The influence of Russia on the destinies of Western societies, its immense weight in the political balance of Europe, the role which it has played for a long time and which it is still called upon to fulfill in the world, through the centuries, all these things have nowadays become the subject of the most serious discussions.

Considering the rapid progress and the invading system of this power, which, backed by the eternal places of the pole, seems to defy the most formidable invasions, wise minds foresaw, at the end of the last century, events and disasters whose visibility ceased unfortunately to be a problem for us. Mably, J. J. Rousseau, d'Argenson and several others, examining the state of Europe and the developments in Russia, especially after the partition of Poland, uttered a cry of alarm, which expired on the threshold of the cabinets of Europe without being able to reach the ears of kings.

The small number of Russian historians who have written the history of their country place the beginning of their monarchy only around the IXth Century, during the reign of the Scandinavian Rurik. The late formation of this power, in the midst of the other constituted governments of Europe, could only with great difficulty, from the beginning, allow us to foresee the greatness which it was to acquire. But monarchies do not come out of the earth great and armed, as Minerva came out of the brain of Jupiter. It is only after long vicissitudes and painful oscillations that they stop, sit within positive limits, and according to fixed, determined institutions; so that, between the great founding man, or the happy soldier who lays the first stone of the throne, and the one who occupies it when this throne is consolidated, sometimes several centuries pass. This is how societies and nations gradually develop; it is thus that the various powers have slowly been formed, which history has placed in the forefront of the tableaux of great political aggregations.

If we could dispose of a larger framework for painting the events of which the history of Russia is composed, we should be obliged to imitate the writers who, before us, have treated this subject; but, having only to summarize, we will follow, by necessity, a course at once more rational, shorter and more philosophical. We will leave out five centuries of historical obscurities, and we will not begin our summary until the end of the XIVth Century, that is to say
the time when, after a dark feudal anarchy, the various dominations descendants of Rurik, reunited, centralized and freed from the yoke of the Tartars, formed Russia more or less as we see it today.

Among the numerous reigns which fill this space of five hundred years, the first alone have stopped us. It was by conquest that Russia took her place on the political scene of the Middle Ages. It was then that the Christian religion was introduced into the North, and with it the new customs. But, after Vladimir and Iaroslav, neglecting a more than doubtful list of princes without genius and without glory, we have replaced these splendors of a barbarous royalty by the table of the physical and moral state of Russia during this first period. A retrospective look, cast on the primitive constitution of this empire, on the habits of the people and on the laws which governed it, will learn what its progress has been, and what it still lacked to march in front with other peoples, in the route of European civilization. It is by observing the starting point of a nation that we can soundly judge the merit of its successive transformations.

GEOGRAPHICAL OVERVIEW OF RUSSIA.

The Russian colossus, leaning against the limits of the world, one foot in Europe and the other in Asia, extends its vast arms, from north to south and from east to west, over a space of sixteen hundred leagues of country, not to mention the Asiatic provinces over which the czars have always assumed a dubious domination. These princes would be the first potentates of the universe, if the strength of States were measured in square leagues. The Glacial Sea, to the north; to the south, independent Tartary and Chinese Tartary; to the west, Lapland, the Gulf of Finland, the Baltic Sea and Poland; to the east, the Pacific Sea, and the particular seas which receive their names from the coasts which they bathe: such is the immeasurable framework which unites the various regions known under the name of Russia.

The Ural Mountains separates European Russia from Asian Russia. The Russia of Europe, much less extensive than that of Asia, is in general a flat country; only in its eastern part do high mountains rise. To the north, one sees large lakes, and to the south, vast steppes. The land slopes down to the north towards the Baltic Sea and Northern Ocean; to the south, towards the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea.

