agent who had conversed with "workers selected at random" had all had a "hearty dislike for the alien" and would like to see "powder and shot used freely among the Labour leaders and the Jews". Another wished all Jews to be given "free passage to Palestine" where he had served.¹²⁷

The beast of anti-Semitism had been un-tethered almost within hours of Lenin and the Bolsheviks wresting power from Kerensky when the *National War Aims Committee* republished claims made in the *Daily Chronicle* in their *Reality: Searchlight on Germany* journal that practically all the Bolshevik leaders were Jewish — including Lenin.¹²⁸ It wasn't even a half truth, but the British public were prepared to swallow it. The anti-Jewish riots in South Wales in 1911 were still playing out vividly in the minds of Home and Foreign Office rightists. It was an energy that could be harnessed, and there was probably no one more aware of this than the Home Secretary during that period, Winston Churchill. Whether as the result of the natural vagaries of civil disorder or more cynical attempts to create a scapegoat, the tsunami of

¹²⁶ Hands Off Russia Movement, Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Report No. 57, June 3 1920, CAB 24/106/102, p.3

¹²⁷ Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom. No 53, May 6 1920, CAB 24/105/39

¹²⁸ *Reality: Searchlight on Germany*, Issue 97, November 17th 1917, p.4. The report was a reworking of an article published Harold William's *Daily Chronicle* on November 10th 1917 in which the real 'Jewish' names of several Bolshevik ministers were revealed

unrest among the country's coal and dock workers had found itself being re-routed toward Jewish homes and businesses in a week-long orgy of looting and violence.¹²⁹ The man behind the *National War Aims Committee* and its fortnightly organ, *Reality: Searchlight on Germany* was Churchill's cousin, Sir Freddie Guest — Chief Whip of the Liberal Democrats. Despite the efforts of prominent Jewish Britons like Lucien Woolf to argue down any link between Bolshevism and the Jewish religion, the tack was cynically pursued by senior members of the British government well into the early 1920s. By February 1921, Lord Curzon and Sir Ronald Graham, the British Minister at The Hague and a leading advocate at the Foreign Office of a British commitment to Zionism, were still discussing the influence of Jews in the Soviet administration in cables in February 1921.¹³⁰ Curiously, *The Bolshevik Peril*, a 'bombshell' play written by the similarly-named 'Ronald Grahame' and resoundingly endorsed and licensed by Liberal MP and Royal Chamberlain, Lord Sandhurst, made its debut at a theatre in Tredegar, ground zero of the 1911 riots, in March 1919.¹³¹

During the war George Shanks, the young translator of *The Protocols* had served as a Sub-Lieutenant in Britain's Royal Naval Air Service, attached on special service with the Imperial Russian Navy at RNAS Kingsnorth on the

¹²⁹ For more see: *The Tredegar Riots of 1911: Anti-Jewish Disturbances in South Wales*, Colin Holmes, *Welsh History Review*, vol. 1, 1982, pp. 214–25

¹³⁰ The British National Archives, LG/F/203/2/8, Ronald Graham, The Hague, to Earl Curzon of Kedleston No.102, February 12 1921. Sir Ronald worked closely Vladimir Jabotinsky's Zion Mule Corps when serving as Chief Staff Officer, G.O.C. Egypt. For more see: *The Question of Palestine, 1914-1918; British-Jewish-Arab relations*, Isaiah Friedman, pp.119-143. Graham was the British Ambassador in Italy during the rise of Italian Fascism under Mussolini in 1922.

¹³¹ *British Theatre and the Red Peril: the Portrayal of Communism, 1917-1945*, Steve Nicholson, p.x, pp.31-33, *The Bolshevik Peril, Wanted: Leading Man, Tredegar, South Wales*, The Stage 13 March 1919, p.22, *The Bolshevik Peril* by Ronald Grahame, The Stage 20 March 1919, p.21. Thousands of plays were licensed by the Lord Chamberlain's office every year.

