

with the German Ambassador on the 24th instant.⁽³⁾ His Excellency thought that, as the question of retaining international troops in Northern China might be regarded as having some connection with the independence of the Chinese Empire, to the recognition of which both Great Britain and Russia were committed, the British and Russian Governments might well discuss the question. I said that I had intended to speak to Count Benckendorff on the subject, and that I would certainly do so.

His Excellency told me that he believed that Russia was a good deal disturbed by the references contained in the Anglo-Japanese Treaty to the "special interests" of Great Britain and Japan.⁽⁴⁾ Those special interests were not clearly defined in the Preamble. I said that I thought that the nature of those special interests was sufficiently indicated in the Articles which followed. Ours had particular reference to India; those of Japan to Corea. His Excellency dwelt upon the fact that the Treaty of Portsmouth, while admitting that Corea was to be under the paramount influence of Japan, recognised that it still maintained its existence as an independent State.⁽⁵⁾ He was anxious to know whether Great Britain intended to have a Representative at Seoul. He felt sure that France would also be ready to maintain one, and he believed that such a step would go far towards reassuring Russia. I promised His Excellency that I would carefully consider the suggestion which he had made.

[I am, &c.]
L[ANSDOWNE].

⁽³⁾ [This conversation is described in a despatch to Sir F. Lascelles No. 277 of October 24, 1905. F.O. Germany (Prussia) 1615. Its substance is sufficiently indicated by the summary given above.]

⁽⁴⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 165-7, No. 155, para. (c) of Preamble and Articles III and IV.]

⁽⁵⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 108, No. 101, Article II.]

III.—THE RAPPROCHEMENT UNDER THE NEW BRITISH ADMINISTRATION, DECEMBER 1905—MAY 1906.

No. 204.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Spring-Rice.

F.O. Russia 1697.

(No. 427.)

Sir,

Foreign-Office, December 19, 1905.

In conversation with the Russian Ambassador today, I said that I had hoped that an Agreement might be reached between Great Britain and Russia with regard to outstanding questions in which both countries were interested. The Ambassador said that he was himself responsible for any negotiations of this kind having been suspended, but he had felt that it was quite impossible to make any progress with them while things in Russia were in their present condition. I said I felt that that must be so, and that of course I should not press any question at this moment, but that, during this inevitable delay, it would be the policy of our Government not to do anything which would make the resumption of negotiations or a settlement more difficult later on. The Ambassador expressed great satisfaction at this, and asked if he might inform his Government of what I had said, to which I readily agreed.

[I am, &c.]
E[DWARD] G[REY].

Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, January 8, 1906.

Dillon called on me on the 1st with a communication from the Prime Minister. He said that Witte had always avoided the subject of foreign politics since he had taken office but that he had suddenly made a new departure. He had told him that in his opinion the friendship and sympathy of England was now of the greatest value to him and to Russia. During the war what Russia had needed was a strong military friend on her border. This need Germany had supplied. But now what Russia needed was not so much the support of a military power as that of a great liberal and commercial power. England's sympathy if afforded in some open and evident form would be of the very greatest service to the party of order. He said that Germany could give a finger's length of help and England an arm's length. France was so deeply implicated in Russia's financial situation that her opinion was discounted. But England was entirely independent of these considerations.

He said that if England could see her way to such an open and evident sign of sympathy he himself could undertake to arrange permanently for the settlement of all difficulties between the two countries in the form of a satisfactory treaty. Accordingly he wished Dillon to proceed at once to London and lay these considerations before you as coming from himself. I asked Dillon if he had any indication as to the form which Witte wished this open and evident sign of sympathy to take? Dillon said that he had once in the course of conversation mentioned a loan. I said that I did not see any other form in which the sympathy of England could be conclusively proved at the present moment, and that he must remember that a loan depended not on the will of our government but on the disposition of the city. I offered of course, if he wished to go, to give him a letter to you; at the same time I said that Hardinge was on his way; that the step was a very important one and that it seemed to me better in the interest of good relations (which Hardinge has at heart) not to take such a step without consulting the person most competent to give assistance. He said in reply that that was his own idea; that he had said so; that Witte had replied "then we shall have to do it through Lamsdorff and nothing will come of it"; that he had a rooted objection to all dealings with diplomatists, with whom he had to speak "diplomatically"; that he much preferred to send a messenger straight from himself who knew his inmost thoughts and could express them as he wished them to be expressed. I pointed out to Dillon that I could neither stop, nor advise, his going but that it would certainly be better, if he wished to have such a proposal carefully considered, to consult the Ambassador about it who in any case would be asked to report fully on the whole matter. He said that personally he did not wish to go and that he thought that Witte would probably insist on his going at once or not going at all. As the Ambassador returns on Friday the delay would not be very considerable.