Asiatic Russia forms an immense plain, which sinks imperceptibly towards the northern ocean, and rises little by little, in the south, to the high mountains which separate Russia from China. One and the other of these parts can be divided, relative to their temperature, into four regions thus classified, namely:

1° Arctic or glacial region. It comprises, in European Russia, a portion of the government of Archangel and of Finland; and in Asiatic Russia, a portion of those of Perm, Tobolsk, and Irkutsk. The nature, in those countries situated beyond the 67th degree of northern latitude, shows itself under the aspect of a sad uniformity. You see neither trees nor shrubs; they are only moss-covered deserts; peat swamps, interrupted only, at the farthest north-eastern extremity, by the Okhotsk mountain range; and, at the northwestern end, by the mountains of Russian Lapland. The earth, which never thaws, makes the soil resistant to any kind of cultivation; even animals attain neither the stature nor the development of forces which are proper to their species in other climates, and everything, even the exterior of man, announces a kind of degradation. The Lapps,
the Samoyeds and the Tschuktchi vegetate alone in these inhospitable regions. Followed by the reindeer, their faithful companion, they live in isolated groups, and obtain their subsistence only by means of hunting or fishing. In Siberia, the arctic region begins at 62° degrees of latitude, and nature seems even more step-mother towards this country than towards the most northern part of Europe. The cold is so bitter in this region that the mercury freezes in September and becomes malleable. The Boreal Ocean and the White Sea are covered every year, from the end of September to the beginning of June, with thick ice. During the summer, a season so short that it does not even thaw the swamps, the atmosphere is constantly charged with humid fogs that resemble smoke. In Novaya Zemlya and at the cape of Tschuktchi, the sun appears on the horizon for three months: a terrible winter reigns the rest of the year. The long nights of this season are, however, animated by the magnificent spectacle of the Northern Lights. During this period, the sun appears, to the eye, like a red globe of fire, and storms are so rare there, that when it thunders, the animals stop seized to spawn. Under such a climate, culture is destroyed; the trees gradually decrease in height, become creeping plants and end up disappearing altogether. Scurvy and hypochondria are common diseases in this area.

2° Cold region. It extends from the 57th to the 67th degree of latitude and includes, in Europe, all of Finland and the governments of Petersburg, Novgorod, Pleskow, Reval, Riga, Mitau, Olonets, Vologda, Tver, Iaroslavl and Kostruma; and, in Siberia, the rest of the governments of Perm and Tobolsk with the center of that of Irkutsk. The chain of Scandinavian mountains, covered with thick forests, occupies the European western portion; but from there, as far as Mount Ural, one sees nothing but plains interspersed alternately with woods, marshes, and small lakes. This region offers an even more desolate aspect in Siberia, where the sea winds do not soften the harshness of the climate, where the industry of men does not come to the aid of nature, and where nothing stops the disastrous breath of the North wind. The ground lays only on huge boulders: it is in this region that the most important iron and copper mines that Russia has are located.

3° Temperate region. It is between the 50th and the 57th degree of latitude and forms the major part of the empire. It brings together, in Europe, the governments of Moscow, Vladimir, Kaluga, Tula, Riazas, Tambov, Orel, Kursk, Voronezh, Ukraine, Saratov, Nizhgorod, Kazan, of Smolensk, of Simbirsk, of Chernivtsi, of Poltava, of Vitebsk, of Mohilev, of Vilna, of Grodno, of Kiev, of Gdansk; and in Asia, the governments of Tomsk, Orenburg with the southern part of that of Irkutsk. This expanse presents, in Europe, a surface only interrupted at the Ural Mountains by heights whose undulations cut the uniformity. The northern regions of this area have only a thin, sandy soil, and of no resources for cultivation. The southern countries, on the contrary, have enough fertility to make fertilizers unnecessary.

4° Hot region. It stretches from the 41st to the 50th degree of latitude, and includes, in European Russia, the governments of Kamienic, of Kherson, of Ekaterinoslav, of the Tauride, of Astrakhan, of the Caucasus, of Georgia, of Derbent; and in Asiatic Russia, the Kyrgyz steppes. All the eastern part of southern Russia offers immense steppes, arid, rarely wooded, and whose soil is salty, except those of the Cossacks, which abound in pastures. To the west, on the banks of the Borysthenes (Dnieper) and the Dniester, there are very fertile lands. Georgia is the Switzerland of Russia; the Caucasus guarantees it from the hundreds of the north; it is open, in the south, to all the hot winds of Asia: also one finds there almost all the fruits of the southern
countries. Tauride is no less fertile: this beautiful country only needs culture to become an enchanting garden.