Hoo Peninsula in Kent. Resigning his commission in April 1919 he appears to have next worked as a clerk in the Chief Whip's Office at No.12 Downing Street, before securing an appointment with the Prime Minister's Personal Secretary, Philip Sassoon, his Russian language skills quite probably being an asset in Lloyd George's upcoming trade negotiations with Krassin and the Soviet. His proximity to the *Committee on Russian Affairs* and the howling, belligerent Churchill — who had given the 'Jewish' Bolsheviks his own verbal thrashing in his much-loathed Zionism versus Bolshevism' article just weeks before — also make it possible for Shanks to have been put there as a plant — either as a desperate shot at sabotage or as a means of keeping tabs on the regular flow of messages that were now currently shuttling daily between Krassin's delegation and No.10 Downing Street. Nobody was thinking clearly, and all former political courtesies and good sense had been lost in the unforgiving fury of betrayal.¹³²

The next man to have his name associated with *The Protocols* was Victor E. Marsden, the former Russian correspondent for the *Morning Post* who had been savagely imprisoned in the notorious Peter Paul Fortress in the immediate aftermath of the Bolshevik assault on the British Embassy in Petrograd in August 1918. The assault on the Embassy had culminated in the callous murder of Britain's naval attaché, Captain Cromie, chief of British Intelligence in Russia for the British Naval Intelligence Division. According to reports, the Russia's Secret Police (the Cheka) had stormed the British Embassy, murdered and mutilated Cromie, then rounded-up and arrested dozens of British Subjects who were occupying the Military Mission at the

¹³² The claim that Shanks worked at Chief Whip's Office under Churchill's cousin Freddie Guest was made in the *Plain English* journal dated Jan 22 1921 (no.29, vol. II). For more see: https://www.monocledmutineer.co.uk/pdfs/George_Shanks_the_Protocols_of_the_Elders_of_Zion_Jewish_Peril.pdf

time, Victor E. Marsden among them. The gory details surrounding Cromie's death were dutifully rolled out every time the Lloyd George government made any positive noises in support of trade with Russia. Marsden was to die suddenly in October 1920, the ill-treatment he'd suffered at the hands of the Bolsheviks having had a continued impact on his health. Any input he may have had into third edition of *The Protocols* was likely to have been strictly honorary, but his inclusion on the book's title pages packed no less weighty a message.

The strong, handsome features of British judgement were to be further disfigured with the discovery that the Bolsheviks now had men in Britain who had been coerced into distributing anti-British propaganda, some of them former British soldiers who were alleged to have been 'turned' at 'propaganda schools' in Russian prison camps during Churchill's secret war with the Soviet.¹³³ As news of the inquest into Florence's death was being reported, word was coming through of a serious charge being made by the authorities under the Defence of the Realm Act. A few weeks earlier on January 16th, ex-Royal Navy man, John Frederick Hedley and his Russian-born wife Bella Sarah Hedley had been charged with sedition in Rotherham. In its now customary sensational fashion, the Home Office weekly report on *Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom* painted a very worrying picture of the couple's activities. Fred is alleged to have told the 200-300 people who had gathered in South Yorkshire for a 'Red Guard' meeting that during the war he and his fellow seamen had been instructed by the British Admiralty to sink several their own submarines as part of an ongoing

¹³³ *Bolshevist Gold*, Manchester Evening News 08 August 1919, p.5

propaganda exercise.¹³⁴ According to a report in the *Sheffield Daily Telegraph* (placed below an update on the Nurse Shore ‘Train mystery’), Hedley had claimed that British and not German ‘chasers’ had been responsible for the losses during the raids on the East Coast of England. On February 17th 1920 Hedley was duly tried under the Defence of the Realm Act at Rotherham Borough Police Court for making false statements and inciting mutiny and sentenced to six months hard labour. Several weeks later in March, news came screaming out from the headlines that another new Bolshevik plot had been ‘unmasked’ in the US. Documents were said to have been brought before a Senate Committee in the US that provided evidence of a Bolshevik plot to ignite a Revolution. A courier had been found with diamonds to the value of three million roubles with instructions to arm demobilized servicemen. British Police were being told to search for an emissary from Russia who is in Britain with plans from Lenin to launch a Great Strike in May.¹³⁵ Within weeks, Nurse Shore suspect and military deserter Percy Toplis was armed and on the run. It’s fair to say that as far as domestic threats were concerned, this was the most volatile year that Britain had faced in centuries.¹³⁶

