

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

order to conciliate the troops and induce them to maintain their allegiance to the Vali Ahd on the death of the Shah. On the occasion of the present Shah's accession the question of a largesse to the troops had proved a serious one and it was as well that the two Governments should be prepared to take steps if necessary. He agreed in principle and said that Monsieur Hartwig, who left yesterday for his post, had spoken to him on the subject. Had I any instructions in regard to the matter? I mentioned the conversation which you had with the Russian Ambassador on the 11th instant in which you had spoken as to the possibility of a joint loan. He said that he had received a report of this conversation and that he was quite agreed, in principle, with the opinions you had expressed. At the same time the information at his disposal was not sufficiently definite to warrant a decision. He had the whole subject under his consideration and would inform you later when he had been able to master the subject.

He then proceeded to say that the German Ambassador had called upon him to make a communication on the subject of the information published in the Standard as to a supposed Anglo-Russian *entente*.⁽¹⁾ Herr von Schoen had said that so far as such an understanding made for the peace of world Germany could only hail it with satisfaction. With regard to one point only he had an observation to make. This was, that part of the published basis of the agreement which concerned the Bagdad Railway. This was the subject of a concession granted by the Sultan to the Deutsche Bank and was therefore specifically a German interests [*sic*], as to which Germany had every right to be consulted. Monsieur Izvolsky had, he said, immediately telegraphed the substance of this conversation to London in order that it might be, *en toute franchise* communicated to you.⁽²⁾ He regarded the communication as satisfactory as it showed that Germany had, as a matter of fact, no objection to an *entente* between England and Russia. With regard to the Bagdad Railway he considered that the contention of Germany was just, and that German claims ought to be considered. I said that you had never left any room for doubt in all your communications on the subject or in the communications made through Sir Charles Hardinge, that in seeking an agreement with Russia His Majesty's Government was aiming at an agreement which made for peace and not an agreement to be directed against the interests of any third Power. With regard to the Bagdad Railway the question was whether or no Great Britain should participate, in common with France, in the enterprise inaugurated by Germany. We had hitherto refused the German offer to participate mainly because we were not willing, as long as Russia was opposed to the project, to enter into a combination which Russia might regard as an unfriendly act. Should Russia withdraw her objections, we should, in common with France, be more willing to give a favourable answer to the German proposals for financial participation, if in other respects they appeared satisfactory. There was no question of acting in the matter without considering Germany, which indeed, as the concession was a German one, was impossible.

Monsieur Izvolsky said that at first sight he thought that the views expressed by you to Count Benckendorff were such as he could recommend to the Emperor; but he was unable to give a definite answer until the competent authorities had been consulted.

I subsequently spoke to the French Ambassador on the subject. His Excellency said that he had not mentioned the matter of the Anglo-Russian negotiations to Monsieur Izvolsky as he thought that it would be wiser to wait until he was more sure of his ground. Monsieur Izvolsky had not spoken to him of the communication made by the German Ambassador. On the subject of the Bagdad Railway he had

(1) [May 19, 1906. The article refers to reports of an Anglo-Russian Agreement in the Berlin press, and, while regarding these as in "anticipation of facts," sketches the probable lines of the expected Anglo-Russian Convention. The foreign papers, which reproduced the article, gave it a more definite form than it bears in the original.]

(2) [*cp. supra*, pp. 231-2, No. 216.]

spoken to Monsieur Izvolsky, Count Witte and the director of the General Staff. The former had given a favourable answer in principle but had reserved a definite reply until he should have consulted the competent authorities. Count Witte had informed him, that on reconsideration, he had changed his mind with regard to the matter and was now prepared to recommend Russia to withdraw her opposition. The same answer had been received from the military authorities who no longer appeared to consider that the construction of the line was injurious to Russia's military interests. Monsieur Bompard said that the director of the Deutsche Bank at Constantinople had approached Sir Nicholas O'Connor with regard to the participation of English capital and that he had subsequently proceeded to Paris where he had made a similar proposal with regard to French participation to the directors of the Ottoman Bank. It was noticeable however that the offers had been solely made with regard to financial participation and the inducements put forward were solely those incident on the issue of a loan in Paris. Nothing had been said either of the industrial advantages incident on construction, or on political or commercial control, or participation in control.

With regard to the general question Monsieur Bompard made the following remarks. The denial of the intention to offer a loan to Persia, if made by Germany, would correspond exactly to Count Tattenbach's similar denial of the intention to make an advance to Morocco,—a denial which did not as a matter of fact prevent Germany making an arrangement which was hardly distinguishable from a loan. The steps taken by the Director of the Deutsche Bank pointed to the desire of Germany to obtain French capital but they also pointed to the desire of Germany to restrict French co-operation to one of a purely financial nature. The Government however could not and would not participate without giving due consideration to the general commercial and political aspects of the question.

With regard to the question of the observations made by Herr v[on] Schoen as to a *rapprochement* between England and Russia, similar friendly observations had been made as to the *rapprochements* made between Italy and France, between Austria and Russia and between France and England. But it was not to be denied that in all these cases Germany had been untiring in her efforts to destroy the force of all these agreements, while protesting publicly that she regarded them with favour. Monsieur Bompard therefore considered that while accepting with satisfaction the friendly sentiments of Germany the two Governments should not lose sight of the fact that the advice and assistance of Germany would not always and invariably be given with a view to the furtherance of harmony. The two Governments should act for themselves according to their own interests. They should of course make it plain that their efforts to come to a mutual agreement did not and could not entail any consequences injurious to any power which sincerely desired peace. But they should act not through intermediaries, but directly, unless they were anxious to pay somewhat heavy brokerage.

He pointed out further that as regards the Bagdad railway it was not advisable that the three Powers (France England and Russia) should act separately, by separate and independent negotiations, with Germany. They should act as a unit and if they did so the terms obtained would be better. For this purpose it was most necessary that they should come to a common understanding as soon as possible. This he said, not with any hostile feeling towards Germany, but from the purely business point of view.

He added that although as he had told me, he had not thought it advisable as yet to speak on the subject of Anglo-Russian relations, which he had abstained from doing because he was not yet sufficiently clear as to the policy which would be pursued by the new Government and because, in principle, he thought it was better that Russia and England should fight out their battle by themselves, on the ground of their own private interests and without foreign interference,—yet His Majesty's Embassy might rest assured that they might count on the friendly and willing co-operation of their French Colleagues in case any question of friction should

arise which could be usefully *aplani* by the offices of a mutual friend. I said I was sure that in the future as in the past his friendly offices would be appealed to if the occasion arose.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING RICE.

MINUTE.

I think Mr. Grant Duff already has instructions to support the Valiahd in concert with his Russian colleague at Teheran.

E. G.

No. 219.

Sir A. Johnstone to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/125.

(No. 64.) Secret.

Copenhagen, D. May 27, 1906.

Sir,

R. June 5, 1906.

Monsieur Crozier, the French Minister here, who has been on leave in Paris during more than two months, returned last week, and yesterday I had the opportunity of a long and confidential conversation with him.

We discussed the nomination of Monsieur Isvolsky as Russian Foreign Minister, and Monsieur Crozier's remarks in this connection may prove of interest as he was very intimate with Monsieur Isvolsky whom he invited, when the Russian Minister was in Paris last March, to meet Monsieur Bourgeois at luncheon.

During the Russo-Japanese war moreover, and during the time when Monsieur Isvolsky was feeling very keenly the Russian defeats, it was to Monsieur Crozier that he turned for sympathy, and the remarks he then made on European politics, may furnish an index to the line he may be expected to pursue, now that he is in charge of the Foreign Office at St. Petersburg.

Believing, as I do, that Monsieur Isvolsky is no very ardent partisan of the Russo-French alliance, I sounded Monsieur Crozier as to his views on this subject, and I ascertained that, whilst he was of opinion that Monsieur Isvolsky would find it necessary from financial and political reasons to adhere to the dual arrangement, he was distrustful of His Excellency's sympathy with, and leanings towards Germany.

Monsieur Crozier alluded especially to Monsieur Isvolsky's friendship with Herr von Schoen, lately promoted from here to the Embassy at St. Petersburg, and said that he feared the German Ambassador would personally be at a great advantage with his other colleagues from his previous intimacy with the Minister. Monsieur Crozier added that Monsieur Isvolsky during the winter and spring of 1905, had frequently alluded to the friendly attitude of Germany and the gratitude he felt for it, and Monsieur Crozier had several times reminded him that the Russian Government owed a still deeper debt of gratitude to the French than they did to the German Government.

It was fairly evident to me from this portion of the conversation that Monsieur Isvolsky had held the scales pretty evenly balanced between his French and German colleagues, both of whom have possibly informed their Governments of the friendship felt by His Excellency to their respective countries.

Monsieur Crozier in the course of further conversation told me that Monsieur Isvolsky was no friend of the Mürsteg programme, as he was an opponent of the extension, at present at any rate, of Russian influence in the far East, and considered that her energies ought to be turned towards Constantinople. Monsieur Isvolsky, so said Monsieur Crozier, had been most desirous of being named Ambassador to Turkey whenever the post was vacant, and His Excellency had frequently stated to Monsieur Crozier that his country had made a mistake in allowing Austria-Hungary to obtain a position equal to that of Russia in the Balkans. I was serving in Vienna when Count Kapnist died there, and I then heard from a good source that the Austrian-Hungarian

Government had signified to the Russian Government privately their disinclination to receive Monsieur Isvolsky as Ambassador, and it appears to me quite possible that whenever Russia is sufficiently freed from her interior political troubles, to take an active interest in foreign policy, the Austro-Russian Agreement as to joint action in the Balkans, may not receive as much support from Monsieur Isvolsky as it did from Count Lamsdorff.

Monsieur Crozier summed up his impression of Monsieur Isvolsky as follows: "He is very Russian, an ardent patriot, very supple and extremely active ('remuant')." He added that Monsieur Isvolsky had often spoken to him in admiring terms of Great Britain and her institutions.

I have sent by Messenger a copy of the above to Sir A. Nicolson under flying seal through Berlin.

I have, &c.

ALAN JOHNSTONE.

No. 220.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. MacDonald.

F.O. 371/177.

(No. 82.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 28, 1906.

I took an opportunity to-day of explaining to the Japanese Chargé d'Affaires that there was no truth in the statement which had appeared in the Press that we had concluded an Agreement with the Russian Government.⁽¹⁾ What had happened was that we had lately had occasion to discuss several matters with Russia, and had been co-operating with regard to them. I instanced especially Crete, Macedonia, the increase of Customs Duties in Turkey, and the general state of affairs in Persia, with special reference to the trouble on the Turco-Persian frontier. Many years ago, Russia and England had surveyed this frontier and drawn up a map stating approximately what the frontier was then considered to be, and now that there was a dispute about it and encroachments by Turkey we had naturally taken a joint interest in the matter.

Count Mutsu asked me whether we had not also discussed Afghanistan and Thibet with Russia.

I said that since I came into Office we had not had occasion to discuss the position of Afghanistan with Russia at all. But I had explained to the Russian Government the provisions of the Adhesion Convention with China with regard to Thibet.

Count Mutsu asked me whether we had also explained this Adhesion Convention at Tokio.

I said we had not made any communication to Tokio or any other place on this point. With regard to the information given to Russia, I said Lord Lansdowne had given a definite statement to Russia of our position respecting Thibet, as it had been left by the Convention between India and Thibet. Statements had lately appeared in the Press to the effect that our Convention with China would give us a new and privileged position in Thibet. The Russian Government had made enquiries, and I had explained that the Convention with China was purely an adhesion Convention, and had not altered the position as described to Russia by Lord Lansdowne.

Count Mutsu said that he understood, then, that we had not concluded any Agreement with Russia, but might perhaps be on our way towards one.

I said we had certainly not concluded any Agreement. But we were undoubtedly on more friendly terms than we had been a few years ago. I assured him, however,

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 233, No. 218, and note ⁽¹⁾.]

that as soon as there was any question on our part of coming to an Agreement with Russia that affected matters within the scope of our Alliance with Japan I would take care to keep the Japanese Government informed.

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

No. 221.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/125.

(No. 333.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. May 29, 1906.

R. June 11, 1906.

I called on Monsieur Isvolsky this afternoon, and after a few preliminary remarks I informed him that I would be in a position to converse with him in regard to certain questions in which both countries were interested. In fact I could tell him that I had received your instructions to exchange views on several important matters, such as Thibet and others, and I understood that the Russian Government were desirous of entering upon a discussion which might lead to a satisfactory conclusion. Monsieur Isvolsky expressed his great satisfaction with this communication, and he assured me that he would cordially take part in the discussions to which I alluded. He added that he could do so with the more satisfaction as a communication which he had recently received from the German Ambassador had set his mind at rest in regard to any possible difficulties from Germany, and that he now felt that he could converse with me with greater liberty than would otherwise perhaps have been the case. The only question on which Germany had expressed some anxiety was that of the Bagdad Railway, but in respect to a general understanding between Great Britain and Russia the German Ambassador stated that his Government regarded it with favourable eyes.

I remarked that I quite understood that the Bagdad Railway was of special interest to Germany, but it seemed to me that it was one to be treated separately from those which I desired to discuss with him. I was of opinion that our conversations should be treated as strictly confidential, especially as they were related to questions affecting the interests of Great Britain and Russia alone, and that I was anxious to discuss them in a spirit of perfect confidence and frankness and solely between ourselves. It seemed to me essential to observe these conditions in order to avoid confusion and misunderstandings.

Monsieur Isvolsky expressed his entire agreement with my views, and observed that the Bagdad Railway and the question also of a Persian Loan had been mentioned by you to Count Benckendorff and he, therefore, thought that they would form part of our conversations.

I replied that of course they were questions of importance and even of urgency, but to my mind distinct from the main questions with which I trusted we should shortly deal. I would naturally be always ready to speak on them also, and indeed would very probably have frequent occasions to do so. I added that I would prefer to wait a few days before commencing our conversations, and that perhaps we might initiate them with an exchange of views in regard to Thibet.

I had been prepared by my French colleague to find Monsieur Isvolsky jubilant in regard to the benevolent views of the German Government relative to an Anglo-Russian understanding, and inclined to take the German Ambassador into our confidence more fully than perhaps would be desirable: and it seemed, therefore, necessary to impress on His Excellency that, while admitting the right of the German Government to be interested in all that affected a German Railway enterprise, it would

be desirable in the interests of a smooth course of our forthcoming discussions that the treatment of the questions before the two countries should be a strictly confidential matter between our respective Governments.⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Sir A. Nicolson's language was approved by Sir E. Grey in a despatch to Sir A. Nicolson, No. 274 of June 16, 1906.]

No. 222.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.⁽¹⁾

F.O. 371/125.

(No. 345.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. June 5, 1906.

R. June 11, 1906.

During the audience which I had the honour to have with His Majesty the Emperor yesterday I took the opportunity of informing His Majesty that I trusted shortly to open conversations with his Minister for Foreign Affairs on certain questions which were of importance and interest to both countries. The Emperor said that he had been exceedingly glad to have been informed of my intention by Monsieur Isvolsky, and that he earnestly trusted that the conversations would result in a satisfactory understanding, which was desirable not only in the interests of the two countries but in those of the peace of the world. His Majesty added that he considered that the prospects of an arrangement were very favourable now that a new Government had come into office in England, and that he had been pleased to observe that public opinion in my country was well disposed to an understanding with Russia.

I observed that I trusted that public opinion in both countries was beginning to understand each other better, and that it seemed to me of great advantage that the question with which I should have to treat related to matters which affected the interests of Great Britain and Russia alone, and that it would therefore enable Monsieur Isvolsky and myself to conduct our discussions with perfect and untrammelled freedom.

The Emperor expressed his entire concurrence with this view.

Subsequently when conversing with Mr. Spring-Rice, His Majesty spontaneously said that he hoped that the new Russian Minister at Teheran and Mr. Spring-Rice would work cordially together in Persia.

I had told Monsieur Isvolsky previous to my audience that I proposed to mention to the Emperor the fact that we would shortly initiate "pourparlers." I had been given to understand by the French Ambassador that His Majesty disliked any political questions being suddenly sprung upon him, and would observe extreme reticence were such subjects broached unexpectedly.

There was a marked and sincere cordiality in the language of the Emperor and His Majesty's evident desire that the forthcoming discussions should lead to some satisfactory arrangement will doubtless exercise a useful influence over the attitude of the Minister for Foreign Affairs.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [The substance of this despatch was telegraphed and received on June 4.]

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, June 6, 1906.

I have not yet broken ground with M. Iswolsky as to Thibet, but I have let him know that I am ready to commence our conversations whenever he is ready. I think that what the Emperor said to me at my audience will be of use and was satisfactory. Acting on a suggestion of the French Ambassador, I had told M. Iswolsky, previous to my audience, that I proposed to mention the matter to the Emperor, and, therefore, the latter was prepared for my observations. His reply had evidently been thought out, as he gave it fluently and with emphasis, while I am told that as a rule if political matters are mentioned to him, he takes refuge in vague answers. I thought it well to state both to the Emperor and to M. Iswolsky that the questions which would be discussed were of interest to our countries alone, so that they might understand that we had no desire to forge a weapon directed against others: and also to impress on them that consultation with others was unnecessary. It was with the same intention that I wished M. Iswolsky to understand that the Bagdad Railway question should be treated as one distinct from those which came under our future general arrangement. I think it well to put a ring fence around our discussions: but I do not feel sure that M. Iswolsky will not take the German Ambassador into his confidence as negotiations proceed. M. Iswolsky confessed to me that his mind at present was a blank on the questions with which we should deal, though he assured me of his earnest desire to facilitate an arrangement by all means in his power. Let us hope that he will act up to these righteous intentions. I have only seen him twice, and then more or less formally, so I cannot yet judge of his disposition or of his calibre.

I was amused at the Emperor's remark to me that he considered that under a Liberal Government in England, there were better chances than formerly of an arrangement. I did not take up the observation, as I was not quite clear as to what he had in his mind. He may think that Russia may obtain better terms.

I noticed a little inclination in the Emperor and also in M. Iswolsky that [*sic*] we were those who were most eagerly seeking for an arrangement, and I thought it well to remark that both sides stood on an equal footing in that respect. They must not regard us as suppliants or they will be too exacting.

Y[ou]rs sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

(1) [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 7, 1906.

F.O. 371/177.

D. 8.15 P.M.

Tel. (No. 111.)

R. 10.15 P.M.

I commenced this afternoon conversations with Minister for Foreign Affairs on Thibet.

I explained verbally to him our various Conventions with Thibet and China, and communicated to him copy of Adhesion Convention as it is believed to be, and said that I would give him an exact copy when the original was received from Peking.

I also stated to him verbally five bases of our demands, as mentioned in my instructions, giving him the necessary explanation.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked if I would let him have in writing points I had mentioned, and I said that I would communicate them informally to him. I think there can be no objection to my meeting his wishes in that respect.

Minister for Foreign Affairs said he would like to look over all past correspondence before our next meeting, as he was not well versed in questions.

He asked me what course of procedure I proposed to adopt in regard to our discussions.

I said that I thought it would be best to examine each question *seriatim*, and when we had exchanged views on one question, and had practically come to an agreement on it, to pass to the next, and when we had terminated the examination of subjects for discussion to draw up and sign a Convention comprising all the questions.

He agreed, and said that he understood that I did not wish to treat each question as a separate arrangement. I replied that I did not wish for an incomplete Agreement, but that settlement of each question must depend on a general understanding being arrived at.

I trust you will concur.⁽¹⁾

MINUTES.

It is only after we have learnt the Russian views on Thibet, Persia and Afghanistan that we shall be able to judge whether a general agreement is possible, therefore it seems very desirable that we should not go too closely into detail in the preliminary discussions on each question.⁽¹⁾ M. Isvolsky gave no indication of his views on Thibet. It might be desirable, if the I[ndia] O[ffice] concur, to say something to Sir A. Nicolson in the above sense.

C. H.

We have now shown our hand as regards Tibet—we may go on to do it as regards Afghanistan—after that a judicious hint that Russia should show a little of hers about Persia would be useful.

E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [Sir E. Grey concurred in telegram No. 109 to Sir A. Nicolson of June 18, 1906, which reproduces the main part of the first sentence of the minute, adding "and as far as possible the disclosure of the Russian point of view on each question should be equivalent to our own."]

No. 225.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. MacDonald.

F.O. 871/177.

(No. 96.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 15, 1906.

I told the Japanese Chargé d'Affaires that it might interest his Government to know that we had made definite proposals to Russia for an Agreement respecting Thibet. I gave him confidentially the proposals which we had instructed Sir Arthur Nicolson to make, pointing out that there was nothing really new in them, and what they amounted to was an Agreement for non-interference.