The heat sometimes rises to 28 degrees at Astrakhan; the rains are so rare there that, without the aid of artificial watering, all the plants would perish. In the steppes, on the contrary, the heat is often so intense that the air produces on the eyes the effect of the threads of a spider's web floating in the air, and the sheep give a bloody scum. The hurricanes and the swarms of locusts which frequently devastate these provinces are the common calamities in the country.

Thus the Russian Empire, within the extent of its immense limits, contains all kinds of climates, one might say almost all zones. Spring, every year, unfolds all its charms in Tauride; and, at the time when the environs of St. Petersburg are still covered with snow, the orchards of the Caucasus are already in bloom.

The population disseminated over the surface of Russia is estimated, by Stork, at forty million individuals; but this estimate, made according to imprecise and inexact censuses, has appeared too low to other scholars. Asiatic Russia hardly furnishes more than a contingent of three millions to this enormous total, which, however, only gives, per square mile, only one hundred and nineteen individuals, a population proportionally well below that which is noticed in the other States of Europe*.

* France, on a scale twenty times less, had, before 1840, a much larger population, since it numbered forty-two million individuals.

ORIGIN OF THE RUSSIAN PEOPLE.

The Russian nation was perhaps the most powerful of those Slavonic tribes which, at an early date, ebbed from the north to the south and from the east to the west, after the fall of the Roman Empire. The question whether the Slavs, in general, came from Asia, is now decided: the European nativity of the Slavonic nations is a fact admitted by scholars.

The name Russian may come from the Latin name Rhoxani or Rhoxolani, imposed by the ancients upon the races which from time immemorial had inhabited the central parts of Russia. It can also be derived from the word rossa or rosseie, which means, in the Slavonic language, wandering people.

Others claim that the Russians were once a special people, later confused with the Slavs, who have held a place in the history of the peoples of the North since the IVth Century; but the Slavs themselves were not a new people. This nation had been known for a long time to the Greeks and Romans, and it may be inferred from the relations of its language with that of the ancient inhabitants of Latium that its origin goes back to the Gentile Fulani. The name of Slavs seems to be a derivative of slava, which means glory, etymology from which we however drew the name of Esclavons.
RUSSIA

Imperial Guard

CHASSEUR. -- ELITE GRENADIER. -- GRENADIER
The *Slavs* or *Esclavons*, at the time of the overflow of the Germanic nations, that is to say around the IV\textsuperscript{th} or V\textsuperscript{th} Century, inhabited the southern part of Poland, which bears the name of White Russia or Great Russia. Under the name of Vénètes or Serbs, they established themselves in Pomerania, in the Margraviate of Brandenburg, and advanced as far as Silesia, Bohemia and Moravia.

New swarms of Slavs having populated the banks of the Danube, gave their name to Slavonia, to Serbia and even extended as far as Austria. The languages of these various nations conspired to strengthen the hypothesis of their common origin, for they are only dialects of the Slavonic or Esclavonic language.

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**FIRST PERIOD.**

**UNCERTAIN TIMES.**

In these countries, now subject to the most absolute government, a republic once flourished. Novgorod, the most ancient city of Russia, enriched by an immense trade, governed itself by means of magistrates freely elected from within; she traded with the peoples who inhabited the shores of the Baltic Sea. The Emperor Constantine Porphyrogenitus, who wrote in the X\textsuperscript{th} Century, speaks of the commerce which she carried on, in her time, with Constantinople. Slaves, pelts, salted or smoked fish, honey, wax and salt: these were the products that these tribes, whose life was nomadic, could provide at any time.

This Republic of Novgorod received the tributes of the nations with which it was surrounded, from Lithuania to the mountains which border Siberia, and from the lake of Rostov to the White Sea. She was so formidable to her neighbors that it was commonly said, "Who would dare to attack God or Novgorod the Great?" This degree of prosperity and power presupposed conquests, and the conquests themselves could not have been made without commands and military reputations. Hence the personal influences, the superiorities of fact or birth, the *primacies*; hence the factions among the people, the anarchy, the corruption of the national spirit, the weakening of the state, the appeal made to foreigners by the discontented; hence, finally, the loss of liberty.