Whatever the exact motive, there was evidence to suggest — however circumstantial — that Nurse Florence Nightingale Shore may have been a casualty in an ever-spiralling war game played out by rival factions of an exiled Russian government. And more astonishingly still, the game had become localised, almost entirely, among the squirely old hedgerows and

¹³⁴ The British National Archives, CAB-24-97-24, Home Office Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom., January 29 1920

¹³⁵ *Bolshevik Plot Unmasked*, Pall Mall Gazette, 04 March 1920, p.3

¹³⁶ *Serious Charge under D.O.R.A.*, Sheffield Daily Telegraph 05 February 1920, p.5

cottages of the Kent and Sussex countryside that Christie had so charmingly sketched-out in her detective novels.

Christie, curiously enough, had her own *Man in a Brown Suit* mystery to unravel. The book, published just a few years after the death of Nurse Nightingale Shore, follows the adventures of Anne Beddingfeld as she pursues suspected diamond thief, Sergius Paulovitch from England to Paris. The Count is a fake Russian agent run by 'The Colonel', a criminal mastermind and political mischief-maker. The Colonel's assistant is Guy Pagett. The real life Guy Paget — an Army Major and Conservative MP — was a distant cousin of Lady Muriel Paget who in November 1920 took over the management of the *Russian Relief and Reconstruction Fund* on behalf of anti-Bolshevik, White Russian refugees living in Britain. The novel was published in 1924. It too featured an iconic London train station and a case of valuable diamonds, and it too had its own colourful menagerie of swarthy Russian counts and agent provocateurs lumbering through the quicksand of the British Secret Service.

But the even Russian intrigue didn't exclude robbery as a motive.

At the time that Nurse Nightingale Shore was attacked, it was being reported that crown jewels of fantastic value were being smuggled from Russia into Britain. Arriving as refugees in Turkey, many a proud White Russian had been obliged to trade his valuables for little more than a loaf of bread. The once wealthy Russian nobles were now enduring now a 'rice for rubies' lifestyle, and inevitably some of the spoils were spilling from Ottoman bowl to the swag bag and across the Mediterranean into Europe. According to some reports, diamonds and emeralds which had been seized by the Soviet in the name of the State had been diverted to private looters. The famous Cullinan diamond, which had graced the sceptre of the Tsar was among them.

A stash worth tens of thousands of pounds was even disposed of by Soviet Representatives Leonid Krassin and Lev Kamenev during their 1920 trade mission to London. Extraordinarily, the sale had the full backing of the UK Government, a move that could only have aggravated relations with its former White Émigré allies. Whether or not it's conceivable that Nurse Nightingale Shore was in possession of such valuables — secretly couriering them from one place to another — at the time she was attacked, the stories and speculation dominating the headlines at this time were almost certainly the inspiration for Christie's novel.¹³⁷

¹³⁷ *Crown Jewels of Russia*, Daily Herald 16 October 1919, p.1/Daily Mirror 31 August 1920, p.2

Chapter 11

The Friends in St Leonards

MISS ROTTON AND MISS KELBE



According to the *Leeds Mercury*, the friend that Florence Nightingale Shore was due to visit in St Leonards on the day she was attacked on the train was another Queens Nurse, Miss Mary ‘Minnie’ Rotton. Miss Rotton lived with Clara Bessie Kelbe at Norlandrise, 6 Matthews Road in Silverhill — just a five minute walk from the care home of Count Paul Ignatieff at Woodmancote.¹³⁸ Kelbe was the daughter of Gustavus Werner Kelbe, a German-born partner in the same *Schroder Banking Corporation* we touched on in an earlier chapter in relation to the Sassoons of Iraq and Rust Hall. By contrast, Minnie had been born to Major General Guy Rotton and Tryphena Garrett of Canada in St Johns, Newfoundland in the mid-1800s.