I thought it best to tell the French Minister about it in general terms. He remarked that it would not in his opinion be a good thing for England and France or for either country alone to make a loan to Russia at the present juncture before the Duma met and before it was certain whether the government was about to renew the old order of things or seriously to inaugurate reforms. It would no doubt be of immense service to Witte, in the present desperate financial situation, if he was able to come before the Duma with a loan in his pocket which would make him independent of the sentiments of the representatives. On the other hand the popular parties would resent such a loan bitterly, which would be tantamount to an open declaration of sympathy and support to their enemies. He added that it

(1) [Grey MSS., Vol. 88.]

would be a very satisfactory arrangement for the German Bankers who had recently advanced money on short-term bonds to have those bonds repaid in good coin at the expense of England and France. He agreed that I had done right to offer no encouragement in Hardinge's absence.

It seems to me that the offer does not in fact amount to very much. We should promise to advance money immediately. (This is taking for granted that we could do so. As however Revelstoke has already signed an agreement with the French and German bankers to issue a loan as soon as the moment is opportune—which apparently it is not yet,—and the Jewish bankers are resolved not to assist Russia at the present moment I don't see what hope we should have of bringing about an advance.) Well suppose we were able to arrange the advance. Russia in reply would then announce her willingness to begin negotiations. But these negotiations would take a long time. And all the evidence is to the effect that at the present moment Russia would not be prepared to make any serious or permanent concessions. The Persian Minister is a fairly good judge and he is strongly of the opinion that Russia regards Persia as her predestined prey and that nothing would induce her to renounce her aims in any permanent form. In that case we should find ourselves confronted with a long and unsatisfactory squabble over details having already given away the one thing we had to give which Russia wanted. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽²⁾ [The omitted paragraphs refer to personal matters and the internal situation.]

No. 206.

Sir C. Hardinge to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/122.

(No. 41.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. January 10, 1906.

R. January 20, 1906.

I have the honour to report that I was received in private audience to-day at Tšarskoe Selo by their Majesties the Emperor and Empress of Russia and that I had the honour of presenting to the Emperor the King's letter announcing my recall.

During the course of a conversation with their Majesties which lasted about half an hour I seized the opportunity of assuring the Emperor in accordance with your instructions, that the attitude of His Majesty's Government at the Morocco Conference would be to fully support France in accordance with the terms of the Anglo-French Agreement.

The Emperor asked me if this was the policy of the Liberal Government and I replied that it was so, and that I had received only yesterday a telegram from you in this sense.

His Majesty remarked that in that case the two Governments would work together since Russia would also loyally support France at the Morocco Conference. I observed to His Majesty that public opinion was very uneasy in France owing to the obscurity surrounding the intentions of the Emperor William and the fear that he might spring a surprise upon Europe.

This feeling, I said, existed also in England though in a minor degree. The Emperor replied that the German Emperor had given several pacific assurances, but that he had received reports from the Russian Ambassador in Paris of the uneasiness prevailing there and he himself did not feel that he quite knew what the German

Emperor would do. He trusted however that the Conference would arrive at a satisfactory conclusion of its labours.

The Emperor spoke with satisfaction of the improvement which had taken place in the relations between England and Russia since the end of the war, and expressed his conviction that they would continue to improve.

Alluding to the internal situation the Emperor said that he hoped that there would now be no more disorders of such a serious nature as that which had occurred recently at Moscow. It could hardly be expected that the series of outrages would cease at once, but serious measures were being taken for the restoration of order which had every appearance of being successful.

Before taking leave of their Majesties the Emperor was graciously pleased to express his regret at my approaching departure from St. Petersburg, but he added that he was consoled by the thought that Russia would gain at the Foreign Office a warm advocate of friendly relations between the two countries. On dismissing me His Majesty handed me a case containing a jewelled snuff-box which he asked me to accept as a personal souvenir from him of my stay in Russia.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

No. 207.

Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, January 16, 1906.

To continue the curious story of Witte's advances. After Dillon had been told that the best thing Witte could do if he wished to effect an agreement with England was to wait for the Ambassador's return to St. Petersburg, nothing further happened until Hardinge's arrival. I told Dillon when he would come and he called at once. In the course of a long conversation he explained his idea, namely that the King should come here at once and arrange directly with the Emperor for an agreement with England. He argued that the Emperor was the only government in Russia and that nothing else was any real good. He urged that negotiation through Lamsdorff offered no guarantees; that it would lead to long delay and that the result would very likely be that the golden opportunity would be lost. Hardinge said he would call on Witte the next day. You will see his report. I asked Dillon the next day what his impression was as to the visit. Dillon said that Witte was much disappointed and that it was plain to him that he could not manage it "through diplomats." He had opened fire at once with a proposal that the King should come to St. Petersburg at once; Hardinge had talked of the danger to which the King would be thereby exposed. The conversation then drifted off to secondary topics. The attempt had failed. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours very sincerely,

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 83.]

⁽²⁾ [The succeeding paragraphs of this long letter refer to the Moroccan Conference and the internal situation in Russia.]

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

*St. Petersburg, January 26, 1906.*I had a long conversation with Count Benckendorff today. . . .⁽²⁾

With regard to relations between England and Russia he spoke at length.