The Japanese Chargé d'Affaires asked me whether we had communicated this to the Russians, and I said we had, but we had not yet got their reply.

He also asked me whether we were discussing any Agreement on any other points.

I told him we had not made any general proposal nor received any from Russia with regard to any other questions, such as Afghanistan and Persia. Troubles were constantly arising in Persia, disturbances and so forth, which needed our attention. And we had hitherto arranged these matters with Russia as they arose in a friendly way. But I thought it worth while to tell him what was passing about Thibet, because that was a part of the world which was covered by our Agreement with Japan. And I

further observed that, if we could make an Agreement with Russia about this and other matters which concerned the Indian Frontier, it would be a very useful additional guarantee of peace.

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

[*ED. NOTE.*—A suggested visit by a British naval squadron to Russia was vetoed by the Emperor Nicholas II, and his reasons given in a telegram of July 12, 1906, to King Edward. The latter, in acknowledging it, telegraphed "Hope visit may take place next year." A visit of representatives of the Duma to London took place at the end of July, to attend the annual conference of the Inter-Parliamentary Union. On the morning of the opening of the conference, news arrived that the Duma had been dissolved by the Emperor. Sir H. Campbell-Bannermann, in his opening address, referred to the incident and ended with the words "La Duma est morte, vive la Duma." For these details v. Sir Sidney Lee: *King Edward VII* (1927), II, pp. 566-8.]

No. 226.

Sir C. Hardinge to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nico,

Foreign Office, August 7, 1906.

. . . .⁽²⁾ Now as to the sequence of the subjects of discussion we know more or less what we want as regards Afghanistan but we have not the faintest idea what the Russians want in Persia and it seems useless to make proposals to them which they will not look at. Our idea has therefore been after submitting to the Russians our views as to Thibet and Afghanistan to ask them what may be their views as to Persia, and if we find we cannot accept them to make counter-proposals of our own. We have not yet got the views of the India office on our proposed instructions to you. We have had the views of the Gov[ernmen]t of India which were quite impossible and to which we have replied. They will probably be overridden by Mr. Morley. As soon as Grey has decided the question of the negotiations we will, if necessary, press the India Office for a definite statement of policy. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours ever,

CHARLES HARDINGE.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [The opening and closing sentences of this letter refer to various matters unconnected with the Anglo-Russian negotiations.]

No. 227.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Falldon, Christon Bank, Northumberland,

Dear Sir Arthur Nicolson,

August 10, 1906.

. . . .⁽²⁾ As to negotiations I *hope* I have now got the instructions ready as to Afghanistan; there is no difficulty at the India Office, but the Indian Gov[ernmen]t has to be consulted and it takes a little time to lead them to the waters of conciliation and get them to agree that they are wholesome.

On Persia I should like the Russians to be invited to say the first word and my idea would be, if they propose something inadmissible to put forward a diagonal line

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [The first part of this letter refers to minor internal disturbances in Persia.]

giving them access to the Gulf, but leaving the mouth of the Gulf on our side of the line; in this I am consulting Morley.

But while Russia is on the brink of Revolution it is no good going faster in these matters than is necessary to keep the negotiations alive.

I cannot see how things are to come right in Russia till the present organization and machinery of Government is broken up and that can only be done by Revolution.

Yours sincerely,
E. GREY.

No. 228.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, September 12, 1906.

It is satisfactory that M. Iswolsky should have been frank in letting us know of the overtures of the Persian Gov[ernmen]t to that of Russia for a money advance and for a prospective loan: and also that he should have communicated to us the confidential information which he received in regard to the Persian negotiations with a German Bank. Although it may appear captious to criticize his virtuous disposition, I think that it was, to a certain degree, *force majeure* which induced M. Iswolsky to unbosom himself. It would be difficult for Russia alone at this moment to find the necessary funds: and M. Iswolsky would doubtless prefer a *ménage à deux* to a *ménage à trois* in Persia, especially when the third party would be such an exceedingly active partner as the Emperor William.

At the same time I am afraid that M. Iswolsky shows no great eagerness or activity in pursuing our negotiations. The long promised Draft Convention as to Thibet has not yet made its appearance; and during our recent discussions on Persian affairs when I hinted that I should be glad to know in general outlines his views on our future relations in Persia, he looked blankly at me and said that he had no views at all. This was a little discouraging, so I suggested that perhaps we might soon begin to talk as to Afghanistan. To this he vaguely replied that this would be agreeable; but he did not seem disposed to take up the topic seriously. It is clear that we shall have difficulty in getting him to take the initiative, and I propose to leave him alone for a while on our larger subjects, and endeavour to settle with him the more pressing special Persian questions. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

⁽²⁾ [The omitted paragraph touches on the Meshed-Seistan telegraph line but adds no new information.]

No. 229.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

St. Petersburg, September 26, 1906.

M. Iswolsky, since my last letter, has made a step or two in advance, and is showing more interest in the negotiations than has been the case for some weeks past. At the same time, I do not conceal from myself that he has confined himself to verbal expressions of his own personal views, and that even with these he has not gone beyond the vaguest outline. Moreover he evidently anticipates some difficulties with the General Staff, but these may not prove to be serious obstacles if the Emperor

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

cordially supports the arrangement as it has been sketched out. In the most favourable circumstances there will, I expect, be considerable delays, as they are slow to move, and have, doubtless much hesitation in committing themselves to paper. I believe that their present weakness renders them more cautious than would perhaps be the case if they were not hampered by their internal difficulties, as they probably fear that we may wish to take advantage of the existing situation to our own benefit. I fully believe in the sincerity of M. Iswolsky, and if I had to deal with him alone, I do not think that the course of the negotiations would be troublesome, though it might be lengthy. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

⁽²⁾ [The rest of this letter gives details of suggested further negotiations.]

No. 230.

Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

British Embassy, Paris, October 22, 1906.

The messenger is just leaving and I have only a very short time in which to tell you that Count Izvolsky came to see me to-day having sent me a message by Count Benckendorff that he wished to see me. What he said was:

The King has been so gracious as to send me an invitation and I should have much liked to be received by His Majesty but to-day was to have been the day named by the King and to-day I had already received an appointment to be received by the President of the Republic. In the present ministerial crisis there is at the present moment nobody with whom I can discuss political and financial matters, but I hope that before I go next Friday there will be a Minister for Foreign Affairs. These are the personal reasons which stand in the way of my going to London, but there are also political objections to my being there in present circumstances. If I went to London the newspapers would make out that negotiations between Russia and England had gone much further than they had in reality. Moreover I might have to discuss matters and questions for which I am not prepared yet to discuss, and suspicion would be caused in quarters which it is very necessary for Russia to *ménager*. Before coming to arrangements with England I must find out at Berlin what interests the German Emperor and his Government consider that Germany has in Persia, not necessarily in order to allow them to stand in the way of an agreement with England but in order to avoid a repetition by Germany of her attitude in the Morocco question and Russia being placed in the dilemma of France. I must also ascertain precisely what are the views of the German Government in regard to the Bagdad Railway question and other matters. I require all this information in order to enable me to judge how far I can go without the risk of meeting with German opposition. In the present position of Russia it is essential to consider German susceptibilities. After Berlin to which I go on Friday I must return direct to Petersburg. I hope to have the honour of being received by His Majesty on a future occasion.

Yours sincerely,
FRANCIS BERTIE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

I perfectly understand and appreciate the reasons given.

E.R.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 10.]

Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey.

Private and Confidential.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

British Embassy, Paris, October 22, 1906.

I wrote in a great hurry this afternoon to catch the Messenger's train at 4 P.M. and did not fully report my interview with Count Izvolsky. I will now supplement my account and send it by Lord Aberdeen who goes to London by the same train tomorrow.

When Count Izvolsky stated that he could not go further in the negotiations with His Majesty's Government until he had ascertained the views of the German Government I asked him whether he meant that arrangements between Russia and England must be subject to the concurrence of Germany. His answer was, no, but that he must sound the German Government as to their views. They had of their own accord informed the Russian Government that Germany would rejoice at an understanding between Russia and England provided that it took account of German interests and they had stated that their interests in Persia were purely commercial; but he was not prepared to adopt the mode of Monsieur Delcassé in the Morocco question and present Germany with a "fait accompli." In the present position of Russia the Russian Government could not afford to do so. He did not propose to make an arrangement with England subject to German consent but he must ascertain what Germany understood or meant by so-called commercial interests. She had professed to have only commercial interests in Morocco, but the result of taking her at her word had been a very grave tension between Germany and France. He was not prepared to run the risk of the creation of such a situation between Russia and her next door neighbour. I asked him whether the Bagdad Railway would be a German Commercial question to be discussed and he said that he thought that it would be possible to come to terms with Germany on that matter.

Count Izvolsky spoke of his excellent relations with Nicolson who, he said, took a very just and sensible view in regard to the internal affairs of Russia, much assisted thereto by the great knowledge and wise counsels of Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace. Order was being gradually re-established. Monsieur Stolypin's nerves had not been in the least affected by the Bomb explosion in his Villa. His Government would maintain order and grant all reasonable reforms.

I met Count Benckendorff late in the afternoon. He asked me whether I had seen Count Izvolsky and I gave him an account of my interview. Count Benckendorff's language was to the same effect as that of the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, but he was more explicit. He said that Russia was under great obligations to Germany and was bound to conciliate her as much as possible, that Germany had given notice of the establishment of a German Bank in Persia. There was no knowing to what concessions to Germany that fact might not lead. The sphere in Persia which His Majesty's Government proposed to mark out for England offered no temptations for Germany. It would be in the Russian sphere that She would probably seek concessions of all kinds through the Bank unless Russia came to terms with her. This would be very inconvenient to Russia and the Russian Government must endeavour to obviate such a position. They did not want Germany in Persia, but they must try to come to terms with her. I put it to him that if account was to be taken of all German wishes in Persia an arrangement between Russia and England might become very difficult. She had volunteered the statement that her interests in Persia were purely commercial. Would it not be better to accept that statement and act accordingly than to elicit explanations which might put forward claims which would have to be disregarded if negotiations

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 10.]

between England and Russia were to be successful. Count Benckendorff replied that Russia in present circumstances could not afford to be on bad terms with Germany.

Yours sincerely,
FRANCIS BERTIE.

No. 232.

Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey.

Private and Confidential.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

British Embassy, Paris, October 25, 1906.

As authorized by your private telegram of yesterday afternoon I saw Monsieur Clemenceau this morning and explained to him the position of the negotiations with Russia in regard to Persia, and I gave him an account of my conversations with M. Izvolsky and Count Benckendorff.

M. Clemenceau told me that he had met M. Izvolsky last night at dinner, and that he had impressed on him, in talking of the policy of the French Government, that they were anxious that Russia and England should come to agreements, that France meant to remain the Ally of Russia and the friend of England and would not drop either one or the other.

M. Izvolsky had remarked in reply that personally he was entirely in favour of an understanding with England, but the negotiations must not be hurried on.

Monsieur Clemenceau says that it is evident that Germany has prevented M. Izvolsky's projected visit to London, and that the Emperor who is anxious to revive the Drei Kaiser Bund will endeavour to make terms with Russia behind our back.

M. Clemenceau does not think that it would be advisable that he personally should recur in conversation with M. Izvolsky, when he meets him again, to England, but he will make Monsieur Pichon acquainted confidentially with the position which I had described to him, and he will get M. Pichon to impress on M. Izvolsky—whom he is to meet tomorrow—the advisability from the French point of view of Russia making terms with England.

I asked M. Clemenceau whether he had any idea of what the obligation might be which Russia owed to Germany to which Count Benckendorff had referred. Monsieur Clemenceau said no, perhaps it related to a German intervention in Poland.

Yours sincerely,
FRANCIS BERTIE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

Germany is certain to act against us—behind our back.

E.R.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 10.]

No. 233.

Sir Francis Bertie to Sir Edward Grey.

Private and Confidential.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

Paris, October 26, 1906.

The President of the Council and the Minister for Foreign Affairs paid me the regulation visits this evening on accession to Office.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 10.]

M. Clemenceau told me that he had met the Russian Ambassador at breakfast this morning, that he had spoken to him about the importance of the relations between Russia and England being placed on a good footing; that the Ambassador had entirely concurred, saying that he had always been in favour of arrangements being made to settle questions between Russia and England. When M. Clemenceau suggested that it was to be regretted that M. Izvolsky should have changed his plans and should go to Berlin from here instead of via London, the Ambassador said that M. Izvolsky had never had any intention of going to London. His plans had all been settled some time ago and London was not in the programme. M. Clemenceau, seeing that M. de Nelidow was either badly informed or did not desire to discuss the matter, dropped the subject after saying that he had understood that there was a question to be settled with regard to a loan or an advance to be made to Persia through the intervention of Russia and England.

M. Pichon told me that he had spoken to M. Izvolsky this morning on the subject of the desire of the French Government that Russia and England should be on the best of terms. M. Izvolsky said that such was his wish, but he changed the subject when M. Pichon referred to the change in M. Izvolsky's plans. M. Pichon, however returned to the charge later on and observed that it was a pity that he should go to Berlin without first visiting London. The account which M. Izvolsky then gave of his reasons was the same as he had given to me and which I described to you in my letters of the 22nd instant, and he said that he had every hope of coming to an Agreement with His Majesty's Government in regard to Persia. He was not going to Berlin in order to consult the German Government as to the negotiations with England, but for the purpose of ascertaining precisely what were the interests which they considered Germany had in Persia, and whether they were really only commercial. He wished to avoid a difficulty with Germany and to be able to negotiate with His Majesty's Government with full knowledge of the attitude of that country. He considered that going to London at the present moment would render his object, which was an Agreement with England, more difficult than if he postponed discussions till after a visit to Berlin. The negotiations required great tact, they must not be hurried, for he had a difficult task, viz., to persuade some of his colleagues of the advisability of coming to terms with His Majesty's Government. He felt confident however of success if matters were not hurried. M. Pichon told me that M. Izvolsky appeared to him to be speaking in good faith, and to be really desirous of coming to terms with His Majesty's Government.

Yours sincerely,

FRANCIS BERTIE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

I shall however always regret that M. Izvolsky was unable to come to London this year.

E.R.

No. 234.

Sir F. Lascelles to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/129.

(No. 893.) Very Confidential.

Sir,

Berlin, D. October 29, 1906.

R. November 5, 1906.

Monsieur Izvolsky, who is spending a few days in Berlin on his return to St. Petersburg from Paris, and whose acquaintance I had the honour of making at a party at the Russian Embassy last night, was good enough to call upon me late this afternoon, as he wished to have some conversation with me. He said he was glad to think that a decided improvement had taken place in the relations between our two countries, and he was in hopes that a thorough and complete understanding

might eventually be come to. For this, however, much time and patience would be required. Earnestly desiring, as he did, to arrive at such an understanding, it was necessary for him to take into account public opinion in Russia, which was still very suspicious of any *rapprochement* between England and Russia. Any attempt therefore to hurry on an agreement would probably give rise to difficulties and result in failure.

I observed that when His Excellency spoke of "public opinion" he referred not only to what was understood by the term in other countries, but also to the opinion of highly placed personages in Russia, not excluding perhaps some of His Excellency's colleagues. He did not deny that this was so, and went on to say that he had been struck by the admirable manner in which the English Deputation which had proposed to visit Russia had been dissuaded from carrying out their intention. The visit would certainly have been inopportune, and would have caused embarrassment to the Government. Proposals had indeed been made to prevent the Deputation from going either to St. Petersburg or Moscow. He had strongly opposed these proposals and had insisted that no coercive measures should be taken against the Deputation. He attributed the abandonment of the visit to the good sense of the newspaper correspondents and the British Colony and perhaps more especially to the presence of Sir Donald Mackenzie Wallace in St. Petersburg, who had been able to give good advice. His Excellency also spoke in terms of the warmest praise of Sir Arthur Nicolson, who on this and indeed on every occasion, had acted admirably. Although he had been but a comparatively short time in Russia, he had obtained a clear insight into the internal situation, which it was very difficult for any foreigner to understand. He was indeed the right man in the right place, and his clear and sound judgment would be of the greatest utility in carrying on the complicated negotiations which Monsieur Isvolsky sincerely trusted would result in a satisfactory understanding.

On my saying that a beginning had been made by the two Governments agreeing to a joint advance to Persia, Monsieur Isvolsky said that that was a step in the right direction.⁽¹⁾ He greatly regretted the incident of the Seistan Telegraph,⁽²⁾ of which he was in complete ignorance when Sir Arthur Nicolson brought it to his notice. He had given orders that the *status quo* was to be maintained, and he had therefore been annoyed at hearing of the incident which had now been explained to be a matter of technical detail. I told Monsieur Isvolsky that my previous knowledge of Persia made me appreciate the difficulties of the situation. The Persians were very suspicious and could not understand why England and Russia should wish to come to terms, and feared that any arrangement between the two Great Powers could only be brought about at the expense of Persia. It would also be necessary to overcome the rivalry which was almost traditional between the agents of the two Governments. I knew from personal experience that it was perfectly possible for the British and Russian Ministers to remain on friendly terms, and I looked back with pleasure to my friendly intercourse with Monsieur Butzow, when we were colleagues at Teheran. Monsieur Isvolsky said that the appointment of Sir Cecil Spring Rice as British Minister at Teheran had given him the liveliest satisfaction. Sir Cecil was well acquainted both with Russia and Persia. He was on good terms with his Russian colleague. He would understand how necessary it was for Russia not merely to protect her enormous commercial interests in Persia, but also to maintain her secular traditions. There could be no doubt of the sincerity of his desire for a good understanding between England and Russia, and his knowledge and experience would be of great assistance in bringing it about. The accounts of the state of the Shah's health were most unsatisfactory, but Monsieur Isvolsky did not anticipate any complications on His Majesty's death and he believed that the Valiahd, being supported both by England and Russia, would succeed his father peacefully.

Monsieur Isvolsky referred to his recent visit to Paris. On his arrival there, he

(1) [The details of this negotiation are given *infra*, pp. 378-89.]

(2) [*infra*, p. 390, Nos. 342-3, *sqq.*]

had called on Monsieur Bourgeois, who had just ceased to be Minister. The fact of his arriving during the Ministerial crisis had, however, had the advantage of enabling him to have a longer conversation with the President than perhaps would otherwise have been the case. Monsieur Fallières had stated that he had made it a condition of intrusting Monsieur Clemenceau with the formation of the Ministry that there should be no change in the Foreign Policy of France. No doubt apprehensions had been felt in certain quarters at the fact of Monsieur Clemenceau having become Prime Minister, but Monsieur Isvolsky was convinced that he would pursue a prudent and peaceful Policy with regard to Foreign Affairs and would devote himself more especially to internal questions. He would certainly put in force the law with regard to the Church, but he had announced that he intended to do so without having recourse to force. Monsieur Clemenceau was now at the head of a homogeneous Ministry, but it was doubtful how far this increased his power. The Ministers whom he had selected did not command many votes in the Chamber, and Monsieur Isvolsky had gathered that the general impression in Paris was that his Ministry would not be of long duration, as the other groups in the Chamber would before long combine against him.

Since he had been in Berlin, Monsieur Isvolsky had been received by the Emperor and had had a long conversation with Prince Bülow, with whom he was going to dine to-night.⁽¹⁾ He need not tell me how extraordinarily sensitive the Germans were with regard to any arrangement which might be come to between any two countries without their having been consulted. He was therefore not surprised at being told, shortly after his appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs, by the German Ambassador in St. Petersburg, that the German Government, while hailing with satisfaction any arrangement between England and Russia, which would contribute towards the maintenance of the Peace of the world, expected to be consulted with regard to any points in such an agreement which might affect German interests. He had replied that the understanding which might eventually be arrived at between England and Russia merely aimed at removing the causes of friction which were due to their respective interests in the East. It certainly would not be directed against any other country, and he asked what were the German interests to which the Ambassador had alluded. The answer had been, as he had expected, the Bagdad Railway. He had expressed the opinion that the Bagdad Railway should be considered as a German Undertaking and that Germany should certainly be consulted in any question connected with it. As Germany was seeking for the participation of English, French and Russian Capital in this undertaking, he was strongly of opinion that any negotiations on the subject should be conducted by the four Powers conjointly and not separately. During his recent visit to Paris, he had again expressed this opinion, in which the French Government concurred, and he had repeated it in his conversation with Prince Bülow, whom, he believed, he had convinced that an understanding between England and Russia would not in any way be directed against Germany. It would, he said, be ridiculous, to suppose that Russia, considering her geographical position, and the internal condition of the country could deliberately seek a quarrel with Germany.