The newspaper told of an ‘extraordinary incident in presentiment’ felt by Miss Rotton. It seems that the friend Nurse Shore was intending to visit had been advised by an ‘acquaintance’ not to go to the train station to meet Florence that day. The acquaintance appears to have told Miss Rotton that they had a feeling that that ‘something terrible’ had happened. Miss Rotton told her acquaintance that she must go as she had “promised to be there to meet her”.

¹³⁸ England & Wales, Electoral Registers 1910-1932, St Peter, Sussex, P of B Hastings, England, 6 St. Matthew's Road, Clara Bessie Kelbe, Mary Rotton, ref. SPR.Mic.P.335/BL.H.37. Kelbe died in November 1927 aged 69. Rotton died the following year aged 73.

When she did arrive at the station, “she found an ambulance waiting, the train arriving a few minutes earlier than the scheduled time.”¹³⁹

“On Sunday 11th, she went to Tonbridge for the day, and returned to Carnforth Lodge the same evening. On Monday 12th, in accordance with her arrangements, she went to Victoria Station to catch the 3.20 train to St Leonards Warrior Square Station.”

— Inquest Opened on Miss Shore, Shields Daily News 20 January 1920, p.3

As the ambulance Miss Rotton describes was at Hastings Station (not St Leonards on Sea) one really has to wonder why Minnie Rotton had not arranged to meet Florence at Warrior Square Station in St Leonards where the train had been scheduled to stop originally. What had prompted Miss Rotton to change plans and meet Florence at the station in Hastings when Florence was scheduled to arrive at St Leonards, the stop before?

Mabel Rogers had told the inquest that on Monday 12th January, “in accordance with her arrangements, she went to Victoria Station to catch the 3.20 to St Leonards Warrior Square Station”. Her ticket was from Victoria to St Leonards on Sea. If Florence really had been on her way to visit Minnie and Miss Kelbe, this would have made far more sense as Warrior Square Station was little more than a 15 minute walk from Miss Rotton on Matthews Road. But in the statement Miss Rotton provides to the press, we can only surmise that she had arranged to meet Florence at Hastings and not St Leonards Station. Had the ‘extraordinary incident in presentiment’ experienced by Miss Rotton’s mysterious acquaintance extended to knowing that the train that Florence was travelling on — and the ambulance that was arranged to

¹³⁹ *Something Terrible*, Leeds Mercury 15 January 1920, p.9

transport her — had been urgently re-routed to Hastings as result of Florence’s injuries? Minnie would have had no way of knowing that the train had been redirected, so how was it that she went to Hastings if Shore’s ticket had meant terminating her journey at Warrior Square, before it continued to Hastings?



Miss Rotton’s brother Brigadier John Guy Rotton (top left) with Princess Marie Louise of Schleswig-Holstein, first cousin of former German Emperor Wilhelm II

“An extraordinary incident is the pre-sentiment felt by Miss Rotton, of St Matthew’s Road, St Leonards — the friend Nurse Shore intended to visit — an acquaintance advised her not to go to the station to meet Nurse Shore. “I feel that something terrible is happening”, she said ... When she did arrive at the station she found an ambulance was waiting.”

— Something Terrible, Leeds Mercury 15 January 1920

In fairness, it’s more likely that the warning that Miss Rotton had received had come not from any prophetic vision but from friends close to Military Intelligence, Section 5. One of her father’s closest friends at the Bristol West Conservative Association had been Sir Walter Long, the First Lord of the Admiralty. Just 12 months previously Long had been instrumental in establishing the *Secret Service Committee*, set-up rather specifically to deal with the new Soviet threat. Florence’s cousin Rafaele Farina had been drafted into one of Long’s newly reorganized Intelligence units, which included Mi5. The threat presented by Sinn Fein and the Russians had become urgent and intense. Long and Major Rotton, who had been born in Ireland, had been strong Ulster Unionists and supporters of Sir Michael Hicks-Beech, former Chief Secretary of Ireland and it is interesting to note that there had been several assassinations by Sinn Fein members in January 1920. One of those killed was Assistance Chief Commissioner Redmond, who was shot and killed in front of the Sinn Fein HQ in Dublin. Given the momentous events in Russia and in Ireland, it is entirely possible that there had been prior warnings of threats to the lives of friends and family of prominent military figures.¹⁴⁰