When Lord Lansdowne was in office he had an arrangement with the French Ambassador under which the latter engaged to tell him when the moment was ripe for reopening the question of a general agreement. He was not quite sure whether under present circumstances the same agreement would hold good. I said he might be sure that you were in no sense less willing than Lord Lansdowne either to be on intimate terms with France, or to do all in your power in order to promote good relations with Russia. He was aware, I said, of your point of view which was, that you were anxious for a settlement of all questions at issue when there was a reasonable hope that a satisfactory and permanent solution could be arrived at, and that in the meantime you hoped that no action would be taken to render such a solution more difficult. I asked him what were the views of Count Lamsdorff. He said that Count Lamsdorff had spoken with very great satisfaction of the common action taken by the two governments in Crete and in the Near East. Russia had had difficulties with every country but England, who had acted loyally and cordially with Russia. This had evidently left a great impression on his mind. With regard to the question of a general settlement of outstanding questions he said that Count Lamsdorff was in principle favourable to it. At the same time, he (L[amsdorff]) said, that it was difficult in the general uncertain condition of affairs to negotiate. How could anyone bind Russia to anything in her present situation? At the same time, he said that he would much like to know what England was prepared to offer. In the same sense the Emperor had said to him that after the great disasters of the war and the not too honourable peace by which it had been concluded, a treaty with England, settling all pending questions with her, might be regarded as a sign of weakness unless that treaty contained stipulations which were evidently advantageous to Russia. Count Benckendorff expressed the personal opinion that if England were to agree to a dual arrangement with Russia as to the Dardanelles and Bosphorus (which in his judgement she would be not unwilling to accept) an agreement with England as to other pending questions would be popular in Russia especially if it contained some provision "for publication" which would appear to give Russia the longed-for commercial access to the Persian Gulf. As to a fortified post on the gulf he was convinced that Russia's experience in Port Arthur had effectually cured her of any such desire. His idea was that an agreement containing some such provisions was quite feasible. I asked him what procedure he would recommend in case England were ready to negotiate on this basis. He said that it seemed to him that there existed a strong desire on the part of the Russian Foreign Office to receive a proposal from England which could form a starting point. I observed that before England made renewed proposals she would probably wish to have some sort of assurance that there was a fair chance of a negotiation being successfully carried through. He at once said that under present circumstances no pledge of that nature could be made. Still a beginning must be made by someone. I observed that England had already made proposals which had been in the hands of Russia without effect. To quote one instance. England had submitted a proposal for a general arrangement which had received the Emperor's formal approbation. As a sign of her

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]⁽²⁾ [The omitted paragraphs refer to the Russian internal situation and the Moroccan Conference.]

good will and to facilitate negotiations England had been asked to withdraw her ships from Port Arthur. This step had immediately been followed by the occupation of Port Arthur by Russia, and there the negotiations had ended. The precedent was not encouraging. He said that the "atmosphere" was now different and that there was no fear of the recurrence of such incidents. What he felt was that a beginning should be made and that England should communicate her terms.

I then asked him (with reference to your remark that even if the moment were not ripe for commencing negotiations, the two governments could abstain from any action likely to prejudice good relations,)—whether it would not be possible to issue instructions to officials in Asia to observe a friendly or at any rate a conciliatory attitude; the special matter which I had in mind being the question of a loan to Persia coupled with political conditions. He said that both you and Lamsdorff had said that their respective governments were averse to making or allowing such a loan, and that he thought that this danger could be easily averted. There was no doubt that if at this moment England granted a loan to Persia with political conditions the effect would be very bad. I said that Lord Salisbury had been in negotiation with the Russian gov[ernmen]t on this very subject when the negotiations were suddenly interrupted by the announcement that Russia had already granted a loan. He said that he was sure such an incident would not be repeated as Count Witte who was responsible for the former loan was very anxious for a good understanding with England. He then spoke of his interview with the Emperor. His Majesty had spoken with regret of the departure of Sir C. Hardinge and had made some observations as to his not having been informed previously to the decision to recall him having been taken. I reminded him of the King's message to the Emperor but he said that this had been received after the transfer of Sir C. Hardinge had become known. "What," said His Majesty "would they think in England if I recalled you without telling them beforehand?" I explained that as the King did not possess the means which were at the disposal of the German Emperor for communicating directly with the Emperor of Russia, a telegram would have to pass through the diplomatic channel and that there were departmental reasons why it was impossible to make such an announcement before it was absolutely settled. Count Benckendorff said that he quite understood, and that he had done his best to explain but the conditions were so different in Russia that it was hard to make the matter clear to his master. The Emperor had then spoken of his hope soon to see the King in Russia. He had explained to the Emperor that there were difficulties as to a land journey under present circumstances and also that in the present state of affairs a visit to the Capital was out of the question. The Emperor objected that at any rate a visit to Tsarskoe would be perfectly feasible and would be a source of great pleasure.⁽³⁾ Count Benckendorff had replied that such a visit could hardly bear the character of an official visit to the Emperor of Russia by the King of England. He added to me that it was evident that the Emperor was anxious for the visit and that it would have an immense political importance. He threw out the suggestion that negotiations or pourparlers could be begun in secret and that an entente, carefully framed in outline beforehand could be "clinched" during personal conversations between the Sovereigns. I said that as Sir C. Hardinge was now at the Foreign Office there was an admirable opportunity for conducting negotiations through a channel with which the Emperor was familiar and which was personally acceptable to His Majesty, and that Sir Arthur Nicolson the new Ambassador here was at present acting in cooperation with the Emperor's representative which was a good augury for future good feeling. He agreed. The whole conversation was perfectly informal and I repeat it at length not because it was in any sense an official communication but because it may give a clue to the state of feeling here. In conclusion I may repeat that there was no sign whatever of any wish of the Russian Government to give any