There was one question which Monsieur Isvolsky considered should at once engage the attention of the great Powers, and that was the reform of the Judiciary in Macedonia. He had not yet heard whether the Sultan had agreed to the conditions contained in the last Note presented by the Ambassadors at Constantinople on the subject of the increase of the Customs Duties. He had, however, little doubt that he would do so, and that sufficient money would then be found to defray the expenses of the Administration. He considered it essential that the judicial reform should then be undertaken, and he believed that if this were done, the Civil Agents and the Financial Commission would be able to effect a real improvement in the condition of the country. He did not anticipate any immediate complications in the Balkans.

⁽¹⁾ [v. G.P. XXII, pp. 35-7, 43-5.]

such as would undoubtedly have broken out if the Powers had permitted the annexation of Crete by Greece. The Bulgarians would in that case certainly have demanded some territorial compensation and would have resorted to force, had it been denied them. I said that it appeared to me that this demand of the Bulgarians was unreasonable, as none of the other Balkan States had received compensation when Eastern Roumelia was united to Bulgaria. Monsieur Isvolsky smiled and said that this took place so long ago that people had forgotten all about it. I asked whether he thought that there would be danger of complications arising in the event of the death of the Sultan. He replied that he did not see any reason for alarm, and he thought that the Sultan's successor would be allowed to take peaceful possession of the throne. He had been glad to hear that the Sultan had recovered his health, and that his illness had not been so severe as had been generally supposed. In his opinion a more serious situation would be created if the Emperor of Austria were to disappear from the scene. As long as His Majesty lived, it was not probable that there would be any serious trouble in his dominions, and the demand of the Hungarians for separation from Austria would not probably take effect during His Majesty's lifetime, which it was earnestly to be hoped might be prolonged for many years.⁽²⁾

On my observing that I had been glad to see that there had been some improvement in the internal condition of Russia, Monsieur Isvolsky said that this certainly was the case, and was due to the wise action of Monsieur Stolypin, who was admirably fitted to conduct the internal affairs at this difficult moment. He was a man of great strength of character and very calm. The terrible calamity which had befallen his family had raised him in the general estimation as, even on the night of the catastrophe itself, he devoted himself to his work as usual. He never flinched, and although he would resolutely maintain order, he was a "progressive" man.

On taking leave of me, M. Isvolsky again expressed his great satisfaction that Sir Arthur Nicolson was now His Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg, and his sincere hope that the negotiations in which they were engaged would lead to a complete understanding between England and Russia.

I will take the opportunity of the Messenger who will leave Berlin on the evening of the 1st proximo for St. Petersburg and Teheran to send a copy of this Despatch to Sir Arthur Nicolson and Sir Cecil Spring Rice.

I have, &c.

FRANK C. LASCELLES.

(2) [This paragraph is also printed in *Gooch & Temperley*, Vol. V, p. 185, No. 148.]

No. 235.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nicolson,

Foreign Office, October 31, 1906.

I entirely agree with your private letter of the 24th⁽²⁾ as to the course and description of the Persian negotiations. So to-day I have sent an official telegram, which is founded on your letter and will enable you to set the ball rolling.

Iswolsky knows that we must be suspicious of his visits to Germany, and I should like him to feel that we expect some frankness as to what passed between him

(1) [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

(2) [Not reproduced.]

and the Germans, and some progress with the negotiations, in order to prove to us that the Germans are not putting spokes in the wheel.

You might find out too whether Iswolsky discovered the present dispositions of the Germans about the Bagdad Railway, and what his own views are. I am willing that the line should be made as an international affair, but that means that Russia as well as ourselves must come into it somehow.

Yours sincerely,
E. GREY.

No. 236.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

St. Petersburg, November 7, 1906.

I think that we can be satisfied that, so far as our negotiations are concerned, M. Iswolsky did not enter into, and was not asked to enter into, any embarrassing engagements in Berlin. He was, I am sure, quite frank with me as to what passed during his visit, and I have reported his declarations in a despatch.⁽²⁾ He is evidently relieved at the removal of the fear which was haunting him that Germany would step in at a given moment and make matters uncomfortable for Russia, and I think that the assurances which he has received have stimulated him to take up the discussions more actively than he has hitherto done. He assured me that he would devote "all his energies" to the task, and, laying his hand on his heart, he said that he was "honestly and sincerely" desirous of arriving at an understanding which he was convinced was the right policy for Russia to pursue. He will, I doubt not, still plead for time, and point out the strong opposition which he will have to meet. Whence inspired I know not, but one or two of the papers here have now begun to tilt against any understanding with us, and intimate that we are taking advantage of the temporary weakness of Russia to extort terms from her in Persia to which it would be most imprudent for her to subscribe. I imagine that the views of the military party, and of other Chauvins, is that Russia has secured a preliminary footing in Seistan, which she hopes to render firmer as time goes on, and that she is thereby obtaining an admirable strategic position from which she should not recede. M. Iswolsky particularly hinted this to me. These opponents enquired what quid pro quo Russia would, or could, obtain in Persia if she retired from Seistan: and I expect that if M. Iswolsky says to his critics that we propose to give Russia a free hand in the north, they would reply that this she practically enjoys already. In short the critics assert that we are giving too little and asking too much: and this perplexes M. Iswolsky.

He told me that he must have weighty arguments with which to combat his opponents and be able to show them that they will obtain compensatory advantages for any concessions that he may make. He seemed to doubt if peace and good will were strong enough arguments, or whether the Russian mind was in a mood, generally speaking, to be willing to make sacrifices in order to secure a good understanding with us. There is something in all this, and I do not at all underestimate the difficulty of M. Iswolsky's task. In our negotiations with France we had something substantial to surrender and which she eagerly desired i.e. our position in Morocco, and she was willing to treat and give a good quid pro quo for it. In the present case we are not in a position either in Persia, Afghanistan or Thibet, to make any great concessions or as our hostile critics say any at all. I indicate these considerations to you, not that they have been put forward by M. Iswolsky, but because I think

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

⁽²⁾ [*v. infra*, pp. 412-3, No. 369.]

that they are at the back of his mind, or, to be more accurate, because they have been put there by others. They may later, when they take fuller shape and form, lead him to sound us as to whether we would not perhaps be disposed, to satisfy his opponents and in order to strengthen his hands, to grant some concessions elsewhere. I think that we should be prepared for some proposals as to a deal over the Near East. M. Iswolsky has not foreshadowed this to me, even in the most indirect way, but I think that, when he is pushed hard by his opponents, he might ask us if we would support or, in any case, not oppose Russia in obtaining some modifications of certain Treaty clauses which hamper and restrict her liberty of action. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,

A. NICOLSON.

⁽²⁾ [The rest of this long letter gives details as to Russian public opinion on Anglo-Russian relations.]

No. 287.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Bertie,

Foreign Office, November 8, 1906.

I ought to have given you before what I believe is the true history of M. Izvolsky's movements. He never intended so far as we know to come to London, but hearing that he was at Paris the King expressed a wish that he should come to London. We agreed however that this would not be desirable yet: it would give rise to rumours in excess of the truth; negotiations were not ripe for a visit here, and to press him to come would give an impression that we wanted to hustle him.

It was therefore the King's verbal invitation and not any change in his own plans, which was the origin of M. Izvolsky's explanation for not coming. I only mention it now because I see from your letter of the 4th that you have another version.

Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 10.]

No. 288.

Sir F. Lascelles to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/80.

(No. 349.) Confidential.

Berlin, D. November 9, 1906.

Sir,

R. November 12, 1906.

I called by appointment on Prince Bülow at 6.30 this evening to take leave of him before my approaching departure for England on leave of absence. His Serene Highness began by congratulating me on the occasion of the King's Birthday. He had ventured to send a Telegram to His Majesty, for whom he entertained the warmest sentiments of gratitude and admiration. He earnestly hoped that His Majesty's life might be a very prolonged one to the benefit not only of his own Kingdom, but of the world, to the Peace of which he had so largely contributed.

His Serene Highness referred to the recent visit of Monsieur Isvolsky to Berlin. He had known Monsieur Isvolsky for many years and had a high opinion of his abilities and straightforwardness, and his conversation on this occasion had given him great satisfaction. Monsieur Isvolsky had spoken of the arrangement with England which he hoped to bring about, and explained that its only object was to remove certain

causes of friction in the East, and thus contribute to the maintenance of Peace. It was not directed against any other Power, and certainly not against Germany. I told Prince Bülow that this tallied exactly with what Monsieur Isvolsky had said to me, and that he had added, in speaking of the Balkan Peninsula, that judiciary reform in Macedonia was essential to enable the Civil Agents and the Financial Commission to effect any real improvement in the condition of the country. Prince Bülow said that Monsieur Isvolsky had mentioned this point to him and had at the same time expressed the firm intention of the Russian Government to pursue a peaceful policy in the Balkans as indeed everywhere else. He had, however, spoken at greater length of the difficulties created for the Russian Government by the internal condition of the country. It would be impossible in his opinion for the Government to withdraw the liberties granted by the Czar but at the same time it was necessary to restore order and to put an end to the assassinations and bomb-throwing to which the Revolutionaries had resorted. On the one hand it was necessary to repress Terrorism, on the other, it was necessary to avoid going back to the undoubted evils of the former régime. It was no easy task, and Monsieur Isvolsky (? Stolypin),⁽¹⁾ who was admirably qualified to carry it out was being opposed by personages in high places who accused him of being too liberal. This long conversation had convinced Prince Bülow that Russia, as was only natural after the losses she had incurred in the war with Japan, earnestly desired to pursue a policy of peace and to avoid anything in the nature of adventure. His Serenè Highness saw no reason to fear any disturbance of the Peace in any quarter. During the summer he had seen the Prince of Bulgaria, the Crown Prince of Greece and Prince Ferdinand of Roumania. Each had complained bitterly of the injustice with which his own particular country had been treated and the undue favour which had been shown to the other two. He repeated that he saw no cause for anxiety and he expressed his great pleasure that the relations between England and Germany had become so much better. He had always believed that the tension which had existed between the two countries had been due to misunderstandings and he referred to the fact that about two years ago the Emperor, against his advice, had insisted that Count Metternich should be summoned to Berlin to state whether England contemplated an attack on Germany. Count Metternich had assured the Emperor that there was absolutely no truth in the report and had had the courage to add that there were people in England who really believed that Germany intended to attack England, and that the German fleet had been built with that sole object. . . .⁽²⁾

I have, &c.

FRANK LASCELLES.

⁽¹⁾ [Added by Sir E. Grey.]

⁽²⁾ [The rest of this long despatch refers to the internal situation in Germany.]

No. 239.

Sir E. Egerton to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/129.

(No. 199.) Most Confidential.

Rome, D. November 13, 1906.

Sir,

R. November 17, 1906.

The Russian Ambassador told me today that he sincerely trusted that the negotiations between His Majesty's Government and that of the Emperor with a view to an understanding on certain Asiatic questions were progressing favourably—as he was disturbed to learn—not directly from Monsieur Isvolsky himself, but by a letter from a sure source—that in Berlin the Russian Foreign Minister had been given plainly to understand that Russia must take one side or another. Friendship with Germany must exclude arrangements to be made with another Power.

In fact the form in which the German view was put showed a roughness of method more likely to offend than terrify.

Though M. Mouraviev considered that the Berlin Foreign Office had been tactless and unwise he did not actually tell me that they had absolutely failed in intimidating M. Isvolsky, but said he had no official information.

I have, &c.

EDWIN H. EGERTON.

No. 240.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/129.

(No. 762.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. November 15, 1906.

Sir,

R. November 26, 1906.

The French Ambassador, M. Bompard, informed me to-day that M. Isvolsky had spoken to him as to the conversations which he had held in Berlin both in regard to the Franco-Russian alliance, and the negotiations which were proceeding between the Governments of Russia and Great Britain. As regards the latter question the language of M. Isvolsky appeared to have been identical with that which he had held to me, and which I had the honour to report to you in my despatch No. 745 of the 7th instant.⁽¹⁾ His Excellency did not enter into details with M. Bompard as to our discussions, nor did he mention the points on which we were treating, but he told the French Ambassador that he anticipated that they would occupy a long time, as he had to remove many deep-rooted prejudices and traditions which had been inherited by so many sections of the Russian political and Military world. He was himself an ardent advocate of an understanding with Great Britain, and he intended to tackle the difficulties ahead of him with perseverance and energy. He was confident that eventually his efforts would meet with success, but he trusted that time would be accorded to him as undue haste might jeopardize the possibility of an agreement.

I told M. Bompard that I was convinced of the sincerity and goodwill of M. Isvolsky, and that I had found him greatly reassured by the assurances which he had received in Berlin that the German Government had no desire to hamper the negotiations. These assurances had, according to the telegraphic reports in this morning's papers, been reiterated by Prince Bülow in the Reichstag, and I trusted that full effect would be given to them. It seemed to me that the allusions of Prince Bülow to the Anglo-French *entente* had been a little guarded and cautious, and I asked M. Bompard what impression the remarks of the Chancellor had produced upon him.

His Excellency replied that the observations of Prince Bülow confirmed a conjecture which he had formed some time previously. It appeared to him probable that the German Government had obtained from M. Isvolsky assurances that if Russia entered into an understanding with Great Britain she must act as a check on any tendency either on the part of France or of England to isolate Germany. He believed that there was still a suspicion in the minds of the German Government that the Anglo-French *entente* might lead to the formation of a ring round Germany, and that the inclusion indirectly of Russia might complete the circle. He doubted if Germany would have expressed her good-will towards an Anglo-Russian understanding unless she had been satisfied that Russia would, in no circumstances, agree to such an understanding being turned to the disadvantage of her Western neighbour. There was naturally no such intention, but the doubts existed, and the occasion of the visit of M. Isvolsky to Berlin had been taken to make sure that Russia would not be led astray.

I said that M. Isvolsky had quite rightly informed the German Government that our negotiations had solely in view the removal of causes of friction between the two countries, and that there was no design or intention to interfere with the interests of

(¹) [*v. infra*, pp. 412-3, No. 369.]

Germany. He had enquired what those interests were so that he might steer clear of them, and he had been satisfied that they were merely of a commercial nature, with which any agreement we might make would not clash.

M. Bompard said he was well aware of that, but that at Berlin they had been a little uneasy. He added that M. Isvolsky had spontaneously assured him that the reports which had been current as to a projected revival of an alliance between the three Emperors were pure myths; and that he had stated clearly both to the Emperor William and Prince Bülow that the basis of Russian foreign policy was the alliance with France.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 241.

Sir C. Hardinge to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nico,

Foreign Office, November 28, 1906.

Many thanks for your letter. We are sending you lots of grist today which ought to carry you on a bit in the negotiations.

Poklewsky asked me today what progress was being made and I told him that we had actually drawn up a sketch of a text for an agreement about Persia which we were sending you. He then said that as the negotiations were now an open secret, public opinion in Russia was already beginning to demand that they should also deal with questions of the Near and Far East. He mentioned in particular the passage of the Dardanelles and that some recognition should be made of the *status quo* in the Far East which would have a moral effect upon the Japanese of whose proceedings they are very nervous. This, he added, need not clash in any way with the stipulations of our Treaty of Alliance. I told him that we would be very glad to consider any proposals which the Russian Governmen]t might submit to us but that they must emanate from them as it is impossible for us to know what they wanted. To this he agreed.

You will see from a mem[orandu]m which Grey is sending you in a private letter how far we are able to go in the Dardanelles question,⁽²⁾ but as regards any recognition by us of the *status quo* in the Far East it is very important that we do nothing which might impair the value of the Japanese alliance. However we have nothing to do but to wait and let them formulate what they want. . . .⁽³⁾

Yours ever,

CHARLES HARDINGE.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 58-60, *Ed. note.*]

⁽³⁾ [The letter closes with a general reference to Persian affairs.]

No. 242.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 532.) Secret.

Sir,

Foreign Office, November 30, 1906.

The Russian Chargé d'Affaires called here on the 28th instant and inquired what progress was being made with the negotiations relating to Persia.

Mr. Poklewsky, who in my absence was received by Sir C. Hardinge, was informed that on our side the negotiations were being steadily pursued, and that we were even communicating to Y[our] E[xcellency] the sketch of a possible text for an agreement relating to Persia which might satisfy the demands of both countries without laying itself open to the charge of being an infringement of the principle of the "open door," and being one to which the German Government might raise objections.

He then inquired if the proposed agreement was to be restricted to Persia and Central Asia, and was informed, in reply, that it was only in those countries that Great Britain found herself in conflict with Russia.

He said that now that the negotiations were an open secret there was a considerable public opinion in Russia in favour of a modification of the regulations for the passage of the Straits of the Dardanelles, and that the Russian Government were very uneasy as to the proceedings of the Japanese in the Far East and would be very pleased if they could obtain from His Majesty's Government a recognition of the *status quo* which would have a certain moral effect upon the Japanese and need not clash with the conditions of our Japanese alliance.

Sir C. Hardinge replied that he felt sure that he was faithfully interpreting my views in saying that I should welcome any proposal which would make for peace in the Far East, that this and the question of the Dardanelles were not matters in which Great Britain and Russia were solely interested as in Central Asian questions, and that since it would be impossible for us to know the wishes of the Russian Government, it must be for them to formulate their proposals. It was quite certain that these latter would be considered here most carefully and as favourably as possible.

[I am, &c.]

E[DWARD] G[REY].

No. 243.

Extract from Annual Report for Russia for the Year 1906.

(Enclosure in Despatch from Sir A. Nicolson, No. 4 of January 2, 1907,
R. January 7, 1907.)

(1.)—*Foreign Relations of Russia.*

F.O. 371/318.

When a country has but recently emerged from a disastrous war and is passing through a grave internal crisis, some time must necessarily be allowed to elapse before its foreign policy can be determined. The problems with which Russia is confronted are of vital importance to her future; the mode in which they will be solved is still obscure, and the position which she will assume among the Great Powers is difficult to predict. It would, in these circumstances, be prudent to abstain from any speculations and from any attempt to cast the horoscope of this Empire. I propose, therefore, to confine myself to a survey of the present relations between Russia and those countries with which she chiefly comes into contact.

2. It is desirable to commence with that country with which Russia has contracted an alliance, which her Foreign Minister is stated to have recently characterized as forming the foundation-stone of her foreign policy. This alliance, at the time of its formation, was perhaps natural and necessary in view of the existing European combinations and of the conditions of international relations. It has, since its inception, been cemented by financial interests, and has been subjected to no serious strain which might have weakened its stability. Whether each party has in the political field reaped great advantages from it, is perhaps a debatable question. France received, I believe, little encouragement when her relations with Great Britain were in a critical condition, nor when subsequently the menacing attitude of Germany caused anxiety, and, to a certain degree, trepidation in the minds of the French people. At the recent Algéciras Conference it is true that Russia afforded valuable assistance, and this should be accounted to the credit of the alliance.

3. Opinions, as far as I have been able to judge, vary here as to the attitude of France during the recent war, and some are ready to question whether she might not have advanced a little beyond the benevolent neutrality which she observed. During the peace negotiations, moreover, it is not considered that France was markedly in the

foreground or that her good offices were especially active and efficacious. Still the unstinted financial assistance which France has during recent times cheerfully provided is doubtless a bond between the two countries. But if the union be based on financial considerations only, they assume the character of relations between creditor and debtor which, though necessarily intimate, are not always the most agreeable.

4. Moreover, of late public opinion in France has not been very favourably disposed to the governing classes in Russia. Some of the most outspoken and harshest criticisms on what are considered to be the faults, errors, and delinquencies of the Russian Government were to be found in the responsible organs of the French press, and the tone in which these criticisms were delivered increased the annoyance and displeasure which the criticisms themselves occasioned. In the ranks of the several opposition parties these homilies were doubtless welcomed and their lessons appreciated; but I did not find that French opinion, even in those circles, was so much valued as I should have anticipated.

5. From what I have been able to ascertain, I should be inclined to infer that neither the present internal situation in France nor her external position inspires much respect or sympathy in many classes in this country. In those quarters in which, in any case up to the present, the direction of the foreign policy of Russia chiefly lies, the advent to office in France of a Government with an advanced Socialistic programme is viewed with disquietude and disfavour; while the anti-Clerical policy of the French Government is regarded with much disapproval. Moreover, there are doubts whether the material and moral force of France would at a critical moment render her a valuable ally. There is among many an impression that France is breaking away from fundamental principles which should form the base rock of every State as of every individual, and that she is governed by Socialistic ideas which the ruling class in this country considers are fatal and subversive. Moreover, there is an impression that both in the army and the navy of France discipline has been greatly relaxed, and that political party considerations have too potent an influence in both services. Those in authority here have had some bitter experiences of late of the dangers and evils of slack discipline and political propaganda in the military forces, and they fear that their ally may afford examples which may encourage disturbing elements in their own services.