¹⁴⁰ It was, incidentally, Lady Lucy Hicks-Beech, the wife the former Chief Secretary for Ireland, who in opposition to Florence Nightingale, had been a leading force in the formation of the Institute. Florence Shore Nightingale and Mary Rotton were among the very first Queens Nurses. The Institute was later patronized by Queen Alexandra of Schleswig-Holstein-

Chapter 12

Surprising Revelations

CONFESSIONS IN THE RESTAURANT CAR



“What do you want?” he said. “I have nothing more to tell you — nothing, do you hear ...”

“Yes, you have something more to tell us,” said Poirot firmly.

“The Truth!”

— Murder on the Orient Express, Agatha Christie

Keeping track of all the various actors arriving and departing in this mystery can be a challenge, so crowding you all into the restaurant car and offering you a potted version of key events and characters may provide some clarity; Florence Nightingale Shore is brutally attacked and killed in the sealed compartment of a train travelling between London and Hastings. Her first cousin is Rafaele Farina, Head of Russian Section at Mi5. In recent weeks he has been compiling files on several high-ranking Russian exiles in locations which can be related directly to Nurse Shore’s journeys in the 24-hours before her death. Russia remains divided. And Britain remains divided about Russia. The ‘Reds’ are in and the ‘Whites’ are out. At the top of Farina’s list is former Prime Minister Kerensky, the Socialist Revolutionary who led Russia’s Provisional Government in the six month interval between the February and

Sonderburg-Glücksburg. The Rotton family remained on friendly terms with the Queen’s family. In the 1930s, Miss Rotton’s brother Brigadier John Guy Rotton played host to her sister, Princess Marie Louise of Schleswig-Holstein. The German Emperor Wilhelm II was her first cousin.

October Revolutions in Russia in 1917. For three years Kerensky has been in hiding. Now he is in Tonbridge with his friend and translator Dr. Gavronsky. This places him and his revolutionaries within 30 minutes or so of Florence and her aunt, the Baroness Farina on Hadlow Road. At this time, Mi5 are trying to determine if Kerensky is now working with the Germans to influence Russian public opinion against the White Russian movement.

Next we have Count Paul Ignatieff, President of the *White Russian Red Cross*. An extract from a file on Alexander Guchkov suggests that Ignatieff was in and around St Leonards at the time that Florence was planning to meet her friends there. The count's brother, General Alexei Ignatieff was murdered by extremist factions within Kerensky's Socialist Revolutionary Party some fifteen years before. Whilst not deemed an immediate threat, Mi5 are remaining cautious, withholding requested visas to anyone outside his immediate family.

Also in Tonbridge at this time, are two glamorous figures: the Baroness Farina (who Florence visited the night prior to the attack) and Lt. General Sergei Belosselsky Belozersky, the former Russian representative to Paris and Berlin who had served as adviser to General Yudenich during a two year war with Lenin's Bolsheviks and who has retained very close ties to Mi6. A resourceful White Russian Prince, Belozersky's commitment to removing the Bolshevik Government, would, like those of his friends, last until his death in the 1950s. He would also end up living just doors away from the Baroness on Hadlow Road in Tonbridge. And then we have Florence's murder, coinciding as it did, with the withdrawal of British support to Russia's counter-revolutionary forces, the execution of its leader and the announcement of a trade agreement with their fiercest enemy, Bolshevik Russia. And as if

this wasn't perplexing enough, we've learned some other uncomfortable truths. The first is that the initial suspect in the murder investigation that followed the attack on Shore was former RAF Captain Ernest C. Brown, who had been arrested on suspicion of both espionage and murder, not once but 'three times'. As Branch Secretary of the Comrades of the Great War in Glasgow, Brown would have come under the supervision of the Association's founder Sir Walter Long, whose close friend and ally, the lawyer Théodore Aubert, would go on to defend White Russian Assassin, Maurice Conrad, charged with murdering the Soviet Ambassador to Switzerland in 1923 — a murder that some claim was financed by our old friend, Guchkov.