⁽³⁾ [cp. Sir Sidney Lee: *King Edward VII* (1927), II, pp. 564-5. The proposal is there mentioned in a letter of Mr. Spring-Rice to Lord Knollys of January 31, 1906.]

indication of what it was prepared to give in exchange for the favours suggested. Nothing could exceed the friendliness shown by Count Benckendorff to England. His sincere desire to see a better understanding between the countries was most evident.

Yours sincerely,
CECIL SPRING-RICE.

No. 209.

Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 179/128.

(No. 119.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. February 12, 1906.

Sir,

R. February 19, 1906.

I have the honour to report that Count Lamsdorff has been lately the object of violent abuse in the press chiefly in connection with the Serbo-Austrian conflict.⁽¹⁾ Rumours of his resignation are again circulated. These rumours are not of recent date (see Sir Charles Hardinge's telegram of August 16⁽²⁾) but are very persistent. A short time ago similar rumours were circulated in connection with the name of Count Benckendorff.

From several sources, which ought to be well informed I gather that, as a matter of fact, Count Lamsdorff stands very well with the Emperor, and with his own department. He has however apprehensions in connection with the meeting of the Duma. If it meets it will most probably order an enquiry into the cause of the war and Count Lamsdorff (although his defence is easy) cannot defend himself without inculpating the Emperor. That he will never consent to do and would prefer to take the blame and resign.

As to the causes of the attacks on him in the press they are attributed (so far as they are organized, as is believed from abroad) to his attitude towards the Austro-Russian agreement and the Anglo-French *entente*. In the former case it is no doubt largely owing to the personal characteristics of himself and the Russian Ambassador at Constantinople that the agreement of 1897 has worked without a hitch, and I understand from the Austrian Ambassador that the German Government has expressed much annoyance at the manner in which Austria has acted independently of her German ally in the Balkan Peninsula: the especial cause of complaint being that she in concert with Russia and the western powers has consistently taken the side of reform against the Sultan.

With regard to the second case. Count Lamsdorff as soon as the Anglo-French convention was published in 1903 [*sic*] repaired to Paris with an autograph letter of the Emperor's approving of the *entente*. He even obtained leave (which is rare in this country) for the publication of the Imperial message in its exact wording, although without the signature. It was believed, that had it not been for the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war Count Lamsdorff would have negotiated an agreement between England and Russia.

On the publication of the Anglo-Japanese treaty of last year, Count Witte, after his interview with the Kaiser, strongly urged a coalition between France, America, Russia and Germany⁽³⁾ as a counterpoise to England and Japan. Count Lamsdorff was instructed to make overtures to France in this sense. On the refusal of France to join,⁽⁴⁾ and the repudiation by the President of the United States of the intentions attributed to him, the proposal was dropped, mainly on account of Count Lamsdorff's own objections to enter into an Agreement with Germany alone.

(1) [*v. Gooch & Temperley*, Vol. V. pp. 148-67.]

(2) [This is an error for August 17. Telegram No. 146 of August 17 reported the rumour of Count Lamsdorff's resignation and of his proposed succession by M. Isvolski.]

(3) [*v. supra*, p. 205, No. 195, and p. 217, No. 203.]

(4) [*v. supra*, p. 214, No. 201.]

Count Lamsdorff was held to have been partly to blame for the failure of the proposed coalition and as reported by Sir Charles Hardinge at the time, his removal formed an important item in the German programme.

As a reply to these attempts Count Lamsdorff received a high decoration from his Sovereign and he has since, I understand, maintained his position. Count Witte himself abandoned the idea of an anti-English coalition and has since become the advocate of an *entente* with England.

The only course which remained open to Germany was to formally abandon her designs on Chinese territory, withdraw her troops and assume towards China that rôle of *Amicus Curiae* which she adopts towards Mahomedan governments.

These negotiations were described in detail in Sir Charles Hardinge's Despatches Nos. 586, 594, 604 and 623⁽⁵⁾ of last year. They appear to be known to the Austrian Ambassador who spoke to me about them recently. He added that an important part of the scheme was a reconciliation between Germany and France, on the subject of Morocco, through Russia's mediation, which Count Witte undertook to effect.