In turn, the Novgorod Republicans became dependent on a people of Scandinavian origin, known as the *Varangians*. Once again masters of themselves, after a time of oppression, they no longer judged liberty good for them, and demanded princes from the Varangians, their former vanquishers. It is from this period that dates the arrival in Russia of Rurik and his brothers Sineus and Truvor. We do not know how this revolution happened; all that is known is that the Varai chiefs, who came as auxiliaries, were not long in leading as masters.
From his establishment in Novgorod, Rurik, having wished to enjoy in peace the power which he had usurped, attracted the contempt of his direct subjects, the Scandinavian Varangians. War and robbery forming the first element of the existence of these people, by a necessary consequence, the qualities which they valued most in a leader were fierce valor and devastating activity.

Rurik reigned however with tranquility, after having suppressed by terror his own subjects, and transmitted his crown to a child of four years, named Igor, whom he left under the tutelage of his relative Oleg.

Oleg enlarged, by conquests, the heritage of his ward. Having collected under his banner a multitude of hordes of different origins, he marched against the Kriviches (Radimichs), and captured their capital, Smolensk. The great number of towns which have been in Russia since the first epoch to which its history goes back proves that, for a long time, the social state had made progress in this country. These towns, it is true, did not resemble those magnificent cities, retreats from ease and idleness; but men who enclose their rustic huts in an enclosure are already far removed from savage life. The old Russian chronicles, instead of saying, to build a city, say, to cut a city (roubit gorod), as they say, to cut a beam; it is that indeed, the art of building consisted then only in cutting and rough squaring of trees to assemble them then, and to make a dwelling of them; then, when the joints and interstices had been filled with foam, the building was finished.

Oleg then seized Kiev, not as a brave warrior, but as a treacherous coward. He lured into a trap the two brothers Askold and Dir, who reigned in that city; and, when they were in his presence, taking the young Igor in his arms: "You are neither," he said to them, "princes, nor of princely race; here is the son of Rurik, perish before him!" They had their throats cut, in fact, in the name of legitimacy, and Kiev became the center of Rurik domination.

Descending then the Dnieper, Oleg arrived, it is said, with eighty thousand combatants, under the walls of Constantinople (904); it was during the reign of Leo the Philosopher. This journey on this river, the course of which is so often cut by reefs and obstructed by rocks, was not as easy as that of the Normans on the Seine, when they came to burn and pillage old Paris; also the fatigue that these barbarians had to suffer surprise our weakness today. Such men were very formidable, because to conquer, for them, was to annihilate.

The victors returned to their homeland, carrying gold, precious fabrics and exquisite wines. But by buying peace by the abandonment of all these things, the Greek emperors only furnished an additional stimulus to the warlike audacity and the thirst for plunder of their enemy.

Oleg retained supreme authority for thirty-three years. Either the Russians, satisfied with the excellence of his government, cared little about his legitimacy; or that, crushed by the force of their character, no one dared to raise their voice to ask for the son of Rurik, the tacit acquiescence of the people to this sort of usurpation was perhaps a title more powerful than that of the heredity.
Igor, to whom the death of Oleg restored his rights, saw, while casting on the throne, rising against him all the peoples who had become tributaries of Russia during the administration of his tutor. He overcame them, and compelled them to resume their yoke; but a nation hitherto unknown, emerging from the banks of the Yaik (Ural) and the Volga, exercised its courage longer: they were the Pechenegs, a people of Turkish origin, and equally formidable to the Russians and the Greeks.

After a treaty made with the Pechenegs, Igor directed his races towards the frontiers of the Greek empire. The peoples of the East, rich and weak, were a natural prey destined for the men of the North, poor and hardy for the labors of war. Also nothing was more frequent, in this first period of the history of Russia, than the incursions towards the South. The Russians then had the ascendancy of barbarism over a civilization which was decomposing. This tendency of aggrandizement still seems essential to the destiny of this empire; but by an inverse march, because its superiority over the populations of the East is founded today on the advantages of a nascent civilization, opposed to the disadvantages of an outdated civilization.