All of this really begged the question: had Florence Nightingale Shore been sucked into a spiral of revenge furiously escalating in the upper echelons of émigré society? Perhaps it was her proximity to her brother Offley, the stalling Brigadier General whose reluctance to release crucial military funds in December 1917 allowed the Bolsheviks to seize control of Southern Russia. Or perhaps it Florence's cousin, Rafaele Farina, the Mi5 and Mi6 officer whose alleged complicity in the Zinoviev Letter had brought him into contact with the same mysterious shadow-world as the White Russian hostiles he had been investigating and whose personal files at Mi5 remained open for review.

Of course, it is terrifically unlikely that the Count, the Prince, Guchkov or Kerensky would have wielded the actual dagger, so to speak. Unlike Christie's Orient Express mystery, there are likely to have been passengers beyond the purview of the coach in which the characters had assembled. Associates, detractors, loyalists, dis-loyalists — each of them capable of leaving an entirely new trail of clues, and all providing us with fresh,

unspoiled tracks in the snow, leading to an ever sweeping blizzard of new questions.

Sadly, answers to many of these questions are likely to remain unanswered.

Within 48 hours of the attack on Nurse Nightingale Shore, Ernest Haigh, Chief Inspector at Scotland Yard was deputed by the Home Office to take control of the case. The investigation was now being led not by Hastings Police but by CID at The Met. It was the second time that year that the Home Office had Chief Inspector Haigh would be asked to intervene in a high-profile investigation — the first being the case against Harold Greenwood, the Solicitor from Llanelli in South Wales accused of poisoning his wife Mabel, the sister of Sir Thomas Vansittart Bowater, Conservative MP and five-time Mayor of London. Again, this was was a sudden intervention and came several months after Greenwood’s arrest.¹⁴¹

“Did Miss Barnard tell you where she was going last night?”
Fraser replied to the question. He seemed to be speaking
mechanically.
“She said she was going with a girlfriend to St Leonards.”
— *The ABC Murders, Agatha Christie Train Mystery, 1936*

Despite, or more likely as a result of being in some considerable debt, Haigh retired from the force in July 1920, just as the Shore investigation was being wound down. But it wasn’t to be the end of his adventures by any means. Within months of his retirement, the Chief Inspector found himself at the centre of a spat with Sir Edward Troup and the British Home Office. Serial Manchester fraudster, Frederick White was in the process of making a series

¹⁴¹ Dundee Courier 09 June 1920, p.6

of films chronicling the work of Scotland Yard and former Inspector Haigh had offered his services as screenwriter.¹⁴² Whether by coincidence or design, the Home Office were in the process of producing their own film on Scotland Yard. The ‘official’ story of Scotland Yard, tentatively titled ‘Scotland Yard 21’ had been commissioned by Met Press Bureau. The bureau had been set-up by Troup and the Secret Service Committee in October 1919 as an attempt to wrestle back control of subversive propaganda in the wake of the Irish and Bolshevik threats. The Yard’s ‘Press Bureau’ was thus created to censor the flow of information between the Met and the film and press industries. The *Topical Film Company* were brought in as producers with former Military Intelligence man, Edmund Distin Maddick at the helm. *Tropical’s* new owner was Edward Hulton, the Manchester newspaper magnate whose *Illustrated Sunday News* had published Sir Winston Churchill’s anti-Communist battle-cry, ‘*Zionism versus Bolshevism*’ in February that year. Attempts were made by the Home Office to have the White Brothers’ and ex-Chief Inspector Haigh’s ‘unofficial’ Yard movie removed from distribution, but their efforts did little more than give it further publicity. *Tropical’s* Yard caper would eventually see Haigh writing and starring in a dozen or so titles that year.¹⁴³ In all fairness, there had been concern at Mi5 that the formal and anodyne film showing the daily procedural undertakings of Officers at Scotland Yard was unlikely to provide the sensational daring-do that was necessary to counter the subversive threat. It’s entirely possible that former Inspector Haigh had been tasked with providing the same thing ‘off the record’ and with none of the restrictions placed on the official film, overseen by Police Commissioner