With the refusal of France to join a coalition against England this proposal fell through with the rest of the design. To this fact may perhaps be attributed the present refusal of the Emperor of Russia to make an appeal to the German Emperor on the subject of Morocco as demanded by France and if Baron d'Aerenthal's [*sic*] statements be correct the whole incident has a good deal to do with the bitterness of the German Government against France and also against Count Lamsdorff, especially if it was the case, as was believed by Sir Charles Hardinge, that he succeeded in persuading the Emperor that unless France joined the coalition, it would be unwise for Russia to accept the German proposals.

Monsieur Bompard in speaking to me about Count Lamsdorff's position, said that the press campaign that was being organized against him, much resembled that conducted with so much success against Monsieur Delcassé. The recent fall of an Italian Foreign Minister of whom Germany disapproved, and the appointment of a statesman in his place whose German leanings were notorious, was another striking example of the influences which could be and were being exercised by Germany in the internal politics of foreign nations, and which constituted in his opinion, a serious danger to the tranquillity of Europe.

Count Benckendorff told me in strict confidence that it was not in Count Lamsdorff's interest that His Majesty's Government should make any public statement in his favour or should appear to take any special interest in his retention of his office. I venture to suggest that his nervousness with regard to the resumption of negotiations with England is partly due to the consciousness that if he pressed the matter forward, especially before public opinion was ripe for it, the attacks upon him both at Court and in the press would only increase in virulence.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

MINUTES.

This is an interesting and accurate account of Count Lamsdorff's position during the past six months. It is satisfactory to hear that he still stands well with the Emperor but I gathered before I left Russia that he would not remain in office after the meeting of the Duma. He holds that having for many years been responsible solely to the Emperor he cannot now submit to any interference by the Duma with the Department for Foreign Affairs. He is a strong advocate of autocratic Government. He passed through many difficult moments during the war and I think that this country is indebted to him for his moderating counsels. He was entirely opposed to the proposed coalition against England after the publication of the Japanese Treaty last October, and he did not disguise his satisfaction when the French Ambassador spontaneously rejected the proposals which by the Emperor's orders and at Count Witte's instigation he was compelled to make.

C. H.

E. G.

There is much matter for reflection in this.

⁽⁵⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 202-3, No. 193, pp. 205-7, No. 195, pp. 208-10, No. 197, and pp. 214-5, No. 201.]

Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, March 1, 1906.

. . . .⁽²⁾ Benckendorff will soon be back in London. He will I suppose talk about the entente which he hopes to arrange. He sees no difficulty about Paris. The arrangement made between Austria and Russia in 1897 and which has been loyally carried out by Count Lamsdorff with (on the whole) good results shows that it is quite possible to arrive at a working arrangement with Russia for common action. The object of the agreement was to maintain the political *status quo* at the same time to act in common with the object of securing for the populations some tolerable conditions of existence. It has not done much but it has kept the peace in the Balkans and has prevented the two nations from quarrelling continually as they did before the arrangement. It is very unfavourably regarded by Germany who thinks that Austria is inclined to separate herself from German policy in Turkey. It works very well, as I hear from the Austrian Ambassador here. It is always the subject of attack on the part of the Jingo newspapers but the Emperor has kept loyally to it. With regard to other considerations I learn from both Benckendorff and Hartwig (head of the Asiatic Department who is now going as Minister to Persia) that Russia desires to obtain our assent to that interpretation of the Black Sea clause which was advocated by Lord Salisbury at Berlin, namely that the clause represents only an *engagement to respect the independent determinations of the Sultan conformably with existing treaties*. Shouvalow answered that Russia regarded the clause *as part of the law of nations* and therefore *as independent of the decisions of the Sultan*. The practical effect of our modifying the view taken by us during the Japanese war (that is, the view of Count Shouvalow) would be that if the Sultan gave his permission for ships to pass the straits we should have no objection. The French will no doubt be informed of any negotiations which may take place in the matter and if so we might excite their apprehension by not telling them. It is curious that both the Ambassador and Hartwig should have used practically the same language and it looks as if a formal proposal in this sense would be made.

I can see that your frank communications about Morocco and also about the Persian loan have had a very good effect here and nothing could exceed the friendliness of the Foreign Office.

Our relations will very much improve as soon as the Duma is a working institution. The reactionary party who have had the command of the press for years have done all in their power to stir up popular feeling against us. Now the public is provided with numbers of pamphlets very well written for popular consumption which point out the greatness of England and how it is all due to her free institutions. If this view prevails we shall soon have more friendly relations between the two peoples. I fear that the Government will do its best to influence the elections by the exercise of undue pressure and that its present policy is one of repression of a very determined and cruel character. But there are indications that the Emperor is averse to this policy and that he will do something to stop it. But he has no initiative and no courage of the active character. It is possible to make him understand but difficult to make him act. He would like to work with the moderate men of the Zemstvos but is afraid that they will know nothing of business and that they will be unable to manage the administrative machine. So he folds his hands, tells them they make very nice speeches, and does nothing.