6. I do not know if the alliance with France is for a definite or indefinite period, or whether it is terminated at the wish of one of the Signatories, but I feel assured that the Emperor will abide by its provisions, and will maintain its integrity for the duration of its existence.⁽¹⁾ But I feel equally assured that, though the letter of the alliance will be observed, in many influential quarters the union between Socialistic freethinking France and Orthodox Russia is not a sympathetic one.

Germany.

7. The relations between the Russian Court and Government and those of Germany are at the present time intimate and cordial. I should indeed be inclined to go further, and to state that German influence is to-day predominant both at the Court and in Government circles. The sympathy shown by the German Court and Government, and by a considerable portion of the German press, during the period of storm and stress through which this country has recently been passing has awakened, I have little doubt, a feeling of gratitude in the hearts of those who were fearful of impending political and social ruin. I am naturally not in a position to state what is the frequency and tenour of the communications which may pass between the Courts of Berlin and

⁽¹⁾ [v. A. F. Pribram: *Secret Treaties*, Harvard University Press (1921), II, pp. 204-225; and the French *Documents diplomatiques: L'alliance franco-russe*, Paris (1918). The military convention, which accompanied the assurances of alliance, was approved by the Emperor Alexander III on December 27, 1893. Article 6 of this convention provides that it shall have "la même durée que le Triple Alliance." This Triple Alliance was renewed in 1896 and periodically after that until 1914. In fact, however, article 6 of the military convention was altered in 1899, and the reference to the Triple Alliance was then eliminated. The terms of the military convention therefore became identical with those of the diplomatic agreement, and this apparently had the effect of prolonging the Franco-Russian alliance *sine die*. For the reasons requiring absolute secrecy see S. B. Fay: *Origins of the War*, New York (1929), Vol. I, pp. 116-21.]

St. Petersburg, but I do not think that I should greatly err were I to assume that advice and consolation were afforded in ample measure by the Sovereign and statesmen of Germany.

8. To those who hold at present the reins of government in Russia, the German Constitution appears as one which could in great measure be suitably adapted to the needs of this country, while the vigorous personality of the German Emperor, the efficiency of the German army and navy, and the competency of the German bureaucracy, all give an appearance of strength and solidity which cause a great impression. My own opinion is that if the Emperor and the Russian Government were free from any other political ties, they would gladly form an intimate alliance with Germany, who represents, in their view, the stoutest bulwark of the monarchical principle combined with the strongest military force on the Continent. I am frequently told that Germans, though feared, are not popular in Russia. I venture to think that it is exceedingly difficult to appraise national likes and dislikes, or to assert that they are abiding sentiments. To my mind for practical purposes they do not form a dominating factor in determining political alliances or international combinations.

9. The interests of Germany and Russia do not run directly counter to each other, with perhaps one exception, which I admit is a large one, I allude to German policy in regard to the Ottoman Empire, and the extension of German influence in Asia Minor eastwards towards Mesopotamia and possibly Persia. But in Europe and in Poland the interests of the two countries are not divergent, while in the Far East they have common aims, or, to be more accurate, a common danger to resist. The "Yellow Peril," whether Chinese or Japanese, is regarded as a menace to both, though more directly and immediately to Russia. Furthermore, they have in a sense, similar internal difficulties with which to contend, more acute and more intense in Russia, but the two Governments are animated with the same desire that these difficulties should be encountered, and if possible, averted, though they may employ different means in combating them.

10. I should also state that the maintenance and extension of German influence are more directly and more skilfully managed here than I have observed to be the case in other countries. The alternate hectoring and cajolery, which are a distinctive feature of German diplomacy in some countries, are not employed here. A suave, conciliatory attitude and a gentle solicitude are the characteristics of German diplomacy in this capital. There are few external signs that the German Embassy is more favoured than others, but as the intimacy of the relations is maintained chiefly by private correspondence or by confidential reports not only between the two Sovereigns, but also by the Ambassador, the military Plenipotentiary, and the Naval Attaché, there is no necessity for any visible acknowledgment of what, to my mind, is the privileged position enjoyed by Germany in high as well as in influential quarters. Apart from the fact that close and confidential relations exist between the two Courts and the two Governments, which the recent evolution of the democratic movement has strengthened and fostered, there is also the desire on the part of the Russian Government to keep on good terms with the powerful western neighbour whose military strength is so superior to their own. I may be travelling beyond the limits prescribed to me in touching upon a question affecting the international position of Germany, but I would remark that, notwithstanding what may have occurred at the Algeciras Conference and on other occasions, when in the eyes of the general public Germany appeared to be almost isolated, there is an impression here that the German Empire is the dominating factor on the European Continent, and that, whatever temporary checks the German Emperor may experience, and whatever difficulties he may occasionally encounter in his own dominions, no decision of any importance in international relations can be adopted without his imprimatur and sanction.

11. I do not wish to maintain that German influence is universal throughout all circles in Russia. The remarks which I have ventured to make apply to the feeling existing at the Court and among the Government, and in a great measure among military circles. These, at the present moment, are the governing factors in Russia

who direct the foreign policy of this Empire. Among commercial and industrial circles, in the press, and among many public men there may prevail a different opinion. There are some who consider that Germany is indirectly the cause of the late disastrous war, and that her occupation of Kiao-chau led to the seizure of Port Arthur with all its baleful consequences. There are others who view with apprehension German competition in commercial matters, others dislike German propaganda in the Baltic Provinces, while many others regard with disfavour German militarism, German bureaucratic methods, and the general cast of German administration and government.

Austria-Hungary.

12. I should question if the relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary have ever been so cordial and so smooth as they are at the period at which I am writing. The two countries are acting in unison in the Balkan Peninsula, where formerly their interests were divergent, and in regard to the Polish question their views and aims are practically identical. These relations are greatly facilitated and strengthened by the respect and affection which the Emperor Francis Joseph has inspired here, by the friendly feelings which the Emperor of Russia has for the Austrian Heir Apparent, and also by the popularity which the present Minister for Foreign Affairs at Vienna succeeded in attaining during his twenty years' residence in St. Petersburg. These good relations naturally tend to facilitate the maintenance of the connection between the Russian and German Courts to which I have already called attention.

Italy

13. I have nothing to say in regard to the relations between Russia and Italy; they are friendly and correct. But Italy does not play an important part in this capital, and, beyond the fact that negotiations for a new Commercial Treaty are in progress, there is no special feature which requires notice.

China.

14. The relations between Russia and China would, I submit, be better discussed from Peking than from here. From what I have been able to ascertain, the Chinese Legation here participates but indirectly in the treatment of affairs between Russia and the Celestial Empire, which are dealt with by the Russian Legation at the Chinese capital. I have on more than one occasion endeavoured to ascertain from the Chinese Minister his views on the several questions which are pending between the two Empires, and especially in regard to the situation in Mongolia, but I have observed that his knowledge of what is passing on those matters is limited. The new situation which has been produced by the results of the late war in the Far East doubtless necessitates a reconsideration by the Russian Government of their policy in those regions. At present schemes are being discussed in regard to railway extension, but sufficient time has not yet elapsed to permit of any decision being reached on these points. Moreover, no definite steps can be taken in regard to them until the necessary funds are available, and the sanction of the Duma obtained. The policy of Russia may be for a time on defensive lines and be circumscribed by circumstances, and, although she may appreciate the fact that her action in Manchuria has been checked, there are other fields—Mongolia for instance—where she might display more activity, and endeavour to secure a position which might compensate her for the losses which she has sustained elsewhere. These are conjectures, and the future policy of Russia will greatly depend on the ultimate development of the situation within her own dominions.

Japan.

15. I have reported on the difficulties which have arisen in regard to the negotiations which are at present being conducted in St. Petersburg between the Russian and Japanese Governments. As these are matters of immediate moment, which may change their character during the preparation of this Report, I would prefer to deal with them in separate despatches during the course of the various phases through which they may pass. I think it may be stated broadly that no revengeful feelings exist in Russia against Japan. The war was an unpopular one, and since its unsuccessful termination it is condemned by many and regretted by all. If Japan is not exacting in her demands, and adopts a conciliatory attitude towards Russia, I think that the great majority of the Russian public would be contented to live on fairly amicable terms with their late adversary. I doubt if there would be a great desire to try conclusions again with so redoubtable a foe, and, as I have mentioned, Russia

will possibly turn her attention to the regions where she may not directly meet with her former antagonist.

16. With respect to Persia and Central Asian affairs generally, the present moment is not one when they could be discussed with any advantage. The negotiations which are proceeding in respect to our future relations in Persia may, before their conclusion, enable a clearer insight to be obtained into the aims and views of Russia in those quarters of the globe. Persia.

17. I have left the question of the relations between Great Britain and Russia to the last, and, although it is the one on which it might be expected that I should be able to write with greater confidence than on others, I confess that I find considerable difficulty in forming a clear and decided opinion on the subject. Generally speaking, I think that it would be possible to say that the feelings of mistrust and hostility which on occasions in the past were manifested are gradually passing away from many minds; but without a more prolonged residence and a wider acquaintance I should hesitate to affirm to what extent a better disposition has spread. It should not be forgotten that, apart from the traditional rivalry by which many minds in Russia are swayed, other factors have of late entered into the account, and which influence certain sections of public opinion in various diverse ways. There are many who consider that Japan would never have ventured on the war unless she had felt assured that Great Britain would loyally observe the provisions of the Treaty of Alliance. Then during the war certain incidents occurred which rendered for a time relations difficult and strained, and since the war other incidents arose which were not peculiarly pleasing and gratifying to certain circles. The above facts produced some impression, which may not be effaced within a limited period. Great Britain.

18. The real question to examine is whether the traditional rivalry and divergence of policy which have hitherto been conspicuous in every international question of special interest to the two Powers are giving place to a sincere desire to arrive at a fair and amicable understanding. The results of our pending negotiations will, in a great measure, answer this question; and it would be of interest to ascertain with some degree of certainty what are the views held on the above subject at the Court, by the Cabinet, by the military party, the press, and by the intelligent public. Owing to various circumstances personal contact with the Court is exceedingly rare, more infrequent probably than in any other country, and therefore the opportunities of judging of the views held there are merely indirect, and not entirely satisfactory. From what I have been able to gather I should say that, in principle, there was no objection to an understanding with Great Britain, and that if the Foreign Minister were in a position to submit a project, it would be accepted without demur. At the same time I do not anticipate that any active stimulus to the conclusion of an Agreement will emanate from the Court, or that any great eagerness will be shown to further the negotiations. In regard to the Cabinet, I think that I could say with confidence that the majority of its members are quite willing that an arrangement should be concluded, provided always that the interests of Russia were safeguarded, and that a fair bargain was struck. Should the negotiations of the Russian Government with Japan enter into an unfavourable phase, this may act with disadvantage on the discussions between Russia and Great Britain. The military party, to my mind, are a stumbling block; and in this party I would include all those whom I may term militant Russians, the successors in a sense of the old Slavophiles. These latter do not perhaps play so conspicuous or so vigorous a part as was the case some twenty years ago; but I understand that their activity, though less noticeable, is none the less prosecuted and is not in abeyance. In regard to this party I should like to obtain some fuller information, as should they recover some of the influence they formerly possessed, they would make that influence felt on the relations of Russia not only with Great Britain, but also with Austria-Hungary and in a measure with Germany also. In any case I doubt if the Military party would lightly abandon their traditional policy or consent to an agreement which checked their schemes of the future. At the same time I do not consider that this opposition is insuperable, if they are able to

obtain some substantial *quid pro quo* for concessions which they may be required to make in some localities. I should be entering upon a very large question were I to sketch even in outline the aims of the military party in the Middle East. It is indeed unnecessary for me to do so as they are sufficiently well known in official circles in London; but I should like to draw attention to the fact that an agreement with Great Britain would, to the military mind, practically amount to an abandonment of a large portion of their programme, and perhaps they do not take that wide view of foreign policy which would lead them to appreciate the benefits of peace and good-will. The military party is a powerful one, and its sentiments cannot be ignored, and it is smarting under the misfortunes of the late war. I anticipate that it is in that quarter that serious obstacles to a good understanding with Great Britain will be found. The tone of the press, with the exception of one or two reactionary organs, who are always vituperative of England has, generally speaking, been fairly favourable. But of late, with the exception of criticisms on the Japanese negotiations, the press has occupied itself but little with foreign affairs. The intelligent public—for the masses do not concern themselves with matters beyond their immediate horizon—have been so absorbed in the affairs of their own country, that they have had little leisure or inclination to occupy themselves with foreign affairs except in so far as the latter can be utilized for party purposes. One fact has been borne in upon me during my residence here and that is the absence of any patriotism in the general public. Indeed, I have been told, and I can well believe it, that many welcomed the disasters which fell upon Russia as affording occasions for attacks upon the Government. Moreover, there seems to be an increasing tendency among the rising generation of intellectuals to discard the sense of any love for their country, as being but a narrow selfish ideal, and that for the future the great idea of humanity should alone animate their minds and contain their aspirations.

19. I am afraid that I have given but an imperfect and superficial survey of the foreign relations of Russia, but I would plead as an excuse that this country is passing through a period of transition, that its future is uncertain, and that it is impossible to estimate what forces are working within her or to predict in what direction they may impel this vast Empire, with all its heterogeneous elements, its conflicting interests, and with its great inarticulate mass of many millions half civilized, wholly uneducated but with a hidden strength which may work for great evil or for great good. . . .

(3.)—*The Court.*⁽²⁾

47. *The Emperor.*—At a Court where the autocratic power still exists the personality of the reigning sovereign is naturally of high importance and the character of the Emperor who rules over this Empire is of great interest. It is a subject on which I am diffident in expressing an opinion; as to estimate fairly and honestly the character of any individual, in whatever station of life he may be, a close personal acquaintance is necessary. In the present circumstances, I must limit myself to a few general observations. I have not heard the slightest doubt expressed as to the honesty, the high sense of duty and devotion to his country which animate the Emperor in the discharge of his important functions. I do not imagine that any impartial man of whatever shade of politics could deny to His Majesty the possession of qualities which are admirable and exemplary. It would be affectation to assert that the Emperor is not exposed to criticism, and that he is universally regarded as a beneficent and capable monarch. There are many who consider that His Majesty is too much wedded to the autocratic power; there are others who think that the strength of his will is not commensurate with the sincerity of his intentions; and there are others who lament that passing and incidental influences carry too much weight when important decisions have to be taken.

(2) [Section (2) of this report deals with British claims on Russia in connection with the Russo-Japanese war. It is printed above pp. 60-4, No. 56.]

48. Whatever grounds there may be for any of the above strictures, the exceptionally difficult situation in which the Emperor is placed should be taken into consideration. It would require remarkable prescience to discern to what degree the reins of government should be slackened, and exceptional powers of judgment to select the right course to follow among the many divers paths which are recommended. I can conceive no position at the present time which is exposed to such great dangers and which is surrounded with such serious embarrassments as that which is held by the Emperor of Russia. He is the heir to a system of government of many years standing, and to a belief in the sacredness of his functions and duties, and if the necessities of the time demand that he should abandon traditional principles and divest himself in great measure of an authority which has been transmitted to him, the motives and sentiments which govern ordinary human nature may be allowed to justify somewhat any hesitation or doubt which he may feel. I think that it would be just to exercise some leniency in judging the manner in which His Majesty bears the almost superhuman task which is imposed upon him, and if in the eyes of many he does not rise fully to the exigencies of the present situation, and does not always act with the required firmness and decision, nor take a bold initiative indifferent to the opposing currents of so many different waves of opinion, it is doubtful if many of his critics would, if placed in similar circumstances, be able to meet and overcome successfully the difficulties which beset the Throne, and at the same time be capable of endowing the country with the liberty, order, and tranquillity which it so urgently needs. . . .

(4.)—*Important Members of the Cabinet.*

51. M. Stolypin is the President of the Council of Ministers, and at the same time Minister of the Interior, which latter post he held under the Ministry of M. Goremykine. . . . He takes an indifferent interest in foreign affairs, but I should class him among the Cabinet Ministers who would be favourable to a friendly understanding with Great Britain.

52. M. Isvolsky, the Minister for Foreign Affairs, is a man of about 50 years of age, but looks younger than his years, and is particularly careful in his dress and appearance. He has charming manners, though I think he has a quick temper, and is always amiable and courteous. He is not without vanity and ambitions; nervous, somewhat timorous of responsibility, and most susceptible to criticism. He is quick and intelligent, and though unused to hard work, he loyally endeavours to master the subjects with which he has to deal. He is very liberal in his views, and is probably the most advanced in the Cabinet in his political opinions. He has lived for thirty years in various diplomatic posts—Copenhagen being the last one—and he is therefore considered by those of his colleagues who are hardened bureaucrats as a Western European with very little knowledge of Russia. His amiable sociable qualities render him very popular at the Court and in society, but I should doubt if his opinions carry much weight with them. His means are slender, and both he and his charming wife would, for many reasons, prefer a comfortable well-paid Embassy to the drudgery and responsibility of a Cabinet Minister, with a comparatively inadequate salary. He is a "dilettante" in art and literature, and of a wide and liberal education. He undoubtedly desires that his tenure of the portfolio of Minister for Foreign Affairs should be a successful one, and is much harassed and perplexed by any obstacles which may arise in the course of any negotiation in which he may be engaged. He is loyally and sincerely anxious for an understanding with Great Britain, though he would take no step which would be unfavourably viewed at Berlin, and the opinions which may prevail at that Court have a paramount importance in his eyes.

53. M. Kokovtsoff is the Minister of Finance, and a man of some 50 years of age. . . . He is, I understand, willing that an understanding with Great Britain should be arranged, and that co-operation in regard to Persian affairs between Great Britain and Russia should be maintained. . . .

56. General Rödiger, the Minister of War—a man of about 60 years of age—is considered to be an admirable man of business, and to be well versed in all office details. Since the separation of the General Staff from the War Office his sphere of action has become more restricted; and, although his duties are multifarious, he does not perhaps occupy so influential a position as the Head of the General Staff. He is a man, I am told, of retired habits, and is almost entirely occupied by office work. He is not likely to be a keen advocate of an understanding with Great Britain.

57. General Palitzin, Head of the General Staff, is not, properly speaking, a Cabinet Minister, but frequently attends its sittings, and always accompanies the Minister of War when the latter has an audience of the Emperor. He is a man of about 45 years of age, and was formerly Chief of the Staff to the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievitch when the latter was Inspector-General of Cavalry. He is in close intimacy with his former chief, and consequently has a good position at Court. He is more versatile and active than the Minister of War, and his opinions, I understand, carry more weight than those of General Rödiger. He would not subscribe to an understanding with Great Britain unless Russia were to secure greater advantages; and I regard him as one of the chief obstacles to an arrangement. He would probably be supported by the Grand Duke Nicholas Nicolaievitch in any representations he might make to the Emperor, and he is consequently an important factor to be considered. I do not know him as yet personally. . . .

(6.)—*Memorandum on the Military Policy and Armament of Russia, 1906.*^(*)

70. During the war with Japan, from its commencement to the end of November 1905, about 20,000 officers, 1,270,000 men, and 1,600 guns were transported to the seat of war.

71. At the time of the signing of the Portsmouth Convention in September 1905, there were at the theatre of war about 1,050,000 men, of which 12,000 officers and 987,000 men belonged to the field army; about 40 per cent. of the total numbers were reservists. Besides the above, there were 1,048 officers and 57,820 men of the army prisoners in Japan; these were transported to Russian territory by February 1906. The numbers that had to be transported back to Russia amounted to about 900,000 officers and men.

72. The demobilization was carried out in the following way: By the middle of December 1905 the cadres, amounting to 600 officers and 10,000 men, which were necessary for the instruction of the incoming batch of recruits, were transported to their respective quarters in Russia.

73. Then followed the 13th Corps, which was on its way out when the Portsmouth Treaty was signed. It was, however, detained *en route* to suppress disorders. Then followed the Siberian reserve troops, who demobilized in Siberia and then formed a railway guard with their peace establishment.

74. After that came the reservists of the various army corps, who were sent back *en bloc* by General Linevitch, instead of going with their units. The result of this error was that the reservists got completely out of hand, came under the influence of the revolutionists, and for nearly six weeks interrupted the traffic and took charge of the railway. Order was not restored until troops had been sent from both ends of the line in January to quell the mutineers. Various repairs were then necessary, and the line was not in working order until March. By the end of July the European corps had been brought back mostly by rail, 100,000 men returning by sea.

75. These troops have returned to their former stations in Russia, leaving behind in Siberia and Manchuria a garrison of 170 battalions of infantry, 46 squadrons, 72 batteries, and technical troops. Of these, 2 infantry divisions (32 battalions) and 8 Cossack cavalry regiments are still at Kharbin. The horses—over 270,000—most of which were brought from Russia, were either sold or given away to Cossack Voiskos.