¹⁴² *The British Film Industry and the Metropolitan Police Press Bureau, 1919-1938 Cinema*, Alex Rock, *Television and History: New Approaches* (ed. Laura Mee and Johnny Walker, CSP, 2014)

¹⁴³ The anxieties suffered by the Home Office over the release of the White Company’s film can be found in files MEPO 2/7442, PRO at the British National Archives.

William Horwood. Curiously both Frederick White and Mrs Greenwood — the sister of Sir Thomas Bowater who Haigh had been investigating — were both from the Manchester area. White had been jailed there in 1914 for an attempt to defraud several prominent figures into investing into a bogus movie studio. Among them was William Herbert Cruddas, Secretary of the *Conservative and Unionist Agents Association*. Despite White's 18-month sentence for fraud, ex-Chief Inspector Haigh worked with White for the duration of 1921.

In 1927 ex-Chief Inspector Haigh's movie mentor, the ex-convict Frederick White partnered Sir Park Goff in *British and Foreign Films Ltd.*¹⁴⁴ Goff enjoyed an illustrious career at the heart of the war time establishment, serving first as Kings Messenger to Russia and Baltic States and then as Assistant Secretary to First Lord of the Admiralty, Sir Walter Long (who had co-founded the Secret Service Committee in 1919). Curiously, Goff was the last formal British representative to see and speak to the Tsar alive and played a significant spying role in the capture and execution of several German agents during 1915. He also paid a critical trip to Russia at the height of the civil war to discuss terms with White Russian generals, Yudenich and Kolchak. The first film that Goff and White produced was 'Volga Volga' (1928), written by directed and produced by White Russian émigrés Viktor Tourjansky and Joseph N. Ermolieff. Like Ernest C Brown, Goff was from Glasgow but for many years had a residence at Marina Court in Bexhill-on-Sea — where Florence Nightingale Shore was found on the train. Another partner in the Goff and White film company was Colonel McInnes Shaw, Grand Master of

¹⁴⁴ *British and Foreign Films Ltd*, The Bioscope 24 May 1928, p.11. The directors are listed as Sir Park Goff, KC, M.P (London), Sir Charles Henry Wilson L.L.D, J.P, M.P, Frederick White (Manchester, Proprietor of Frederick White Company).

Glasgow's Orange Order which was notoriously aligned with 'Peaky Blinders' Razor gang leader Billy Fullerton — fascist thug for hire.¹⁴⁵

Many of the secrets relating to Florence's brother Offley and to the pair's Secret Service cousin, Rafaele Farina were likely to have been too sensitive for public consumption and the threat of publication may well have put lives and careers at risk, irrespective of any possible relevance to the case. One thing is for sure, the *Met Press Bureau* — launched to counter Bolshevik propaganda just several weeks before — would have encountered its first real test. Information would have been managed, a crisis controlled, and the proposed cuts to Intelligence budgets being challenged by the likes of Sir Walter Long and Winston Churchill, may even have been narrowly averted.¹⁴⁶ The contents of the attaché case, or large red 'despatch box' that had been partially opened and rifled-through at Nurse Shore's side was not explored at the Inquest, despite such boxes featuring commonly in government or 'official' matters.

There is another question we may feel compelled to ask. Had Florence's visit to the Baroness Farina in Tonbridge the evening prior to the attack resulted in the conveyance of important documents? Had Florence been entrusted as a messenger by her Aunt or cousin and been followed from the house and then violently robbed of the papers?