Witte is not a friend of reaction although he is quite willing to go in for it or at any rate to allow his government to carry on such a policy. He prefers to intrigue with the extremists of both parties and his predominant feeling seems to be in

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

⁽²⁾ [The first part of this letter deals with the Moroccan question.]

jealousy of anyone respectable, moderate or clever enough to take his place. A reactionary government would suit him well enough for it would not last long and he could overthrow it. A moderate and sensible government with a moderate man at its head would be fatal to his chances. The general feeling is that he thinks only of himself. But then he may be right. At present no one has appeared with strength enough to take his position.

Yours sincerely,
C. SPRING-RICE.

Bompard said very explicitly that the language held by the Emperor to him showed quite clearly that he was *not* under the Kaiser's influence at all—or at least not at the moment of talking.

No. 211.

Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, March 15, 1906.

. . . .⁽²⁾ I hear you saw Dillon. He gave your message to Witte who was much pleased. He also saw Lord Knollys who called in Esher who listened attentively to Dillon's message. They both said there was too much danger in a journey to advise the King to undertake it. Benckendorff saw the Emperor twice. He was very friendly in his expressions about England and seemed very much gratified at the way in which we were acting together in different parts of the world. But he said that he would like to see the King.⁽³⁾ B[enckendorff] wished that his name should not be mentioned. The reason is that the Emperor would not like to have it said that he had asked the King and that he had refused. The moment is opportune if it can be managed. It is like visiting a man just declared bankrupt. I remember in Japan there was the custom if you heard that a man's house was in danger from fire to call on him at the last moment before the fire took hold. Witte's idea is that a visit now or in the early summer would have a much greater effect than if it was put off till all danger had passed, or until there was no court to visit.

The German press is persistently saying that the Kaiser is to meet the King in the spring and that the King wishes it, and this makes it much more marked if the King does not come. The Emperor thinks that Peterhof would suit as the King could come by sea. This would be like the Emperor's own visit to Balmoral. . . .⁽⁴⁾

Yours sincerely,
CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

⁽²⁾ [The opening paragraph refers to the Moroccan Conference.]

⁽³⁾ [The project seems to have dropped after a memorandum written by the King on March 22, v. Sir Sidney Lee: *King Edward VII* (1927), II, p. 565.]

⁽⁴⁾ [The rest of this letter touches on the Cretan question and Persian affairs.]

No. 212.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Spring-Rice.

F.O. 178/124.

(No. 129.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 19, 1906.

Count Benckendorff read to me to-day some extracts from a message which Count Lamsdorff had desired him to communicate. This was to the effect that the Russian Government had noticed with much satisfaction how, without any anterior agreement, England had gradually shown a tendency to co-operate with Russia. He instanced

our co-operation in Crete and in Macedonian Reforms, where he had observed that, even when Lord Lansdowne had wished to make a proposal which was not entirely in accord with Russian views, it had been done in such a way as to make the Russian Government feel that co-operation with them was desired. He further instanced the Algeciras Conference as evidence of our working together.

I said that I was very glad to receive such a message, and from some things in Count Lamsdorff's message I gathered that the Russian Government might perhaps wish to go further and to have something in the nature of an *entente*, such as we had with France.

Count Benckendorff seemed to think that, owing to the unsettled condition of affairs in Russia, it was somewhat difficult for the Russian Government to come to us with offers which might be used against them in Russia at the present time.

I said that every arrangement of this kind must have two sides, and of course what we should expect would be that repose should be guaranteed on our Indian frontier. I thought we could guarantee that on our side there would be repose, in the sense of not pushing forward into Asia, but we should want to be sure that if we maintained this attitude there would be no changes in the Russian frontier which would operate to our disadvantage or disturb the prospects of peace. In Europe we had, as Count Lamsdorff had observed, found no difficulty in co-operation. In Asia it would perhaps be easier for us to arrange for co-operation now than it had been a few years ago. At any rate, I said, we had done our best to keep the door open for agreement, for we had lately been very much pressed to lend money to the Persian Government, which we had declined to do, because we could not lend it without making conditions which would alter the situation in Persia.

Count Benckendorff was aware of this, but the only observation he made was that he did not think Russia would have much difficulty in securing the condition we desired on the Indian frontier, and he said nothing as to what requests Russia might have to make on her side with regard to that or any other question. He evidently regarded the matter as one for further consideration as to how far the good relations between Russia and ourselves, which are at present entirely indefinite, could take some more definite form.

He asked me what news I had from Algeciras. I said that everything now depended upon whether Germany would give up the idea of having police of a third power at Casa Blanca, and if so what she would ask in return. If she gave up Casa Blanca but asked concessions which the French could not accept it would of course not advance matters. But I saw some reason to hope that Germany really desired a settlement, and if so I hoped the Conference might end in an Agreement.

[I am, &c.]

E[DWARD] G[REY].