Igor devastated Paphlagonia and Bithynia. All the troops of the empire were withdrawn, and the impossibility of resistance on the part of the Greek populations seemed to exalt the fury of these barbarians, who massacred all those who fell into their hands. Some were put on the cross, others were impaled or buried alive; the priests especially seemed for them victims of choice: they liked to make them undergo particular tortures. If they happened to surprise them in the churches, they forced them to put on their most beautiful ornaments, played with them, and, piercing them with their long javelins, they said: "We have sung the mass of lances!"

Igor then turned his arms against the Drevliens, at the request of the leaders of his troops, that is to say the warriors who had followed him on his expeditions to the East. The latter were men of iron, living only on rapine; for them, fatigue was a pleasure and rest a torture. The Drevliens were defeated; but they were not long in conspiring to recover their independence, and massacred Igor and his people (945) in an ambush.

This prince having left a son in childhood, named Sviatoslav, Olga, his wife, took the reins of government. This princess, whom the chronicles of the time call Prekrasna, which means very beautiful, showed herself worthy, by the energy of her character, to be the wife of a barbarian hero and the mother of another; she avenged the death of her husband on the Drevliens: this vengeance was atrocious.

Wanting to become a Christian, Olga undertook the trip to Constantinople to learn about this religion. Constantine Porphyrogenitus then reigned in the old Greek empire: the chronicles of the time say that he fell in love with Olga, and that he wanted to marry her although she was sixty years old; but this tale is sufficiently refuted by Constantine himself, who left us the story of his life, and said, speaking of this Russian princess and the men she received at her court, that the empress, his wife, still lived.

Olga received the name Helen when she became a Christian. It is thought that his conversion and his trip to the capital of the Greek empire could still have had as their motive the intention of
multiplying with these beautiful regions of the South. As we can see, the political desires of Russia date back a long way.

However, the conversion of Olga (955) did not ensure the triumph of the Christian faith in her states. This conversion was imitated neither by her son nor by the nobles of her court; and, remarkably, these rude barbarians feared ridicule, a mild poison which ordinarily only affects polite men: "Do you want my friends to laugh at me," replied Sviatoslav to his mother's pious exhortations?

Sviatoslav was a warlike prince like his father; he even had in a higher degree the genius for conquest and devastation. He reigned twenty-seven years, and during these twenty-seven years he never ceased to have arms in hand. His warlike morals are the beautiful ideal of barbarism, but this precious barbarism multiplies the strength of man tenfold. He had no other habitation than the camps. His troops were not followed by any kind of crew, and he himself lived only on meat cooked over coals; he had no other bed than the earth, and no other pillow than the saddle of his horse. Thus lived the heroes of Homer. By means of this way of life, conforming to that of the Kalmucks, he could, like them, carry the war afar, without worrying about the subsistence of his army: the same animal which carried the warrior then served to feed him.

Sviatoslav thus ranged under his domination the southern regions of Russia comprised between the Tanais and Borysthenes, Tauric Chersonese and Hungary. He took from the Bulgarians all the towns they possessed on the Danube, and formed the design of establishing the seat of his empire, enlarged, in the town of Pereyslavets, now Prislav (Nufāru) in Rumelia.

The Emperor Nikephoros II PhOKas provoked an expedition of his ally Sviatoslav against the Bulgarians, eternal enemies of the Greek Empire. The Russians remained victorious after a bloody day; but, contrary to the faith of the treaties, they seemed disposed to maintain themselves in the provinces which victory had just subjugated to them. "We will not leave such a beautiful country", replied the barbarian to the Emperor's ambassadors, "until you have bought, with cash, the cities and the prisoners who are in our power; if you do not want to submit to this condition, withdraw yourself to Asia: you are women, while the rest of us are men."