The arrival of the 'man in the brown suit' at the last possible moment before the train set-off for Hastings may be an indication of a premeditated attack preceded by close-observation on foot. But as Florence's friend Mabel

¹⁴⁵ Orange Alba: The Civil Religion of Loyalism in the Southwestern Lowlands of Scotland since 1798, R. Michael Booker, PhD diss., University of Tennessee, 2010.

¹⁴⁶ Reports of the Secret Service Committee, January 27 1920, File KV 4/151

Rogers claimed she was still in the carriage with Florence when ‘the man in the brown suit’ is alleged to have jumped on board the train, you are left with the impression that this was not some predatory opportunist targeting a lone female traveller. Unless he had been tipped-off, the assailant would have had little way of knowing that Mabel would disembark — and the more people, the greater the risk. Perhaps he just seized an opportunity that presented itself, who knows?

As Agatha Christie once wrote, “there are questions that you don’t ask because you’re afraid of the answers to them”. Further pithy observations could be offered. Sometimes the best way of removing a breadcrumb trail is to remove the loaf entirely, and the politest way of refusing an answer, is to pretend you never heard the question in the first place. There are clearly many questions that Scotland Yard chose not to ask, and many loose-ends they chose not to pursue, and during the 100 or so years that have elapsed since the Nurse Nightingale Shore murder, those ends have almost certainly frayed to the point of failure. The scent has been lost and the file has been closed. Ernest C. Brown and our mystery Russians remain the only glowing embers of a stubbornly cold case.

**CHIEF-INSPECTOR HAIGH,
29 YEARS AT SCOTLAND YARD.**

Chief Inspector Haigh, of New Scotland Yard, goes into retirement to-morrow after nearly 29 years' service in the Metropolitan Police.

Mr. Haigh is a detective who has figured in many prominent cases, and his successes have brought him no fewer than 120 commendations. Chief Inspector Haigh was deputed by the Home Office to take charge of the investigation into the Kidwelly poisoning mystery. When the accused solicitor, Harold Greenwood, is brought up for trial, Mr. Haigh will be one of the witnesses.



CHIEF INSPECTOR HAIGH.

Chief Inspector Ernest Haigh who led the investigation into Nurse Shore's retired suddenly just months later to become a movie actor.

SELECT BIBLIOGRAPHY

The Nightingale Shore Murder Death of a World War I Heroine, Spire Publishing, Rosemary Cook, 2014.

You can buy *The Nightingale Shore Murder* by Rosemary Cook at the link below:

<https://www.troubador.co.uk/bookshop/essays-and-literary-criticism/the-nightingale-shore-murder/>

Find a Grave (Shore's aunt and cousins Stuart Hobkirk, Baroness Farina, Rafaele Farina)

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/122058428/clarence-john-hobkirk>

Empires in Conflict: Armenia and the great powers, 1895-1920, Manoug Joseph Somakian, I.B. Tauris, 1995

The British Military Involvement in Transcaucasia, 1917-1919, Artin Hagop Arslanian, University of California at Los Angeles, 1974

British Policy Towards Russian Refugees in the Aftermath of the Bolshevik Revolution, Elina Hannele Multanen, Ph.D. Thesis, The School of Slavonic and East European Studies, University College London, 2000

The First World Oil War, Timothy C. Winegard

Russia's Greatest Enemy? Harold Williams and the Russian Revolutions, C. Alston, Bloomsbury I.B. Tauris, 2007

The Zinoviev Letter: The Conspiracy that Never Dies, Gill Bennett, OUP
Oxford, 2018

Russia's New Era, R.J. Barrett, The Financier and Bullionist Ltd

Inside the Enigma: British Officials in Russia, 1900–39, Michael Hughes,
1997, Bloomsbury Publishing

Alexander Guchkov and the End of the Russian Empire, William E. Gleason,
American Philosophical Society, 1983

The Crown Jewels: The British Secrets at the Heart of the KGB Archive, Nigel
West, Oleg Tsaryov, Yale University Press, 1999

Report on Revolutionary Organisations in the United Kingdom, Home Office,
CAB files, The National Archives

SHORE-FARINA FAMILY TREE