(*) [The memorandum on the Naval Policy of Russia is omitted as very little had been done to rebuild the Fleet after the catastrophe of the war.]

but there still remains in Siberia a large quantity of arms, ammunition, stores, and transport carts.

76. The fact that there has been no radical change in the distribution of troops in Russia shows that her military policy, by which one-half of the total active army is massed on or near the western frontier remains unaltered, while the comparatively small garrison retained in Siberia gives evidence of no aggressive intentions with regard to Japan.

77. The situation in Central Asia remains unaltered. The discipline amongst the troops still appears to be far from satisfactory. The country has suffered lately from a frequent change of Rulers. In the autumn of last year the Governor-General of Turkestan, General Teviashev, died. He was a weak Governor, and left the country in a very bad state. The energetic rule of his assistant and temporary successor, General Sakharov, greatly improved matters. Then came General Subbotich, and his rule has been disastrous; he was recalled during the autumn, and has now been dismissed from the army. The Governor of Trans-Caspia, General Ussakovsky, was recalled last year in disgrace for sympathizing with the revolutionists, and was succeeded by General Kossagovsky, of whom great things were expected. But he apparently quarrelled with the Governor-General, resigned his post and left the army. General Matsievsky, Commander of the 1st Turkestan Army Corps, is now Acting Governor, no successor to General Subbotich having yet been appointed.

78. As regards the Caucasus, one European infantry division that was sent from Kiev last year to quell disturbances in the Caucasus still remains in the country, and is distributed about Poti, Kutais, and Batoum, a proof that affairs in that region are not yet normal.

79. Plans for the construction of railways are important evidence as to future military policy. In this respect the most urgent need of the moment, consequent on the loss of Manchuria, is a line from Stretensk to Khabarovsk, north of the Amur River. Next to that in importance comes the doubling of the existing track of the Siberian Railway. Both these measures have been approved in principle. Surveys will commence as soon as possible on the former scheme and as regards the latter, it was decided last July in the Council of Ministers to commence with a double line from Atchinsk to Lake Baikal, and from thence to Manchuria, the frontier station of the Manchurian Railway.

80. In Central Asia there are projects for a railway from Tashkend to Tomsk, and from Uralsk to Semipalatinsk, but the Russian Government wishes to make use of foreign capital to construct them, so they are not considered so urgent as the former Siberian schemes. They are, however, also of strategical significance, as the Tashkend-Tomsk line would draw closer the Central Asian and Far Eastern theatres of war, while the Uralsk-Semipalatinsk-Tomsk line gives another route from Russia to Siberia along the portion where it is not yet proposed to double-track the Siberian Railway. With regard to the projected line from Samarkand to Termez, threatening Kabul, it is rumoured that the Russian Government has postponed its construction.

81. Concerning armaments, Russia is still far from having completed the rearmament of the Field Artillery with the 1902 pattern of 3-inch field guns. The war with Japan and the industrial strikes in Russia have greatly retarded progress. It is believed that in September last, six army corps in Russia were still armed with the old 1878 gun. The Guard Corps and some of the schools have received the 1902 gun, but the remaining army corps and line Rifle Brigades have 1900 pattern, many of which are worn out. There are twenty-six batteries of mountain artillery furnished with the new gun. As to siege guns, since the war with Japan, the Russian authorities have come to the conclusion that all their siege artillery must be replaced. Nothing has yet been accomplished in this direction beyond laying down details of the guns required, and inviting samples from the principal foreign firms for competition.

82. One result of the war has been a very great extension in the use of machine-guns of the Maxim type. At the commencement of the war there were only eight companies of eight guns each, now they number 118 companies draught and pack.

83. Land fortresses are armed with 8-inch guns and mortars, and 2·24-inch Q.-F. guns. For coast defence there are 11-inch and 9-inch mortars, 11-inch, 10-inch, 9-inch, 6-inch Q.-F., and 2·24 Q.-F. guns.

84. The annual contingent of the troops for 1906 has been fixed at 469,618 men. The number for 1903 before the war was 320,732. During the war the figures naturally rose—in 1904 to 447,000, and in 1905 to 475,000. The reason for the present large number is the recent alteration in the terms of military service under which Infantry and Field Artillery will serve for three years instead of four, and the other branches four years instead of five. This measure has been generally popular, and the Government has experienced no difficulty in collecting recruits.

85. The army has, undoubtedly, benefited in many ways from the experiences gained from the war, and also from the attacks of the revolutionists. The artillery, although at present lacking in field guns, and, doubtless, also in stores of ammunition, possesses an excellent type of modern Q.-F. field gun. There are twenty-six mountain batteries, also of a new type of gun the details of which are not known, whereas, before the war there were only two mountain batteries of an old type. There are about 118 machine-gun companies as against eight companies before the war. The infantry has improved in the matter of tactical training, uniform, and equipment, and is devoting greater attention to rifle shooting. A better system of mobilization has been instituted by dividing the reservists into two classes according to age.

86. In order to counteract the efforts of the revolutionists to sow discontent and mutiny among the rank and file, the pay of the soldier was largely increased at the end of last year, and he was given extra permanent issues of bedding, clothing, and rations.

87. The war clearly showed up the weak spots in the organization of the huge fabric of the Russian army, namely, the deficiency both in quantity and quality of the reserve of officers and of good, intelligent, and mature, non-commissioned officers. Efforts are being made towards improvement in both these directions, though progress must, of necessity, be very difficult and a matter of years. . . .

(9.)—*Finance.*

181. The year 1906 has been one of financial embarrassment, as a result of the late war. When the Budget was issued (January 1906) it was estimated that a loan of £50,000,000 would be required to cover the expenditure of the year, including the final disbursements connected with the war. It was recognized that this estimate must be increased by—

- (a.) A deficit of £16,500,000, shown by the accounts for 1905.
- (b.) £14,000,000, expenditure incurred in 1906, and not provided by the 1906 Budget, of which £8,000,000 were additional funds required for famine relief, and £6,000,000 were for objects connected with the internal disturbances, such as compensation to land owners and manufacturers, extraordinary police measures, &c.
- (c.) £15,000,000, the amount of short-term Treasury Bonds negotiated in Germany in 1905, and repayable in 1906.

The deficiency to be faced during the year was thus brought to a total of £95,500,000 = £50,000,000 + £16,500,000 + £14,000,000 + £15,000,000.

182. It has been met in part as follows :—

The "International" 5 per Cent. Loan of 1906, of a nominal amount of £88,000,000, yielded £70,200,000, and a fresh issue of 4 per Cent. Rentes of a nominal amount of £5,000,000, yielded £3,500,000. Credits allowed in the 1906 Budget for the war and other departments were reduced by £2,000,000. Finally, the Government receipts for the first eight months of the year exceeded the estimates

by £12,600,000. The deficiency is thus reduced to £95,500,000 - £88,300,000 = £7,200,000. If we suppose the receipts for the last four months of the year to exceed the estimates in the same proportion as the receipts for the months January - August, the deficiency will further be reduced to about £3,000,000.

183. The German short-term loan, which was partially renewed when it first fell due in the summer will, it is announced, have been entirely paid off by the close of the year (Russian style). So also the French short-term loan of £10,000,000, and other short-term loans to which no reference has been made in the above statement of liabilities to be met in 1906, because they were contracted and repayable in the course of the year.

184. Thus the Imperial Treasury will have succeeded in tiding over the year with a comparatively inconsiderable deficit, and without resorting to a second foreign loan, as it had been freely predicted that they must. The net amount obtained by loan, exclusive of short-term loans contracted and paid off during the year, was £73,700,000; but the expenditure of the year included such exceptional items as over £50,000,000 in connection with the war, the repayment of £15,000,000 borrowed the previous year in Germany, a deficit of nearly £17,000,000 inherited from 1905, £13,000,000 spent on famine relief, including £5,000,000 assigned for the purpose in the Budget, and £8,000,000 subsequently provided, &c.; the exceptional expenses were thus largely in excess of the net amount borrowed. It could not, however, be inferred that Russia will be able to pay her way next year without a loan; for extraordinary expenses will be required if she proceeds to rebuild her fleet, re-equip her army, or realize the various reforms introduced or in contemplation. It is also certain that a large sum will be required again next year for famine relief, and probably there will still be the necessity for extraordinary police measures entailing increased expenditure by the Ministry of the Interior. Until the Budget for 1907 is issued it will not be known how far the Government rely on economies and fresh taxation to enable them to cope with these unusual demands on the Treasury. As regards the country's present borrowing capacity, it may be noted that the present interest on the public debt, including a small amount assigned for amortization, has now reached approximately £40,000,000, or roughly one-fourth of the total ordinary revenue—if in estimating the revenue we do not take the gross yield of the two great State industrial enterprises, the spirit monopoly and the railways, but of the net yield after making the necessary deductions for working expenses.

185. The monetary situation has greatly improved since the close of last year, when it had become critical. On the 21st December, 1906, the State Bank possessed, according to the official returns, at home and abroad, gold to the value of £124,400,000 as against £104,700,000 on the same date in 1905; and the value of the bank notes in circulation was £126,200,000 as against £136,900,000 twelve months previously.

186. Thus the stock of gold has increased by £19,700,000, and the note circulation has diminished by £10,700,000, and the danger which at one time appeared to threaten the stability of the gold currency has for the present been dispelled.

No. 244.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

St. Petersburg, January 2, 1907.

I trust that the Neva climate is not commencing to exercise an effect upon me, but I confess to some misgivings as to our negotiations. In the first place, I was

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 83.]

not quite satisfied with M. Iswolsky's attitude during our conversation in regard to the Chumbi valley occupation; and though I still feel confident that he is at heart sincere, I am afraid that he is beginning to feel the influence of the military party. His Pro memoria, to my mind, was perfectly clear in so far as it simply requested a formal reassertion in the future Convention of the provisional character of our occupation. He is now desirous that we should admit that the provisions of the Convention should be revised, if our occupation were, for some reason or another, prolonged. From his point of view, I do not take much exception to this proposal; but what I did not like was a hint which he threw out that possibly we might indirectly instigate incidents in order to justify a prolonged occupation. This insinuation emanated, I feel pretty sure, from the General Staff, as it is not worthy of M. Iswolsky himself. Again, he spoke throughout our conversation, as if our interests in Thibet were no more than those of Russia. I must go into this question fully with him, and make our views very clear to him, and I shall be glad when I am in a position to hand him our revised Article II, as it will give me an opportunity of discussing the whole question of our relations with Thibet.

In the second place, I am a little disturbed at his eagerness to withdraw our joint offer of an advance to the Persian Gov[ernmen]t. The withdrawal may be desirable on account of local considerations; but it was only quite recently that M. Iswolsky was ready to make the advance independently of the wishes of the Persian Assembly; and he has now suddenly developed an anxious solicitude for the opinions of that Assembly. This in itself does not disquiet me, as fuller information from Tehran as to the strength of the popular movement may very properly cause him to change his opinion. But the method which he has adopted of communicating in writing the draft of a note and requesting an immediate reply is not in accordance with his usual mode of procedure.

Until recently he has always been emphatic on the virtues of our joint action in the question of the advance, as being of such admirable augury for a general arrangement, and as being a course which we should steadily maintain and develop. He is now ready to abandon it, and at a moment when Spring-Rice reports that he notices at Tehran a weaker desire for joint action than formerly. When I receive your instructions, and communicate them to him I shall be able to see more clearly into the workings of his mind on the subject; but I have some fears that if we unlink our arms on this question, we may find difficulty in hooking him on again. I shall not, of course, give him the slightest indication that I have any doubts or misgivings; but I must tell you that I have.

• It seems to me that he is possibly affected by an impression which is gaining ground in St. Petersburg—wrongly I venture to think—that the Government have surmounted all their internal difficulties, and are able to take a higher line in our discussions. Again the Japanese negotiations in which Russia must perforce play a secondary part may incline him to be a little stiffer and less disposed to concessions in other matters: and he may be disappointed that we declined to intervene with Japan, and, if I may say so, we were quite right in refusing. Moreover the General Staff may have been somewhat peremptory with him, and pointed out that he should keep his hands perfectly free. I trust that subsequent conversations with him will remove my doubts; and I quite admit that it was not to be expected that our negotiations would run perfectly smoothly.

I do not believe in an understanding with Germany—made behind our backs. On the ground of prudence alone, M. Iswolsky would not be so foolish as to enter into any compact of that nature. We should inevitably discover it, sooner or later, and he would be quite unable to justify himself. It may be possible that some recent action of Germany may cause him to be less assured of her benevolent indifference to our negotiations than he was formerly; and that he may feel it wiser to proceed with caution; but the fear of offending Germany which does exercise much influence on all his actions would hardly be so effective as to lead him

to give her a wide opening in Persia. He would but poorly serve the interests of his own countrymen were he to do so; unless he were negotiating a big bargain with her over a wider field where he could obtain some substantial quid pro quo.

Y[ou]rs sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

No. 245.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/319.

(No. 28.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. January 19, 1907.

Sir,

R. January 21, 1907.

The French Ambassador, M. Bompard, who has just returned from a short holiday from Paris, told me today that he had been surprised to hear at the Quai d'Orsay that the Russian Ambassador at Rome had informed M. Barrère that M. Isvolsky had returned from his visit to Berlin in the autumn much discouraged, as he had been given to understand that Russia must choose between Germany and Great Britain, and that she must not expect to be able to come to an understanding with the latter Power and retain at the same time the friendship of the former.

M. Bompard had told his Government that the above version of the results of M. Isvolsky's visit was absolutely in contradiction with what he had gathered in St. Petersburg, and that, on the contrary, M. Isvolsky had not been able to conceal his satisfaction at the benevolent views expressed by the German Government in regard to an understanding between Great Britain and Russia. He asked me whether I had any reason to differ from that view. I told M. Bompard that it passed my comprehension to understand from what source M. Muravieff had derived his information, as there was no doubt whatever that M. Isvolsky was entirely satisfied with the results of his Berlin visit, and that the views of the German Government in regard to an Anglo-Russian understanding had been on two occasions communicated to me by M. von Schoen here, and also openly stated by Prince Bülow in the Reichstag. There was no ambiguity or misunderstanding possible; and M. Isvolsky was quite justified in stating to me, as he had done, that he could now proceed with a light heart in our negotiations, as he anticipated no difficulties or objections on the part of the German Government.

M. Bompard said that he believed that M. Muravieff had repeated the same story to Sir E. Egerton; and I find that this was the case (see Sir E. Egerton's No. 199 of November 3, 1906).⁽¹⁾

I said that though I did not believe that M. Isvolsky had in any way tied his hands in Berlin, I felt sure that he *always* kept an eye fixed on that quarter, and was attentive to any sign which might be given him from the banks of the Spree. M. Bompard said that this regard for German susceptibilities might be inconvenient both to France and Great Britain. I replied that such might be the case, but it was a fact with which we must reckon.

M. Bompard said that he had told M. Paul Cambon that, in his opinion, some little more stimulus should be given to our negotiations, as unless the Russians were spurred on they were inclined to be very lethargic. He did not wish to be indiscreet or ask for details but he feared our negotiations were unduly dragging. I told him that progress was certainly not rapid, but that some had been made, and we had exchanged views on some questions in a practical form. I hoped that matters would soon move a little more quickly, but it was of no use to try to hasten the Russians,

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. It describes the above account given by M. Muraviev of M. Isvolski's visit to Berlin. The date is, in fact, November 13, 1906.]

and M. Isvolsky was constantly pleading for time to overcome opposition. Moreover, my Government had several different and widely separated authorities to consult: and all this caused some unavoidable delay.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 246.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/382.

(No. 41.) Most Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. January 19, 1907.

Sir,

R. February 4, 1907.

The Japanese Minister called on me yesterday afternoon, and, in the course of conversation, enquired of me whether my negotiations with M. Isvolsky were making any marked progress. I gave M. Motono in confidence a general outline of the position of affairs, and I added that, although it was possible that an agreement on the main points might eventually be reached, I feared that M. Isvolsky might hesitate to give the final touch to the Convention if he had not, in the meantime, succeeded in satisfactorily concluding his discussions with the Japanese Government.

M. Motono observed that he did not understand why the Russian negotiations with Great Britain should be in any way affected by those passing between Russia and Japan. I told him that I was similarly perplexed, but so far as I could gather, the views of M. Isvolsky were as follows. He was, I understood, apprehensive that the Japanese Government would insist on certain demands to which Russia would have eventually to submit, and that consequently he would have to present to the public a Commercial Treaty and a Fisheries Convention which would not be considered satisfactory. At the same time he would have signed an Agreement with Great Britain, the Ally of Japan, which would in the eyes of many place a distinct check on Russian policy in the Middle East; and, therefore, criticism would be severe on a policy which turned to the disadvantage of Russia both in the Far East and in Central Asia. It was not, I said, difficult to combat these fears and apprehensions, but I wished to place before him what I thought was at the back of the mind of M. Isvolsky.

M. Motono remarked that it seemed to him that M. Isvolsky was unnecessarily alarmed, and was conjuring up difficulties and dangers which did not in reality exist. So far as the Japanese negotiations were concerned, he repeated to me what he had said on former occasions to the effect that Japan was presenting no demands on which an understanding could not be effected, and that he was unable to comprehend why an agitation in the public press had been fomented. M. Motono entered into considerable detail on this point with the object of explaining to me that the Japanese Government were simply requesting the due fulfilment of the provisions of the Treaty of Portsmouth⁽¹⁾

M. Motono said that he was very grateful to me for having spoken to him so fully, and that I could trust him to consider what I had said as strictly personal and confidential. He could assure me that his Government desired nothing better than to be on amicable relations with Russia and to see peace maintained in the Far East. Without betraying the confidence I had placed in him he would take an opportunity of leading M. Isvolsky on to the ground which I had indicated; and if he made any proposals of the nature which I had sketched he would be happy to communicate them

⁽¹⁾ [The omitted passages give details on this subject.]

to his Government. It would, he thought, be an admirable consummation if Great Britain and Japan could establish such relations with Russia as would make for peace in Central Asia as well as in the Middle and the Far East.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

Sir A. Nicolson was on delicate ground but he walked carefully.

E. G.

No. 247.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/382.

(No. 42.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. January 19, 1907.

R. February 4, 1907.

During the course of my conversation with the Japanese Minister yesterday, he asked me if I thought that M. Isvolsky kept the German Ambassador fully informed of the negotiations which were passing between Russia and Great Britain and Japan. I replied that, as far as my discussions were concerned, I doubted if M. Isvolsky acquainted M. von Schoen with any details; in fact he had assured me that he had communicated them to no one. The relations between M. Isvolsky and M. von Schoen were intimate and of some standing and it was possible that when he was in difficulties he might confide in an old friend. I asked M. Motono if his question implied that he had doubts as to Germany viewing with satisfaction friendly arrangements between Russia and our own countries.

M. Motono said that the German Government were at present profuse in amabilities towards Japan, but it was perfectly clear to him that it would not be in the interests of the German policy to see Russia, Japan and Great Britain come to arrangements which would preclude all danger of friction between them, and he doubted if Germany would willingly witness a friendly understanding between the three countries. He believed that M. Isvolsky was much under the influence of Berlin, and he feared that trouble might arise from that quarter.

I told M. Motono that I was well aware that M. Isvolsky was very solicitous in his care for German susceptibilities, but that in regard to an understanding between Russia and Great Britain, the German Government had announced that they regarded it with benevolence. At the same time I did not deny that a similar charitable disposition had been shown by the German Government in the early days of the Anglo-French agreement, and that subsequently a change of attitude had ensued.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 248.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/321.

(No. 50.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. January 25, 1907.

R. February 4, 1907.

M. Isvolsky recurred today to a suggestion which he had previously made to me that he, Count Benckendorff and myself should have some conversations in regard to the several questions on which we were treating. I had told His Excellency that I should always be at his disposal and that I considered that it would be of advantage, if we could discuss matters in the presence of Count Benckendorff. I think that the

latter, who is cordially in favour of an agreement being reached, may stimulate M. Isovsky to push on matters a little and may also be of use in moderating in military and other circles any opposition which may exist.

M. Isovsky then said that a small Commission was about to meet to discuss several of the points connected with our negotiations, and that Count Benckendorff would attend the sittings. He, therefore, would suggest that our conversations *à trois* should be postponed until the Commission had concluded its labours, as he would then be in a better position to discuss matters.

I am glad that a Commission is to examine the questions under discussion, as it shows that M. Isovsky is now resolved to take up the subject of the negotiations seriously and without procrastination. Moreover, as presumably some delegates from the General Staff will be on the Commission, it will be possible to ascertain with some precision the views of the military party.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

[*ED. NOTE.*—The following appears to be the decisions of an early meeting of the Committee here alluded to:—

(548) *Protocol of Deliberations of the Russian Ministerial Council of February 1, 1907, on the Project of a Treaty with England on Persian affairs.*(¹)

At the opening of the meeting, the Minister of Foreign Affairs reminded the Council that the question of an understanding with England as to Persian affairs had already been ventilated, although solely *à propos* of a loan to be granted to the Persian Government.