With enemies of such insolence, it was difficult to avoid war: on both sides it was fought with relentlessness. The Russians, more daring than cunning, succumbed to the skill of the Greek generals. They had entrenched themselves around Silistra; seeing themselves surrounded by enemy cavalry, they pierced each other with their swords. "They believed", says Leon Deacon, "that he who is killed in combat will be, in the other world, the slave of the one under whom he died; also they stabbed themselves when they no longer had the hope to conquer or to flee, and died intimately convinced that they would preserve their freedom, at least, in the future life." We have seen among the Russians of our day the same ideas, the same beliefs, which eight centuries had only slightly altered or modified; which proves that this people walked slowly along the path of civilization, or rather that it was not fit to advance along this road.

The Russians fled after this defeat, leaving the banks of the Danube covered with their weapons. On the return from this disastrous expedition, Sviatoslav and the small number of his warriors
who escaped the massacre were exterminated by the Pechenegs, and their skulls, adorned with a circle of gold, served as cups for the victors.

The children of Sviatoslav divided the States of their father, and made war after the division. Kiev, Novgorod, and the country of the Drevliens made up these various dominations. Yaropolk assassinated Oleg; Vladimir assassinated Yaropolk, and thus united under his domination all the countries previously subjugated by his father. This Vladimir is nicknamed the *Great* in the history of Russia, and moreover he is reputed to be a *saint*, because he was the first sovereign of this empire who solidly established the Christian faith in his States, an enterprise vainly attempted by his ancestor Olga.

Before becoming a Christian (980), Saint Vladimir was given over to the practices of a bloodthirsty cult: he immolated to the god *Perun* prisoners of war and often even children of his nation.

Vladimir, touched by grace, undertook war against the Greek Empire, with the sole purpose to obtain priestly instruction and baptism. He could have converted at less expense; but to ask what he could obtain by force was, in the ideas of this barbarian, a step unworthy of a warrior.

On his return from his journey to Constantinople, Vladimir, as furious a Christian as he had been a cruel idolater, overthrew the idols before which he had lately prostrated himself, and treated with particular contempt the terrible *Perun*, his favorite divinity. His wooden statue, tied to the tail of a horse, was dragged to Borysthenes, and on the way, strong soldiers armed with sticks struck the degraded god, who was then thrown into the river.

The children of Vladimir waged a terrible war against each other. Iaroslav, who had shared the city and the country of Novgorod and who had revolted against his father, ended up prevailing over his brothers. It unites with the vast countries which depended on this capital, the principalities of Kiev, of Rostov and a considerable part of present-day Poland.

Iaroslav propagated the Christian religion in his States. Touched by the fate of his uncles Yaropolk and Oleg, who had died in the bosom of idolaters, he ordered that their bones, dug up, be purified by baptism. It was then that the pope attempted to attach Russia to the See of Rome, by arranging relations between that country and France, from which resulted a marriage between Henry I, King of France, and the second daughter of Sviatoslav*. This singular union, this unexpected relationship of two States so foreign to each other, gives rise to an impression in the mind which one would be hard put to define.

*The princess wife of Henry I was named Anne. She was the mother of Philippe I, fourth grandfather of Louis IX.

Iaroslav passes for the first legislator of Russia. It must be understood by this word, no doubt, that he had the existing laws or usages sanctioned by time coordinated and drawn up in a regular code, since we have just seen that the Russians, under Oleg, already had a rather complicated legislative edifice.
This prince, in spite of enlightenment superior to his century, conformed to the disastrous custom which dismembered the empire by dividing it among several competitors equal by birth. He left five sons, who destroyed each other. The state of anarchy bequeathed by his immediate heirs continued under their descendants. This capital vice in a primitive institution may be considered as the first cause which later delivered Russia up to the invasions of the Tartars.

Almost all the princes of this first dynasty, who kept the throne until the XVth Century, seem cast in a common mold of ferocity and barbarism; none of them had anything of the savage greatness of the soldier-kings who formed the first stems of their race. All this epoch, which corresponds with us to the second period of the feudal age, offers in Russia only the constant struggle of the elements of a feudalism which cannot succeed in establishing itself and consolidating itself.