No. 213.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Spring-Rice.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Spring-Rice,

Foreign Office, March 26, 1906.

Count Benckendorff has given us copies of a number of documents relating to a supposed secret agreement by which England and Japan guarantee the territorial integrity of the possessions of the Sultan of Turkey in Asia Minor, and bind themselves to help the Imperial Ottoman Government by their united forces against any attack upon the Ottoman Empire on the Asiatic side.⁽²⁾

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

⁽²⁾ [*cp. supra*, pp. 213-4, No. 200.]

The most circumstantial of these documents is a supposed telegram from Musurus Pasha, the Turkish Ambassador in London, to the first Secretary of the Sultan, dated January 29th, 1906, in which Musurus states that I have just communicated to him the definitive text of the secret article to the above effect.

No such article exists, there is no secret article or understanding of any kind between us and Japan; the published alliance contains everything that has been agreed upon between us. The supposed guarantee of Turkey has never been mentioned between us and Japan, nor have we ever mentioned such a proposal to Musurus or at Constantinople, and we have undertaken no new engagement of any kind with regard to the Turkish Empire. If it is possible to make a denial more categorical than this I am quite ready to do it.

What does interest me is the circumstantial character of the documents that have been supplied to the Russian Government. It has taken some trouble to invent them and there must have been a strong motive for doing this and conveying them to the Russian Government. But Count Lamsdorff is probably as well, or better, able than I am to guess their origin and motive.

You may give a copy of this letter to Count Lamsdorff.

[Yours sincerely,
E. GREY.]

Enclosure in No. 218.

*Télégramme de Musurus Pasha au Premier Secrétaire du Sultan en date du
29 Janvier, 1906.*

Private.⁽³⁾

Le Ministre des Affaires Etrangères d'Angleterre vient de me communiquer le texte définitif de l'article secret additionnel au traité d'alliance Anglo-Japonais qui a été établi par lui de concert avec l'Ambassadeur du Japon. Je vous transmet la traduction turque de cet article :—

“ Les Gouvernements de Grande Bretagne et du Japon pour compléter les stipulations du traité conclu entre elles le 12 Août 1905 sont tombés d'accord sur l'article suivant qu'ils prennent l'obligation de tenir strictement secret. Les Gouvernements de Grande Bretagne et du Japon déclarent qu'ils garantissent l'intégrité territoriale des possessions de Sa Majesté le Sultan en Asie Mineure et seront tenus de porter secours au Gouvernement Impérial Ottoman par leur forces réunies contre toute attaque dont l'Empire Ottoman serait l'objet du côté de l'Asie. Cet article additionnel et secret aura la même force et valeur que s'il était mot par mot inséré dans le texte du traité susmentionné du 12 Août 1905 et restera en vigueur pour la même durée.”

Les textes Français et Anglais de l'article précité ont été expédiés par l'Ambassadeur Turc à Londres par poste.

MINUTES.

There is a mystery about this affair: I do not believe that Musurus invented this telegram; but someone has invented it and given it to the Russians. This is the sort of thing that has gone on for years; now for the first time the Russians are giving us the opportunity of exposing the lies.

E. G.

This last fact is worth all the lies put together.

H. C-B.

(³) [Grey MSS., Vol. 38.]

No. 214.

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, April 8, 1906.

Witte said the other day that he was in favour of an understanding with England but that there was no hope of a satisfactory arrangement unless the Emperor took the matter up and he did not believe that he would unless the King said he would come and visit him at Peterhof. He is of course desirous of getting a loan before the Duma meets and wants the help of England. Perhaps Russia would formulate some terms or other if she had hopes of getting money from us. But unfortunately she seems to think that the favours must be all on our side. On the whole I don't think that it would be possible for Lamsdorff whose position is very weak to make any proposal or to give any definite answer to a proposal of ours unless he had orders from his master which is not likely at present. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,

C. SPRING RICE.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]⁽²⁾ [The last paragraph of this letter describes the internal situation in Russia.]

No. 215.

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, April 10, 1906.

I asked to see Count Lamsdorff yesterday and called by appointment. He said he was just on the point of writing to me as he had heard from Count Benckendorff that I had an important communication to make.

I gave him copy of your private letter of March 26,⁽²⁾ which I enclosed in a letter to him giving the substance in French (he does not understand English) and adding—as I thought I was justified in doing—a warm acknowledgement of the “perfect frankness” displayed by him in communicating the documents.

He read the letter attentively and said that he was very glad to receive it: he would show it to the Emperor at once and it would have, he was sure, an excellent effect. He was convinced by experience that the wisest policy in diplomatic dealings was a policy of frankness. The incident reminded him of the famous “Copenhagen letters,” the forged correspondence respecting Bulgaria, which had been communicated to the Emperor Alexander and by him shown to Bismarck who was thereby enabled to refute the calumny. He gave me no indication of the source or origin of the present forgeries; their object was however evident. He added, with earnestness, that the present moment would probably be fruitful in such attempts to sow distrust between England and Russia, as the fact that Germany had refused a loan to Russia while England and France were making one, would give rise to the supposition that an alliance was brewing between the three. The weapon to use against such

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 228–9, No. 213.]

machinations was the one which had been so effective in the present instance—namely the frank interchange of ideas and the immediate communication of any “incriminating” documents. . . . (*)

Yours sincerely,
CECIL SPRING RICE.