This time it was a matter of coming to a decision as to the proposal of the British Government to divide Persia into spheres of influence. Until quite recently, this idea had met with no approval from Russian public opinion, and in Government circles the conviction even prevailed that Persia must come entirely under Russian influence, and that Russia must press onward to the Persian Gulf, which would necessitate the building of a trans-Persian railway and a fortified terminal station on the shores of the above-mentioned Gulf. The events of the past few years, however, have shown this plan to be impossible of realization and that everything must be avoided that might lead to a conflict with England. The best means for achieving this purpose is the demarcation of the spheres of influence in Persia.

The Minister of Foreign Affairs expressed himself as being a convinced adherent of this standpoint, and desired to learn the opinion of the Ministers present as to the expediency of such a policy, before the meeting entered upon the discussion of the proposals made by England.

The Ministerial Council accepted the principle of spheres of influence as the only basis possible for an agreement with England, whereupon the Minister of Foreign Affairs pointed out the close connection existing between this question and the Bagdad Railway. Only a treaty with England could lead to the expected results, if no objections were raised against the Treaty on the part of Germany. *As events in Morocco have shown, Germany distrusts all agreements concluded without her knowledge and which might in any manner affect her position as a world Power.* There is all the more reason for such anxiety on our part, since Germany has already turned her attention to Persia and apparently intends creating important interests for herself there. This is furthermore confirmed by the fact that the possibility of a Treaty between Russia and England has aroused lively perturbation in Germany. This however has been disposed of by the statements of the Russian Government at Berlin. *We gave them to understand that Russia would take upon herself no obligations without having previously come to an understanding with Germany, should the proposed agreement affect German interests in any way.* But to be completely secure, it would be necessary to come to a definite understanding with our Western neighbour and to circumscribe, to a certain degree, our mutual interests. *Such a basis of negotiations is presented by the Bagdad Railway which Russia has hitherto attempted to prevent by all possible means, relying on the support of France and England.* The Ministerial Council must now decide whether it be to Russia's advantage to renounce such a policy.

The Minister of Finance pointed out that the rumours of Germany's extensive economic designs on Persia were greatly exaggerated. According to his information, the German banks, which especially finance German enterprises in Asia, are so extremely occupied that they are hardly able to take part in new undertakings in Persia, all the more so as the continuous disturbances in Iran hardly create sound conditions for trade and commerce. True, several leading German banks have formed a new institution, "*Die Orientalische Bank*," and intend opening a branch at Teheran, but, so far as is known, the activity of this institution in Persia

(¹) [Siebert, pp. 475-80. Unless otherwise stated notes, punctuation, italics, &c., are as in original.]

is to be more of an informative nature, to determine which Persian markets might in the future be of use to Germany. Nevertheless, the fact of German interests in Persia cannot be denied and the understanding with Germany, referred to by the Minister of Foreign Affairs, is therefore decidedly desirable.

Referring to the Bagdad Railway, Kokowtzeff† reiterated that all his former objections to this railway still held good. Although it is an important line of transit between Western Europe and India, and would partly replace Ocean Traffic, yet it avoids our territory and consequently does not permit us to participate in the advantages of this transit. The Bagdad Railway will also undoubtedly increase the productiveness of the territories of Asia Minor and Mesopotamia through which it passes, and thus create new competition for the Russian wheat export trade. Especial danger for our predominance in Northern Persia is embodied in the branch lines leading towards the Persian frontier, which will make access to our economic sphere of influence possible for German and English industrial products.

We cannot, however, disguise the fact that we do not possess the power to prevent the construction of the Bagdad Railway or to defer it for any length of time. The only means at our disposal—our influence on France—are not reliable and we would hardly succeed in restraining French capital from participation in this enterprise.

The idea of entering into competition with the Bagdad Railway, by the building of a new line connecting the Russian railways with India by way of Afghanistan, will also have to be given up. England would doubtless regard such a line as far more dangerous than the Bagdad Railway. We shall therefore have to reconcile ourselves to the idea of the Bagdad Railway and endeavour to obtain compensations from Germany. In any case, the Minister does not regard Russia's participation in the Bagdad Railway as desirable. Our financial position does not permit us to take an active part; a fictitious participation, moreover, through a private banking concern or a French group of capitalists, affords us no advantages. The Russian Ambassador at London thereupon remarked, that since England had hitherto always calculated on Russian participation in the internationalising of the Bagdad Railway, our withdrawal might give quite a different aspect to the whole question.

The Minister of Trade believes that Russian obstruction in the Bagdad Railway question would only be of use could the construction of the line be postponed for several decades. As this is impossible, it would be desirable to secure as advantageous compensations as possible in return for our acquiescence.

The Bagdad Railway is so injurious to Russian interests that we can scarcely hope to receive compensations of real importance to us. Hence we must content ourselves with paralysing as far as possible its harm. In this respect we must differentiate between the main and the branch lines approaching the Persian frontier. For Russian interests, the main line signifies the concentration of the transit service from Europe to the Persian Gulf. Since 1883, when the Caucasus was closed, this transit service has not passed through Russia, so that our losses now would only be indirect. The branch lines mentioned above, however, especially those touching Persian territory, signify a direct menace to us, as they would open the North Persian markets, which we have hitherto controlled, to foreign goods. Hence the following provision in favour of Russia should be established at the pending negotiations with England and Germany:

1. Germany guarantees that no branch lines be built in the direction of the Persian frontier, as, for instance, Khanekin.
2. England and Germany must support us as to the renewal of the obligation of the Persian Government, valid until the year 1910, and providing that Persia would build no railways in the North‡ or that such should be built only with our sanction, consequently also with due regard to our interests.
3. The Treaty of 1900 with Turkey relating to railways in Asia Minor must be extended in our favour.

The representatives of the War Ministry and the General Staff, unanimously confirm the impossibility of reconciling the Bagdad Railway with Russian strategic interests; the advantages which would accrue to Turkey through this railway could only be equalised by a corresponding development of our Caucasian railway system, and corresponding reinforcement of our troops in the frontier districts. We can obtain no compensations of a military nature from other States. Nevertheless, they§ are of opinion that under certain conditions we could give our consent to the Bagdad Railway.(²)

† President of Ministerial Council—virtually Russian prime minister.

‡ An unusual condition in this age of railroads.

§ The military.

(²) [Siebert—Benckendorff, Vol. I, pp. 1-9, prints the whole protocol, of which pp. 6-9 did not appear in the earlier edition. They describe the discussion of the British proposals.]

No. 249.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/921.

(No. 58.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. January 27, 1907.

R. February 4, 1907.

I enquired of Count Benckendorff last evening whether at his last audience he had found the Emperor well disposed towards the conclusion of an understanding between our two countries; and he replied that there was no doubt that His Majesty was sincerely desirous that an arrangement should be reached. Count Benckendorff added that from conversations which he had held with various persons he found that there existed an impression that Great Britain had originated the negotiations immediately after the war, and that there was a feeling that she had, thereby, evinced a desire to take advantage of the difficulties of Russia to exact terms of an onerous character. His Excellency said that he had taken pains to explain that *pourparlers* for an arrangement had commenced long before the outbreak of the war, and that they had naturally to be suspended during the period of hostilities, to be resumed as soon as peace had been concluded. He did not consider that the opposition of the military party would be so strenuous as was feared, and from a conversation which he had had with an important member of the General Staff he trusted that it would not be difficult to remove many misapprehensions.

Count Benckendorff said that it was evident to him that the General Staff had never been informed of the previous discussions and had been under the impression that Great Britain had suddenly sprung the negotiations on the Russian Government when the latter were in troublesome difficulties. They had consequently not reviewed the transaction with much favour.

Count Benckendorff said that he would attend the sittings of the Committee, to which I alluded in my despatch No. 50 of the 25th instant,⁽¹⁾ and I think that his presence will be of utility.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

[Count] Benckendorff might also add that after the war the initiative in the resumption of negotiations was taken by the Russian Government.

C. H.

(1) [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 250.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/921.

(No. 78.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. February 10, 1907.

R. February 18, 1907.

Count Benckendorff spoke to me last night in regard to the progress of our negotiations, and stated that the General Staff was now ready to accept in principle the fact that an understanding between Great Britain and Russia was desirable, but that they considered that some concessions of a political nature should be made to Russia in return for her projected withdrawal from a "military position." I presume that allusion was here made to Seistan being included in the British zone. Count Benckendorff said that he had been unable to obtain from the General Staff precise information as to what concessions they required, but he dropped an observation on the Dardanelles. I remarked that it would be well if all parties concerned in the negotiations were to state frankly their desires and aspirations, in fact that they should lay their cards on the table. As to the Dardanelles, that was outside the scope of my instructions, and, moreover, other Powers than Russia and Great Britain were interested in the question.

Count Benckendorff further said that he found a very favourable disposition generally to an understanding, and he hoped that it would be established on a broad and permanent basis. I believe that the inter-departmental Committee is to meet in a day or two; and I trust to be shortly in a position to inform you more precisely as to Russian views.

Count Benckendorff alluded also to the Russian negotiations with Japan which had naturally some influence over the course of our discussions. He said that he had explained to M. Isvolsky that it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to intervene in any manner in the negotiations which he was pursuing with M. Motono, but that in respect to his desire to come to some arrangement with Japan which would ensure peace in the Far East, he thought that His Majesty's Government could perhaps afford some service. M. Isvolsky was anxious to insert in a Convention with Japan some joint declaration that both parties engaged to maintain the *status quo* in the Far East, and to abide by the provisions of their Treaty obligations. It might be possible perhaps for His Majesty's Government to associate themselves in some manner in an engagement of that character. I said that I knew that my Government would welcome any mutual agreement between Russia and Japan which would maintain peace in the Far East, but I imagined that the Russian Government would in the first place ascertain the views of the Japanese Government on the subject, which course I understood had not yet been taken.

I think that in regard to the Anglo-Russian negotiations Count Benckendorff is doing very useful work among military and other officials in a sense favourable to a satisfactory issue of the discussions.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTES.

It is not clear at first sight what is the "military position" from which the General Staff are willing that Russia should withdraw in return for political concessions, so it is not possible to judge whether such a withdrawal would be of substantial benefit to us and therefore worth accepting in return for such concessions. It would in any case be difficult for us to prevent Russia reoccupying the position in question at any moment that suited her, after the agreement was concluded. Any proposal emanating from the military party must be looked on with great suspicion.

M. Izvolski's suggestion regarding the association of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] with a Russo-Japanese agreement for the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Far East seems rather premature.

H. N.

Note reference to the Dardanelles question.

R. P. M.

Sir A. Nicolson has a copy of our Memorandum on the Dardanelles question.⁽¹⁾

C. H.
E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [Memorandum of November 16, 1906, v. Ch. XXIII, pp. 58-60, *Ed. note.*]

No. 251.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/821.

(No. 95.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. February 15, 1907.

R. February 26, 1907.

I called on Count Witte today, and endeavoured to induce him to give me his views on internal affairs, but I found him inclined to be most reserved on the question, though he expressed the opinion that the Duma would be in great majority composed of deputies irreconcilably hostile to the Government, and little disposed to assist the latter in the work of the session.

Count Witte was evidently anxious to speak on foreign questions, and he spontaneously dwelt at some length on the situation in France, and made especial reference to the recent discussion in the French Chamber on loans to Russia. He considered that the attacks which had been made not only against Russia but also against the Emperor should have been promptly condemned by the President of the Chamber, who had passed but the slightest censure upon them. He admitted that the language of M. Pichon was perfectly correct and friendly. At the same time he was of opinion that the sympathy in influential circles in Russia with the French alliance had greatly diminished, while on the other hand he was pleased to observe that friendly feelings towards Great Britain were spreading and increasing, and he earnestly hoped that the negotiations which were proceeding between the two Governments would reach a satisfactory conclusion. He trusted that they would not be unduly protracted, as the favourable moment at present existing might slip by, and it was well "to strike when the iron was hot." He spoke in the highest terms of M. Isvolsky, whose appointment as Minister for Foreign Affairs he had at the outset viewed with some misgiving and surprise, but now that he was better acquainted with him, and had had an opportunity of watching his work he had been struck with his intelligence, breadth of view, and honesty of purpose. He did not consider that too much heed need be paid to military opposition to an arrangement with Great Britain. Such opposition was to be expected, and was in the nature of things.

Count Witte further stated that he hoped that Monsieur Isvolsky would succeed in establishing a durable understanding with Japan on a broad basis, and if Russia were enabled to live on amicable and undisturbed relations with Great Britain and Japan he thought that M. Isvolsky would have rendered an invaluable service not only to his own country but to the cause of peace.

The foreign policy of Germany, he continued was so erratic, and so impulsive, and so eminently selfish, that Russia should endeavour to make terms with Great Britain and Japan rather than be cajoled by the allurements which might emanate from Berlin.

Count Witte is leading a retired life, but of late he has been frequently visited by one or two of the highest Court officials, and by some members of the Cabinet, M. Isvolsky among others, and it may be that his advice is being sought by those who previously shunned him, and that his undoubted talents and experience are found to be valuable and useful.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 252.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/321.

(No. 96.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. February 16, 1907.

R. February 26, 1907.

The French Ambassador informed me today that he was pleased to find that M. Isvolsky was most satisfied with the outlook of his negotiations both with Great Britain and Japan, and that he had gathered that His Excellency expected to bring both matters to a fairly speedy and successful termination.

M. Bompard said that, as regards the Japanese negotiations, he considered that the Japanese had become more conciliatory owing to the advice which had been given them from Paris. He did not specify what was the nature of the advice, but he evidently was of opinion that the French Government had succeeded in giving, as he termed it, a *bon coup de main* to the negotiations. He had every reason to believe that the Japanese Government would now be willing to come to a comprehensive under-

standing with Russia, and animated with this hope, and a good prospect of coming to terms with Great Britain, M. Isvolsky was, so my French colleague remarked, radiant and sanguine.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 253.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.⁽¹⁾

St. Petersburg, February 19, 1907.

F.O. 371/382.

D. 12:57 P.M.

Tel. (No. 25.)

R. 2:15 P.M.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to call on him yesterday evening.

Count Benckendorff was present. H[is] E[xcellency] told me that he thought that our draft convention as to Thibet could be accepted but he questioned me as to scientific missions and as to Chumbi occupation. I told [him] that I was expecting a draft note as to the former and that I had submitted a draft declaration as to the latter but had not yet received a reply.

He read me portions of draft embodying Russian proposals as to Persia. I shall receive them in writing very shortly. Their line I understand would run as follows:—Kuchan-Ispahan-Yezd-Kasri Sherin.

There were conditions as to maintaining existing concessions in respective zones. I said that these should not include Meshed-Seistan telegraph line and enquired what other concessions were referred to. He mentioned Bank agencies and customs revenues and observed that settlement of two telegraph lines might be made the subject of a separate arrangement. I said that only settlement to my mind was a transfer.

It will be best to await proposals in writing so that I may be sure that I have correctly given line and that I may see all the details as he only read me passages.

He informed me that he had succeeded in winning over military party to accepting in principle our zone which was practically abandoning Seistan to us and was a surrender of what might in certain eventualities be an important strategical position. He said further that Persian question could not be settled until we had come to an arrangement as to Afghanistan and asked me to give him a sketch of our views. I expressed my inability to do so at present but hoped to be in a position shortly to give him some proposals. I asked what Russian views were. He said that military party was anxious lest we should change Afghanistan from a buffer state into a country entirely under our control and obtain Amir's permission to organize his troops, build railways etc. I said we could not prevent the Amir from developing his country and building railways if he wished to do so. I asked if he meant that Russia desired the maintenance of political *status quo*. He replied in the affirmative and added that some arrangement should be made as to relations of local frontier officers and as to trade. I gave him no indication of what we would propose.

Minister for Foreign Affairs at conclusion of interview made important statement that Russia would have to arrange with Germany so that latter power should not seek concessions in Russian zone and that such an arrangement would have to deal with Bagdad Railway—in accord with us I understood. His idea apparently is that Russia should withdraw her obstruction to the Bagdad Railway on condition that Germany gives her free hand in her zone.

M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] is desirous of pushing on negotiations especially as those with Japan are progressing very favourably.

⁽¹⁾ [A long despatch expanding this telegram is printed in the chapter relating to Persia, *infra*, pp. 428-31, No. 388.]

No. 254.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, February 20, 1907.*

F.O. 371/969.

D. 8.25 P.M.

Tel. (No. 28.)

R. 10 P.M.

Persian negotiations.

I have received in writing Russian proposed draft Convention. Russian line to run from Kasr-i-Sherin through Ispahan, Yezd, Kokh, to the Afghan frontier near Kuhsan. This is different from line which I telegraphed yesterday, but the misunderstanding is mine. Our line is mentioned as running from Afghan frontier through Gazik, Birjand, Kerman, and Bunder Abbas, and "without that frontiers of Afghanistan and Beluchistan."

I do not quite understand words in inverted commas. Each country reciprocally engages not to seek for herself or to support in favour of her own subjects or of subjects of third Power, any political or commercial Concessions, such as Concessions for railways, banks, telegraphs, roads, transport, insurance, &c.

Russia engages not to oppose directly or indirectly Concessions supported by British Government in British zone, and Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as to Russian zone.

No mention is made of (? maintenance of) existing Concessions, as was stated verbally to me yesterday, but Russian Government may consider this as implied.

Final paragraph states that revenues of all the Persian customs, with the exception of those of Farzistan and of Persian Gulf, guaranteeing the service of the Russian loans are to be devoted to same purpose as heretofore.

Minister for Foreign Affairs stated to me yesterday that the above reserved revenues were affected to British loans, but I presume you will wish that all the revenues affected should be clearly specified in the Convention.

Preamble mentions integrity and independence of Persia, and equal opportunity for industry and commerce to all nations. I will send copy of draft Convention by safe opportunity, I hope, to-morrow.

No. 255.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/321.

(No. 114.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. March 1, 1907.

Sir,

R. March 18, 1907.

Their Majesties the Emperor and Empress gave a dinner last night to the Diplomatic Body at Tsarskoe Selo, and I took an opportunity of mentioning to the Emperor that I was pleased to state that my negotiations with M. Isvolsky were making satisfactory progress. His Majesty said that he had been gratified to learn from the weekly reports made to him by M. Isvolsky that a substantial advance had been made towards an agreement on the questions under discussion, and he trusted that the course of the negotiations would continue to proceed smoothly. I said that I had every reason to congratulate myself on having so loyal and sincere a coadjutor as M. Isvolsky and that with his cooperation I hoped that a satisfactory conclusion would be reached before very long. His Majesty smiled and said this must occur.

I report these few remarks as they show, I think, that His Majesty is desirous that our agreement should be concluded and his good will to that end will naturally be a weighty factor with the Russian Government.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

C[oun]t Benckendorff told me that the Emperor had said to him that the agreement *must* be made.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 256.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/369.

(No. 101.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 7, 1907.

Count Benckendorff came to see me to-day on his return from Russia.

He was very pleased with the progress which had been made with our negotiations at St. Petersburg, and I said I was sure his own visit to St. Petersburg had been a most useful one. I felt that his influence in the negotiations had been beneficial.

I then told him that we were sending our reply to the Russian proposal with regard to Persia. I observed that the sphere which they claimed was a very large one, and that it included Tehran. This was a matter of very great importance, as the fact that Tehran was in the Russian sphere was bound to increase Russian prestige there. And yet it was at Tehran, the seat of the central Government, that any influence we might require would have to be exercised, even in connection with concessions or other matters relating to our own sphere only.

Count Benckendorff admitted the point, and said that, owing to the situation of Tehran, he did not see how it could be otherwise than in the Russian sphere.

I said that, of course, I saw the difficulty. But none the less, it was a consideration to be borne in mind. This was not, however, the vital point to which I wished to refer.

I then explained that, in consequence of our obligations to Afghanistan with regard to frontier matters, and to Persia under our Treaty of 1857 with regard to the Perso-Afghan frontier, it was impossible without great complications to place a piece of the Perso-Afghan frontier within the Russian sphere. To do so would also complicate arrangements for direct communication with Afghan officials on local frontier matters. It might be that Customs officials, or doctors, or persons of that kind, would have to be placed by the Russians in their own sphere; and if such persons appeared on the Perso-Afghan frontier, our difficulties would be greatly increased. Therefore, it was vital that the Russian line should start, not from Kuhsan, but from Zulficar, and so avoid bringing any part of the Perso-Afghan frontier into the Russian sphere.