(*) [The rest of this letter refers to the position of the Dalai Lama and closes with a further reference to the forgeries.]

[ED. NOTE.—On March 28, Sir E. Grey wrote a private letter to Lord Knollys with reference to the desirability of a visit by King Edward to the Emperor Nicholas II. The letter closes with the following statement: “All therefore that I want to do for the moment is to point out what is to be desired as an object of foreign policy and how entirely it will in the long run depend upon the King: but for the present it is impossible to come to any decision and we must wait upon events.” Grey MSS., Vol. 64.]

No. 216.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 971/125.

(No. 287.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 23, 1906.

Count Benckendorff told me to-day that the German Ambassador at St. Petersburg had, by order of his Government, made enquiry regarding the reports in the Press as to an *Entente* between Russia and England on the subject of their reciprocal interests in Turkey, Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet, and had declared that the German Government would be very glad of any arrangement of this kind which did not damage German interests. He had said, however, that the German Government hoped that Russia would not put Germany, in this matter, in the presence of a *fait accompli*, and added that the question of the Bagdad Railway directly affected the interests of Germany, and that the attitude of the Russian Government on this question had, in the eyes of Germany, a special importance. M. Isvolsky had replied, by order of the Emperor, that the Russian Government knew how to appreciate the frankness of the step which the German Government had taken. The tendencies towards an arrangement between England and Russia for Asiatic affairs had not yet taken any concrete form, and had not had hitherto any other result than to maintain the *status quo* in these affairs. But a concrete *Entente* between England and Russia might become the natural result of the situation, and consequently the Russians look act with satisfaction of the declaration which the German Government had made to them in view of this eventuality. M. Isvolsky had also said that they recognised the German interests in the question of the Bagdad Railway, and that they would not take any decision in connection with it without previous friendly explanations with the German Government.⁽¹⁾

I said that M. Isvolsky had described the situation and the feeling between Russia and England in terms with which I entirely agreed; that I was to be asked a question in Parliament with regard to the reported Agreement between Russia and England; that I must reply that such an Agreement does not exist as reported in the Press; but that I would adjust my answer to make it agree with the language used

⁽¹⁾ [A memorandum in French describing M. Isvolski's conversation with Herr von Schoen is attached to the draft of this despatch. The memorandum appears to come through Count Benckendorff from M. Isvolski, though it is unsigned. It is exactly identical in substance with the first paragraph of this despatch.]

by M. Isvolsky. I also said that nothing was further from our desire than to use friendship with Russia as a lever to create difficulties with Germany, either for Russia or for ourselves. As in the case of our *entente* with France, we would regard it as not directed in any hostile sense against any other Power.

I told Count Benckendorff that Germany had not yet approached us about the Bagdad Railway, but they might do so at any time, and it was, therefore, important that the Russian Government should come to a decision about it. We had not settled on what precise terms we might be willing to co-operate, if asked to do so, and we could not settle this till we knew the conditions on which Russia might be willing to come into the enterprise.

I reminded Count Benckendorff that, though I had not put forward any general proposals for an *entente*, yet the Bagdad Railway and present events in Persia, on which I had proposed co-operation, were two very important subjects which might carry us some way towards a general Agreement.

[I am, &c.]

E[DWARD] G[REY].

No. 217.

Question asked in the House of Commons, May 24, 1906.

(*Parl. Deb.*, 4th ser., vol. 157, p. 1416.)

Mr. William Redmond (Clare, E.): I beg to ask the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs whether he can make any statement as to the alleged agreement arrived at between His Majesty's Government and Russia.

Sir Edward Grey: I cannot make any statement about the alleged agreement as described in the Press, because such an agreement does not exist. But I may add that there has been an increasing tendency for England and Russia to deal in a friendly way with questions concerning them both as they arise. This has on more than one occasion lately led the two Governments to find themselves in co-operation. It is a tendency which we shall be very glad to encourage and which, if it continues, will naturally result in the progressive settlement of questions in which each country has an interest, and in strengthening friendly relations between them.

IV.—THE PERIOD OF THE MAKING OF THE CONVENTION,
1906-7.

No. 218.

Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/125.

(No. 329.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. May 24, 1906.

R. May 28, 1906.

I have the honour to state that Monsieur Izvolsky told me yesterday that the news as regarded the Shah's health was better. There therefore appeared to be no present reason to take serious steps. He said that he had no doubt Mr. Grant Duff had already received instructions to act jointly with his Russian colleague in support of the Vali Ahd's succession to the throne. He had himself sent corresponding instructions to the Russian Chargé d'Affaires at Tehran. I observed that it might be advisable that the two Legations should have a certain sum at their disposal in