Count Benckendorff did not seem to anticipate that there would be difficulty about this, and appeared relieved that this should be the main point to which I attached capital importance.

I also explained what we should have to propose with regard to Customs officials in our sphere if Russia had to foreclose the security for her loans. With regard to the Meshed-Seistan telegraph-line, I agreed that the transfer might be dealt with in a separate Note, provided it was done simultaneously with the main Agreement.

Count Benckendorff saw no difficulty on either of these points.

He said M. Isvolsky thought it might be necessary to take measures on the northern frontier of Persia to prevent revolutionaries crossing from the Caucasus, but he was determined to keep us informed of anything that was done, and to act in

concert with us. Count Benckendorff spoke most warmly of the co-operation between us, which had existed lately, and of the advantage of continuing it.

I cordially agreed, and observed that co-operation had only been arranged just in time, for had it not been arranged before the recent disturbances in Persia began there would have been trouble. At one time, we might have increased our prestige enormously by becoming the champions of the popular party, and great self-restraint had been necessary on our part to prevent this being thrust upon us. As to interference now, I understood that the Shah might desire foreign help against his own people, but such intervention from outside would be dangerous. To this Count Benckendorff entirely assented.

This part of our conversation ended without the expectation on either side that there would be any difficulty in coming to a settlement on the Persian question.

Count Benckendorff then referred to Afghanistan.

I explained the impossibility of our making any proposals about frontier officials and local communications till we had sounded the Ameer, who would naturally be very suspicious.

Count Benckendorff referred to the Russian apprehension of any change in the status of Afghanistan. The Russians were afraid that an Afghan Army, commanded and trained by British officers, would be a danger. They were, therefore, very anxious that we should undertake some engagement on the subject.

I told him that I could without reserve assure him that we had no intention or desire of penetrating into Afghanistan, or changing its present status. We did not intend to send British officers into Afghanistan, nor had the Ameer asked for any. During his visit to India we had made no political proposals to him, and he had made none to us. The object of the visit, so far as we were concerned, was to prove to the Ameer that we were very good friends to him, but friends who asked nothing from him, and that he had not been asked to India in order that we might make demands upon him.

But I foresaw that it would be very difficult for us to undertake any engagements about Afghanistan. There were very turbulent tribes on our own frontiers, such as the Afridis and Waziris. There would probably be no trouble under the present Ameer, but it was always possible that some Ameer less wise might stir up the frontier tribes within our own borders, and assume an aggressive attitude which would require measures on our part.

Count Benckendorff admitted the force of this, and said perhaps some form of words might be devised by which we should engage not to do anything unless the Ameer took action which rendered measures necessary on our part. But the suggestion was very vague, and I did not think it desirable to pursue the point any further.

Count Benckendorff admitted that the Ameer could not be prevented from taking measures of his own to develop his country. He was aware of our general ideas about Afghanistan on other matters, and seemed sanguine of an agreement.

We then spoke of the Bagdad Railway.

I explained that Count Metternich had complained to others, though not to me, that our attitude towards the Railway was an obstacle to good relations. I therefore intended to say to him that I thought it was not fair to make a grievance of our opposition to the Bagdad Railway, while Germany refrained from making any proposals to us with regard to it.

Count Benckendorff asked me whether we would initiate any proposal, and I said, No. I meant to confine my statement to the point that, if Germany felt the Bagdad Railway to be a political difficulty, it was for her to make a proposal.

Count Benckendorff said that M. Isvolsky's attitude was that he would prefer that the Railway should not be made. But if it was to be made, the situation must be accepted, and the best terms must be made.

I told him I thought the Railway would be made in the long run. If it became a through route from sea to sea, it was obvious that all the Powers, Russia, France, and ourselves, as well as Germany, would be affected by it, and would be concerned in it.

If, therefore, Germany made any proposal, I would say that I thought it should include an arrangement with Russia. But I assumed that the German Government were already aware of M. Isvolsky's views.

Count Benckendorff further said that he hoped we would co-operate in the Balkans. The Russian Government had, after some difficulty, accepted the principle that judicial reform should be worked out through the Financial Commission.

I said we had but one end in view, and that was to promote a better state of things in Macedonia. The situation was becoming difficult here, because the Balkan Committee, who were not chauvinists, but quite the contrary, were pointing out that things in Macedonia were getting no better. I was afraid this was true. We ought, therefore, to work together this year, and try to make things better than last year.

I also said that, to be quite frank, it was our impression that the Civil Agents of Russia and Austria had not, last year, used their influence as they might in improving matters.

Count Benckendorff seemed to be fully aware of this opinion, and he did not demur to it.

I told him that, as soon as the Customs question was settled, I hoped effective reforms would be proposed. We would be very glad to support them.

In the course of this conversation, Count Benckendorff emphasized M. Isvolsky's desire to extend the scope of an agreement with Japan so as to produce something, which might perhaps not amount to an *Entente*, but would at any rate produce "des relations" between Russia and Japan. He hoped we should favour this.

I said we certainly should favour a general good understanding. We could not suggest to Japan that she should make concessions on points connected with the Portsmouth Treaty, but we wished to promote good relations between Russia and Japan. The direct object of a settlement between Russia and ourselves was to secure the Indian frontier; but there was also an indirect object, viz., to be on good terms with Russia, and this indirect object would be lost unless relations between Japan and Russia were satisfactory. We wished, therefore, to see this secured.

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

No. 257.

Memorandum by Sir Edward Grey.⁽¹⁾

F.O. 971/847.

Foreign Office, March 15, 1907.

Count Benckendorff told me to-day that he had no instructions to speak to me on the subject of the Bosphorus, but he wished to point out that the opening of the Straits to Russia would strengthen and ensure a good disposition in that country, and complete the success of the arrangements we were now discussing.

He made it quite clear that, Russia having at present no fleet of her own, would rather that the Straits should remain closed to all Powers than that they should be opened to all Powers. Access to Constantinople might be on the same terms for all, but for Russia it would be essential that the entrance to the Black Sea should not be open to foreign Powers. Unless she could have it open for exit to herself, without its being open for entrance to others, she would rather the question should not be raised at all.

As other Powers were involved in the question, it might be that any arrangement made with us would be platonic only, but its beneficial effect on public opinion would be very great.

⁽¹⁾ [This memorandum was sent to Sir A. Nicolson in the form of a despatch. No. 117 of March 20, 1907.]

I replied that I had felt all through these negotiations that good relations with Russia meant that our old policy of closing the Straits against her, and throwing our weight against her at any conference of the Powers must be abandoned. It was this old policy which, in my opinion, had been the root of the difficulties between the two countries for two generations. And, for us and Russia to settle our difficulties in Asia, and then to find ourselves afterwards in opposition on some other important matter, would be to undo the good which would be done by the present negotiations as to Asiatic frontiers.

I felt, however, that it would be difficult for us to put anything concerning the Straits in the form of an engagement, and it would be necessary for me to speak to the Prime Minister before I could say anything very definite. Even if the present Government were agreed that a settlement of the matter should be made, there was a risk that, when it was known that we had agreed to the Straits being open to Russia and closed to ourselves, there would be a storm in public opinion here. Then the whole Agreement, instead of being carried with general acceptance, might give rise to party feeling.

I wanted, therefore, to have a little time to consider the question.

Count Benckendorff asked whether he should say anything to M. Isvolsky at once.

I said that, if M. Isvolsky was expecting something on the subject, I should not like him to infer from silence that the mention of it had been unfavourably received. But if he had not instructed Count Benckendorff to mention the matter, and was not expecting anything, it would perhaps be better to wait for a few days.

E. G.

No. 258.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 971/347.

(No. 120.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 19, 1907.

In conversation with Count Benckendorff to-day I referred to the question of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, which he had mentioned to me last week.

He had told me his personal view was that Russia would rather that the Straits should remain closed altogether than that they should be opened in such a way as to allow other Powers than Russia access to the Black Sea. If any change was to be made, the entrance to the Black Sea should remain closed to other Powers, while Russia should have the right to make arrangements with Turkey for the passage of her own ships. Subject to this provision, the Dardanelles and the rest of the Straits as far as the entrance to the Black Sea might be available for other Powers on the same terms for all.

Count Benckendorff made it clear that this was only his personal view of the form which an arrangement might take.

I told him I had always felt that this question of the Straits had been at the root of the difficulties between England and Russia for the last generation and more, and that, if permanent good relations were to be established between the two Countries, which was what we desired, England must no longer make it a settled object of her policy to maintain the existing arrangement with regard to the passage of the Dardanelles. For if we were now to come to a friendly arrangement about Asiatic questions, and if a few years hence the question of the Straits and the entrance to the Black Sea was to be raised in Europe, and we were again to find ourselves in opposition to Russia upon it all the good secured by an Asiatic Agreement would be undone.

This was the view of H[is] M[ajesty's] Government. At the same time, however, I should like the Russian Government to consider two or three points as to the expediency of asking for a definite engagement on our part in connection with the present negotiations.

It might be that some important sections of public opinion would be very critical of a particular engagement on this question. I had no doubt the House of Commons would accept whatever we proposed, but it would be better to propose something which secured general acceptance than to make a proposal which would cause party feeling though commanding a majority.

In the next place, if we made an engagement which people here would consider a great concession to Russia, they might expect that kindred questions, such as the Capitulations in Egypt and the Bagdad Railway, which related to the same regions, should be the subject of reciprocal engagements at the same time.

In the third place, there were the other Powers in Europe to be considered. Count Metternich had lately made some comment to me on the Russian negotiations, and I had dismissed the matter by telling him that our negotiations related to the Indian Frontier, and did not, therefore, concern Germany, and were in no way directed against her. If our Agreement was to include an Article about the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus, it would be necessary to tell Germany beforehand that the original scope of the negotiations had been widened; otherwise I should be open to a charge of having mislead [*sic*] the German Ambassador intentionally.

I had not mentioned the matter to the French Government. I concluded that the Russian Government would do that if they proceeded further. We wished to continue in agreement with the French. The negotiations on their present lines, confined to Asiatic questions would not arouse the susceptibilities of any other Powers. If they resulted in a pledge as to a particular settlement of the question of the Straits, other Powers might be provoked to say that we had attempted to settle the question behind their backs and they might take offence.

I wished M. Isvolsky to take these points into consideration. But, in view of what I had said as to our general policy, I wished it to be understood that the question was one which we were prepared to discuss. If, however, the Russian Government desired a discussion now, it would be for them to take the initiative; for the present I understood that Count Benckendorff had spoken from his personal point of view only.

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

No. 259.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/847.

(No. 154.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. March 25, 1907.

Sir,

R. April 2, 1907.

At my interview to-day with M. Isvolsky, His Excellency said that M. Poklewski had just arrived from London, and had brought with him a communication of the highest importance. M. Isvolsky read to me the document which was a transcript of your despatch No. 120 of the 19th instant,⁽¹⁾ and which related to the conversation which you had held with Count Benckendorff in regard to the question of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus.

M. Isvolsky said that the conversation constituted to his mind a great evolution in the relations of the two countries, and that though the matter was one which would have to be most carefully considered from all points of view, especially as to the method and moment of advancing further in the question, still he was highly gratified with the tone and tenour of your remarks. His Excellency said that your observations

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]

on the three points, 1. of securing a general acceptance in Great Britain, 2. of a *quid pro quo* being given for the great concession which might be made to Russia, and 3. of the necessity of considering the views and susceptibilities of other Powers, were all exceedingly sound and weighty, and had his entire concurrence. But in any case the exchange of views between you and Count Benckendorff was a *chose acquise*, and His Excellency was evidently much pleased at the vista which had been opened out. He was heartily with you in the opinion that to make the arrangement between Russia and Great Britain complete and durable it would be desirable to take into consideration the existing arrangements with respect to the passage of the Dardanelles.

He must naturally think well over the matter before expressing any official opinion or sending a reply, but he would give the matter his most earnest attention.

I have rarely seen M. Isvolsky so contented and satisfied; and the evidence of the goodwill and earnest desire of His Majesty's Government to establish relations between Great Britain and Russia on a thoroughly satisfactory basis will, I trust, have a good effect on the deliberation of the outstanding points of the Asiatic negotiations.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

There is a shade of difference in the words "it would be desirable to take into consideration etc" from what I actually said. The natural meaning of my words would rather be "when the question came up for consideration," etc.

E. G.

No. 260.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/922.

(No. 160.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. March 26, 1907.

Sir,

R. April 2, 1907.

The French Ambassador mentioned to me last night that he gathered from M. Isvolsky that the latter was becoming uneasy lest Germany was contemplating some intervention in the Anglo-Russian negotiations of a disagreeable nature. He understood from M. Isvolsky that nothing had been said either here or at Berlin on the subject, but M. Bompard believed that certain articles in some German newspapers warning the German public as to the attempts to isolate Germany had disquieted M. Isvolsky, as being possibly the precursors of some observations from official quarters. M. Bompard said that he trusted that the negotiations would be speedily brought to a conclusion so as to prevent any endeavour to hamper or delay them.

I told my French colleague that I had not noticed any uneasiness on the part of M. Isvolsky, and that I did not quite see on what grounds Germany could intervene in matters which in no wise affected her interests. I was, however, of his opinion that the sooner the negotiations were concluded the better, now that the press had begun to turn their attention to the matter, and had published more or less incomplete statements in regard to the scope and nature of the discussions. In fact I could tell him that I had quite recently impressed this consideration on M. Isvolsky, who was doing his best to expedite matters.

Others of my colleagues have drawn my attention to the audiences which the German and Austro-Hungarian Ambassadors had on two consecutive days of the Emperor, and to their frequent interviews with M. Isvolsky. This activity is attributed by some to the negotiations which Russia is conducting with Great Britain and Japan. Personally, I am inclined to believe that the two Ambassadors have been chiefly preoccupied with the question of the limitation of armaments, and with the mode in which His Majesty's Government may present that matter to the Conference.

At the same time I do not disguise from myself that the relations between the German and Russian Courts and Governments are at the present moment exceedingly intimate and cordial, and that the influence of the French Embassy has of late correspondingly declined. My United States colleague tells me that he knows from an undoubted source that at the banquet given at the Palace on the birthday of the German Emperor, the Emperor of Russia after proposing the health of "his brother and friend," observed to the German Ambassador that "brother" was far more than "friend," and that this remark was interpreted by M. von Schoen as meaning that France was the friend, but Germany the brother.

But while admitting that many motives impel the Emperor and his Government to draw nearer to Germany and to accept as an unfortunate necessity the alliance with France, it seems to me that more powerful factors than personal sympathy will counteract to a great extent the tendency to drift too much into the orbit of Berlin.

I have little doubt that it is the present aim of the Russian Government to remodel their policy in the Far and Middle East, and to husband their resources and keep their hands free for recovering their position as a European Power.

It is I think indubitable that the Russian Government have renounced their forward policy in those regions, and the whole tenour and trend of their negotiations both with Great Britain and Japan show, I think, that they are more intent on strengthening their position of defence rather than preparing for any aggressive action. As regards their negotiations with Great Britain, this, I think, is especially noticeable; and the proposals they make and the concessions they are willing to give are evidence, I submit, that it is a defensive and not an aggressive policy which they are adopting. Moreover, matters have advanced too far both with Great Britain and Japan, to permit Russia, even under pressure from her western neighbour, to alter the course on which she has been sailing during the past twelve months. I feel no uneasiness on that score. Nevertheless I am strongly of opinion that it will be well to terminate the negotiations without undue delay and to bring the Convention safely into port. Although the western neighbour might consider it impolitic or impossible to attempt openly to thwart the negotiations, she might indirectly influence them by suggesting modifications which she knew would create discord, or what is more probable, she might require from the Russian Government, for her part, certain concessions or engagements which would weaken, or in a measure, nullify the happy results which a cordial understanding between Russia, Great Britain and Japan should produce.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

I think we all agree as to the advisability of these negotiations being concluded as soon as possible but the delay is not on our side.

C. H.

E. G.

No. 261.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

St. Petersburg, March 27, 1907.

. . . . (2) He [M. Isvolski] is beaming with pleasure over the report which Poklewsky brought to him of your communication to Count Benckendorff in regard to the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.⁽³⁾ He quite grasped the sense of your

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

⁽²⁾ [The first part of this letter refers to the Persian negotiations and Russo-Japanese relations, and is of a purely formal character.]

⁽³⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 280-1, No. 258.]

observations and will study the question thoroughly before making an overture; but the fact that the British Gov[ernmen]t are willing to discuss the question is, he considers, and as he expressed it, a great evolution in our relations and a historical event. The statement which you made will undoubtedly have a beneficial influence on our Asiatic discussions, and will render the Russians disinclined to insist on any minor points of difference. In fact I see no serious rocks ahead. . . .⁽⁴⁾

Your sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

⁽⁴⁾ [The omitted paragraph refers to the Hague Peace Conference.]

[*ED. NOTE.—The Mongolian Frontier Formula.*—The following papers all relate to a somewhat obscure incident and are accordingly grouped together. The earlier negotiations are referred to in a Foreign Office memorandum written in January 1907, *infra*, pp. 341-2. From that point they may be summarised as follows: On January 5, 1907, M. Isvolski mentioned to Sir A. Nicolson the question of including a reference to Mongolia in the proposed Convention regarding Thibet, suggesting that it might be possible to state there "the desire of the two Governments that no alterations should be introduced in the existing administrative system of Mongolia." Sir A. Nicolson reported this to Sir Edward Grey in his despatch No. 19 of January 6, R. January 21. On the 16th Sir A. Nicolson reported that in a conversation of the previous day M. Isvolski had discussed with him the negotiations then in progress between Japan and Russia for a commercial treaty, and stated that he hoped "to go a little farther" than a purely commercial understanding. The Russo-Japanese negotiations continued to develop on these lines, and on March 6, Baron Komura informed Sir Edward Grey that definite proposals had been received from the Russian Government, and that his own Government were preparing a counter-draft. Sir Edward Grey told Baron Komura "that Russia had made some mention of Mongolia when we were discussing Thibet." Baron Komura said that no mention had been made of Mongolia in the Russo-Japanese negotiations (Sir E. Grey to Mr. Lowther, No. 47 of March 7, 1907). Two days later Sir Edward Grey was informed by Baron Komura that the Japanese counter-draft had been presented. "I reminded him of the inquiry Russia had made concerning Mongolia I thought we might advise some formula, such as a promise to give our diplomatic support to the maintenance of security on the whole extent of the Chinese frontier" (Sir E. Grey to Mr. Lowther, No. 60 of March 18, 1907). Sir A. Nicolson wrote a private letter to Sir Edward Grey on March 26, which is reproduced below as No. 262 (a). It enclosed a copy of the formula which had been given to him by M. Isvolski, having been originally communicated by Sir Edward Grey to Count Benckendorff. This formula is printed below as enclosure to No. 262 (a). On March 31, M. Poklevski informed Sir A. Nicolson that M. Isvolski would probably accept the formula with some "modifications de rédaction."]

No. 262 (a).

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

British Embassy, St. Petersburg, March 26, 1907.

M. Iswolsky has alluded once or twice to the "formula" which was communicated privately to C[oun]t Benckendorff, and of which he gave me the enclosed copy. It tallies with what Hardinge sent me in a private letter. M. Iswolsky has not yet formed an opinion on the terms of the formula, though he remarked that it was a little vague. He wishes to know what ground is covered by the expression "s'appuyer," Does this, he asks, mean material or merely diplomatic support? Would you kindly let me know your interpretation so that I may reply should he again refer to the point?

In another letter I will write as to our negotiations, &c. I believe Hardinge will be away when the messenger reaches London, so I trouble you with this question.

Yours sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 83.]

Enclosure in No. 262 (a).

The Mongolian Frontier Formula.

Les Gouvernements de la Grande Bretagne et de la Russie s'étant mutuellement engagés à respecter l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Chine et animés du sincère désir de voir l'ordre et le développement pacifique se maintenir sur toute l'étendue de leurs frontières avec la Chine, s'engagent à s'appuyer mutuellement pour assurer la paix et la sécurité sur leurs frontières respectives.

No. 262 (b).

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nicolson,

Falldon, Christon Bank,

Northumberland, April 1, 1907.

This formula arose out of the Russian anxiety to get some security on the Mongolian frontier. That is not a place where we would give material support; "s'appuyer" must therefore be diplomatic support, good offices, or whatever other varieties of diplomatic support there may be, given at Peking or wherever it would be useful.

The position is this; if Russia guarantees not to disturb Japan or ourselves, she gets in return a promise from each separately not to disturb her. But this leaves a large part of the Russian frontier in the Far East, which is not directly covered by such a promise given by Japan or ourselves. The formula simply means that our influence will be used to prevent Russia being disturbed on the Chinese part of her frontier.

Komura laughed at the idea of her being disturbed by China who was not in a position to be aggressive outside the Chinese frontier, but that is no argument against adopting some formula of this kind if Russia asks for it.

Yours sincerely,
E. GREY.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

No. 262 (c).

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Tel.

Foreign Office, April 3, 1907.

D. 1.45 p.m.

Private.

Your private letter of the 26th "s'appuyer" means diplomatic support and use of our influence diplomatically especially at Peking. We could not give armed support in such a place as the Mongolian frontier."

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

[ED. NOTE.—The later negotiations on this subject may be summarised briefly. On April 12 the formula was still being considered by the Russian Government. But meanwhile M. Bompart had submitted a French formula to M. Isvolski on April 10, and he gave Sir A. Nicolson his impression that M. Isvolski "would be disturbed ("inquiété") by the series of formulæ which was now being submitted to him." The result of the Franco-Japanese and

Russo-Japanese negotiations was seen in the treaties signed on June 10, 1907, and July 30 respectively. On May 2 Sir Charles Hardinge wrote to Sir A. Nicolson "We have heard nothing more of the Mongolian proposal. Do you think the question has been forgotten? I hope so." (Carnock MSS.)

So far as the Editors have been able to discover, this hope was fully realized, *cp. infra*, p. 299, No. 280.]

No. 263.

*Note by Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. 971/821.

Foreign Office, April 2, 1907.

Count Benckendorff called and read me extracts from a letter which he had received from M. Isvolsky⁽²⁾ in which the latter stated that he had communicated to the Emperor your mem[orandu]m about the Dardanelles and the note about Mongolia, &c.⁽³⁾ and that they had created the best possible effect, the Emperor laying special stress on his satisfaction at the views of the Gov[ernmen]t on the Dardanelles question.

M. Isvolsky asked C[oun]t Benckendorff to thank you and to say that he fully appreciated the objections which you had raised to the Dardanelles question coming within the present agreement and that he thoroughly understood their importance.

Count Benckendorff asked me to convey to you these messages.

C. H.
E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [The substance of this note was sent to Sir A. Nicolson in the form of a despatch, No. 150, April 10, 1907.]

⁽²⁾ [This private letter was almost identical with the Memorandum printed below as enclosure in No. 265.]

⁽³⁾ [For the memorandum on the Dardanelles, *v. supra*, pp. 280-1, No. 258. The substance of this despatch was communicated to M. Isvolski as a memorandum. The note about Mongolia is given, *supra*, p. 285.]

No. 264.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/847.

Tel. (No. 65.)

St. Petersburg, April 14, 1907.

* Straits and Bosphorus.

Your despatch No. 120.⁽¹⁾

I have received Memo[randum] from the Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] relative to your conversation with Russian Ambassador. Russian Gov[ernmen]t note with pleasure disposition of H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t to discuss question and that closing of Straits is no longer cardinal point of British policy. Russian Gov[ernmen]t consider it would be inopportune to conclude special arrangement as to the Straits during the course of the present negotiations. They therefore take act of the disposition of H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t and reserve discussion of question of revising the stipulations concerning the Straits to a more favourable opportunity.

I will send copy of the Memorandum tomorrow by safe opportunity. It is couched in very friendly terms and it is satisfactory Russian Gov[ernmen]t do not wish to introduce question into present negotiations. Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] tells me he is forwarding copy of Memo[randum] to the Russian Ambassador.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 280-1, No. 258.]

No. 265.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/847.

(No. 202.)

St. Petersburg, D. April 14, 1907.

Sir,

R. April 19, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit, herewith, copy of a Memorandum which M. Isvolsky communicated to me in regard to the question of revising the Treaty stipulations concerning the passage of the Dardanelles and Bosphorus.

I telegraphed the substance of the above Memorandum in my telegram No. 65⁽¹⁾ of to-day's date.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 265.

Memorandum.

Quoique le C[om]te de Benckendorff n'ait pas été muni d'instructions précises relativement à la question des détroits, sa parfaite connaissance des vues du Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial lui a permis d'exposer à Sir E. Grey les *desiderata* russes à ce sujet d'une façon qui répond à nos intérêts historiques et à notre situation géographique. Du reste cette initiative n'a fait qu'accélérer un échange de vues qui devait nécessairement se produire au cours de nos négociations actuelles dans le but d'éviter toute cause de malentendu dans l'avenir.

Le résultat des conversations entre le C[om]te de Benckendorff et le Ministre des Affaires Étrangères Britannique consigné dans le mémorandum susmentionné doit être considéré comme hautement satisfaisant. C'est avec le plus vif plaisir que le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial a constaté que le maintien des stipulations existantes relativement au passage des détroits ne forme plus un point déterminé de la politique de la Grande Bretagne. Nous attachons aussi la plus grande importance au fait que Sir E. Grey n'a pas formé d'objection principielle à un projet d'arrangement qui donnerait aux navires de guerre russes le droit exclusif de passer les détroits dans les deux sens, tandis que les forces navales des autres Puissances ne pourraient pas entrer dans la Mer Noire. Enfin nous nous plaignons à relever que le Principal Secrétaire aux Affaires Étrangères s'est même déclaré prêt à discuter dès à présent dans de certaines conditions nos propositions, si nous en prenons l'initiative.

Il est évident que le point de vue anglais sur la question des détroits ainsi formulé est de nature à écarter une des causes principales des malentendus précédents entre la Russie et l'Angleterre et tout en facilitant la solution du problème des détroits dans un sens favorable à la Russie contribuerait puissamment à l'établissement de relations cordiales entre les deux pays conformément au désir sincère des deux Gouvernements.

Les quelques observations de Sir E. Grey contenues dans le même mémorandum ont été soigneusement examinées par le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial; celui-ci est entièrement d'avis qu'il serait inopportun de conclure un arrangement spécial pour les détroits au cours des négociations présentes qui n'ont pour but avéré que le règlement des questions pendantes en Asie. Il n'est évidemment ni dans l'intérêt de la Russie, ni dans celui de l'Angleterre d'éveiller des susceptibilités d'autres Puissances auxquelles tant Sir E. Grey que le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial ont à maintes reprises donné des explications dans le sens susindiqué.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial se borne donc pour le moment à prendre acte des dispositions du Gouv[ernemen]t Britannique et se réserve de soulever la question de la révision des stipulations concernant les détroits à une époque plus favorable. Il ne manquera pas à cette occasion de prendre en juste considération la réserve de

(1) [v. immediately preceding document.]

Sir E. Grey relativement à une compensation éventuelle en faveur de l'Angleterre, compensation qui pourrait toucher à un problème international dans le genre de ceux mentionnés dans le mémorandum anglais.

Je me plais à espérer qu'au moment où la question des détroits sera soulevée par nous, le résultat de nos négociations actuelles aura déjà produit son influence bienfaisante et que par conséquent l'opposition d'une partie de l'opinion publique anglaise à un pareil arrangement sera réduite à des proportions insignifiantes.

Il me semble aussi utile d'ajouter que tout comme l'Angleterre la Russie ne compte pas s'engager plus avant dans cette affaire sans un accord avec la France.

MINUTE.

It appears to me that the Russian Government are taking a most unfair advantage of the expressions used by Sir E. Grey in his conversation with C[oun]t Benckendorff recorded in his despatch of March 19, 1907, to Sir A. Nicolson⁽²⁾; and still more of his judicious silence on certain points. An attempt is made to extract from the latter an implied consent to Russian vessels of war having an *exclusive* right of exit, and to the denial of equal rights of entry to the waters of the Black Sea to the ships of other Powers. It is also apparently suggested that we should enter into a sort of conspiracy of silence at the expense of the other Powers, who have a right to be consulted: especially Austria Hungary—in virtue of the Danube and Roumania. I hope a clear and emphatic caveat will be at once put in against the language of the Russian Foreign Office and their covert insinuations.

F.

(²) [*v. supra*, pp. 280-1, No. 258.]

No. 266.

Colonel Napier to Sir A. Nicolson.

(Enclosure in Despatch from Sir A. Nicolson, No. 230, of April 25, 1907.)

F.O. 371/323.

(No. 15.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, April 25, 1907.

I have the honour to inform your Excellency that I was received by the Emperor to-day, on the occasion of relinquishing my post as Military Attaché. Owing to the advent of Russian Easter, this took place earlier than would otherwise have been the case.

His Majesty received me graciously, and asked me about my previous services. On hearing that I had been in Persia as Military Attaché, the Emperor turned the conversation on to that subject and on to the personality of the Shah and of the Atabeg; he had not met the former, but the latter he knew and appreciated. He knew the people had endeavoured to stop his landing at Resht, but that had been satisfactorily disposed of, and the Atabeg would he hoped, prove the strong man that the country needed. I took occasion to observe that it was very fortunate that Russia and England were now of one mind as regards Persian affairs, and that there had been a great deal of waste of energy in opposing each other on all points. His Majesty thoroughly agreed and declared that he was very pleased to hear from M. Izvolsky of the favourable course of negotiations, and evidently considered that matters were settled as regards Persia. Referring to Afghanistan, His Majesty said that he was in favour of maintaining Afghanistan as a buffer State, but that there were some arrangements necessary in order to enable the neighbouring people to live in amity with each other. I presumed that his Majesty referred to arrangements for settling local frontier matters direct, to which he agreed, and added that also in matters of trade it was impossible in these days to build up a Chinese wall against one's neighbours. I ventured to say that our negotiations were a little complicated in view of the fact of the independence of the Amir in relation to his own internal affairs, and that the

policy of his late father had been to keep himself as free as possible from all such instruments of civilization as trade relations and ways of communication, such as railways, in order to preserve his independence. His Majesty remarked that he understood this, but of course there was no intention of aiming at the Amir's independence.

Referring again to the subject of the good-will that was now being displayed between the two nations, His Majesty remarked that he thought it would take some time before the respective minor officials and agents of the two countries would work together, perhaps one year, but that once the Heads of Governments were agreed, the others would soon come into line, in fact there was nothing else for them to do. His Majesty then referred to the evil effect of the Press. "When one reads the same calumnies day after day, one's own ideas insensibly take the colour of what one reads, and the control of these irresponsible people who compose the newspapers, is one of the most difficult questions of the present time."

His Majesty appeared to be in good health and spirits, and on bidding me goodbye graciously expressed the hope that we might meet again.

I have, &c.

H. D. NAPIER, *Lieutenant-Colonel,*
Military Attaché.

No. 267.

Sir N. O'Connor to Sir Edward Grey.

F.Ö. 371/321.

(No. 258.) Confidential.

Constantinople, D. April 30, 1907.

Sir,

R. May 6, 1907.

I think it well to report that, in calling upon me on the 8th instant in connection with the 3 %, the Grand Master of Ceremonies Ghalib Pasha remarked that the Sultan was perplexed and somewhat disturbed at the reports he had heard in regard to the Anglo-Russian negotiations and wished to know whether I could tell His Majesty quite privately and unofficially their general nature and whether they referred to this country.

I said that I did not think you would consider I was wanting in discretion if I told him that as far as I knew these negotiations were connected with a desire on both sides to come to an amicable understanding in respect to Thibet, the Indian frontier and Persia, and that the negotiations in regard to the latter were based on the principle of respecting her territorial integrity.

At the time I spoke to Ghalib Pasha I was not aware of the conversations which had taken place between you and the Russian Ambassador in regard to the passage of the Straits and although these remarks cannot be considered as negotiations I am rather inclined to believe that the suspicions of the Sultan have in one way or another been aroused and that it is probable that he has spoken with greater freedom to the German Ambassador on the subject.

I cannot help thinking that the Germans will find out what has taken place either directly from the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs or else in some subterranean way, and I have no doubt whatever that if this be so they will communicate their information to the Sultan in such a way as to impregnate His Majesty's mind with still further distrust of British policy while at the same time advancing their own interests.

I believe there is nothing the present Sultan would more dislike or would more strenuously oppose than the opening of the Straits of the Dardanelles to Foreign men-of-war.

I have, &c.

N. R. O'CONNOR.

MINUTES.

Sir N. O'Connor has by implication conveyed an assurance that the Anglo-Russian negotiations do not touch upon the question of opening the straits to foreign warships. As the arrangement will of course be intensely distasteful to the Sultan it would be as well that what has passed between the two Gov[ernmen]ts on the subject should be kept from H[is] I[mperial] M[ajesty] as long as possible.

Q[uer]y. Inform Sir A. Nicolson of the substance of this desp[atch] by telegraph and instruct him to urge upon Russian Gov[ernmen]t the necessity of observing the strictest secrecy in the matter for the present.

E. G. L.
7/5/07.

If the Germans are going to find out what has passed by "subterranean" methods we shall not prevent them from doing so by urging the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to observe strict secrecy. I doubt also if such a representation would be well received.

R. P. M.

I agree with Mr. Maxwell. If the relations between the Czar and the Emperor William are as close as Mr. Lister has recently reported in a private letter which is confirmed by Mr. O'Beirne, the Germans will find out all that they may want to know I expect.

L. M.

I spoke this morning to C[oun]t Benckendorff of the danger of the Sultan knowing what had passed between the two Gov[ernmen]ts relating to the passage of the Straits, and of the risk of the Sultan leaning still more on Germany and actually concluding an alliance. He fully realised the danger and said he would point it out to his Gov[ernmen]t.

C. H.

This is all we can do.

E. G.

No. 268.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 971/947.

(No. 166.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 1, 1907.

I gave Count Benckendorff a Memorandum of which a copy is inclosed commenting on the Russian reply to our conversation about the Straits.

Count Benckendorff, after reading it, enquired what I meant by "questions which it was not necessary for us to discuss unless they were raised by other Powers."

I told him that what was in my mind was the right of exit from the Black Sea of other limitrophe Powers besides Russia. That was the sort of question which we had no interest in raising, but which might be raised by the Powers concerned.

All I meant, therefore, was that there might be some questions which we must be free to consider if they were raised by others, though it was not our business or desire to raise them.

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

Enclosure in No. 268.

Memorandum by Sir Edward Grey.

Foreign Office, April 27, 1907.

The text of the Memorandum communicated by the Russian Government on the subject of the Straits⁽¹⁾ contains a summary of the original proposal made by Count Benckendorff which, owing to certain omissions, probably due to a desire for brevity,

⁽¹⁾ [v. supra, pp. 287-8, No. 265, encl.]

might possibly convey a different impression of the scope of the proposal originally stated in my Memorandum of 19 March.⁽²⁾

The original proposal did not exclude a right of exit from the Black Sea and the Straits being allowed to other limitrophe Powers on the Black Sea. And the Memorandum makes no definite mention of the fact that the proposal contemplated the passage of the Dardanelles and the rest of the Straits being made available for other Powers as far as the entrance to the Black Sea on the same terms for all, although it is certainly implied.

I do not wish, however, to discuss the particular conditions under which the existing arrangements with regard to the Straits might be altered. Some of them it would not be necessary for Great Britain to discuss at all, unless they were raised by other Powers; and I do not wish to be regarded as committed to any particular proposal, though, on the other hand, I do not wish to attach conditions now which would prevent any particular proposals from being discussed when the time comes.

I am glad that the Russian Government have agreed to let the matter rest for the present as it was left by my reply to Count Benckendorff. But I should like to say that one consideration which affected me in coming to this conclusion was that stated in the Russian Memorandum: that, if the negotiations now in progress between the two Governments with regard to Asiatic questions had a satisfactory result, the effect upon British public opinion would be such as very much to facilitate a discussion of the Straits question if it came up later on. I have no doubt whatever that, if as a result of the present negotiations, the British and Russian Governments remained on good terms in Asia, the effect on British public opinion and on any British Government with regard to other questions, including this, would be very great.

[E. GREY.]

(²) [cp. conversation between Sir E. Grey and Count Benckendorff of March 10, *supra*, pp. 280-1, No. 258. The substance of Sir E. Grey's remarks in this conversation was communicated to Count Benckendorff as a memorandum.]

No. 269.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 871/821.

(No. 169.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 1, 1907.

Count Benckendorff in conversation to-day expressed special satisfaction at Prince Bülow's reference to Anglo-Russian negotiations.

I told him I thought his phrase that Germany must not live on the enmity of other nations amongst themselves was excellent.

Count Benckendorff remarked that the expression Prince Bülow had used about Persia was a little elastic. The words were translated in English to the effect that he claimed a "fair field." But the German word went a little further, and implied rather "field to expand."

I pointed out that this was used only in the commercial sense. But I admitted that, as in the case of Morocco, a commercial sense sometimes had political consequences.

It seemed to me that Germany was jealous of the way in which other Powers were settling their differences with each other and improving their relations, while she was not settling any difficulties with anyone.

I also observed that Germany might have an opportunity in connection with the Bagdad Railway. That question might be settled in co-operation with France, Russia, and ourselves.

Count Benckendorff admitted that such a settlement would be desirable, because as the Railway would be a new through-route to the East it was bound to have political consequences.

[I am, &c.
E. GREY.]

No. 270.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nicolson,

Foreign Office, May 1, 1907.

. . . .⁽²⁾ The Russians are taking a long time about Afghanistan. And it would be desirable, when we have all their proposals, to get our Persian line moved up so as to start from Zulficar. Otherwise, I foresee that people here will fasten upon the Clause respecting concessions in the neutral zone, and say that Russia will take advantage of it to push a railway concession right up to the Afghan frontier on the side of Herat.

It would, of course, have been better if we had stated at the beginning that our line should start at Zulficar, and I see the difficulty of raising the question now. But I think it might be done in return for some concession on our part about the Seistan telegraph. We might, for instance, agree to leave the control of the Meshed-Seistan line in Russian hands as far as the limit of their sphere, reserving only the rest for ourselves. I must discuss this with the India Office.

Lord Percy spoke to me the other day about Persia. He does not, so far as I am aware, know the conditions of our negotiations. But he told me that he was opposed to any division of Persia into spheres, on the ground that it would end in the Russians pushing railways unopposed up to the beginning of our sphere. The Agreement would be valid only on paper: the Russians would break it later on, when they were in a favourable position, after having taken advantage of it in the way he indicated.

I do not in the least agree with this. I do not believe the Agreement will be broken if our general relations with Russia are good: which I believe will be the result of the Agreement.

And, if we have no Agreement, we shall soon have to choose between seeing the Russians push communications right up to Herat and into Seistan, or annexing parts of Persia ourselves in order to prevent them. Each of these alternatives is an exceedingly undesirable thing.

But I tell you what Percy said, in order that you may see the line of criticism which we may have to meet.

I am strongly in favour of concluding the Agreement on the lines now laid down, and I believe it will do a great deal of good to both Countries.

Yours sincerely,
E. GREY.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [The omitted paragraph refers to the Hague Peace Conference, and will be printed in the relevant chapter of a succeeding volume.]

No. 271.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

St. Petersburg, May 8, 1907.

. . . .⁽²⁾ I do not share Percy's views. Once we have come to an agreement with Russia and have obtained her signature, I do not consider it likely that she will disown

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 38.]

⁽²⁾ [The first part of this long letter discusses the inadvisability of re-opening the question of the boundary line of the British sphere.]

her engagements, it would not be in her interests to do so. Since the Japanese war her Asiatic policy has necessarily undergone a marked change, from an aggressive to a defensive one: and there are several other important considerations which curb her aspirations.

I think that we can rely with confidence on 15 or 20 years of peace and breathing time: and in political affairs we cannot with safety look further ahead. If we regard Russia as incurably smitten with bad faith, it would, I admit, be useless to make any agreements with her, and we should have to resign ourselves to a continuation of the former unsatisfactory relations. But, looking at all the circumstances, present and future, I think it was wise to come to an agreement. Doubtless it will take some time for the agents of Russia, perhaps even for some of our own, to recognize and adapt themselves to a new order of things: but it will be a great gain to have a written agreement to which to appeal. As to Persia, I cannot conceive on what lines other than those which we have laid down, an agreement could have been reached. We hamper and bind no one but ourselves and Russia. We both simply lay certain restrictions on our complete liberty of action, for the very righteous purposes of mutual good will and peace. Surely no one can object to this self denying action not even the Persians. We do not ask the latter to take any engagements, nor do we impose any limitations on their independence. They will remain after as before the agreement as free and unfettered as they themselves had permitted themselves to be. It is on this important point that the Anglo-Russian agreement is differentiated from the Anglo-French agreement regarding Morocco. In the latter case we gave France a free hand to reform and reorganize Morocco and thereby implied a certain protective right of France over Morocco. In the present instance we expressly recognize the right of Persia to manage her own affairs; we merely limit our own sphere of action: and I do not see how this procedure can be interpreted as a partition of Persia into spheres, in the sense in which that term is generally used.

Pray forgive me for writing at such length and on matters on which you are so far better able to judge than myself.

Yours sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

P.S.—I should perhaps have mentioned that there might be an advantage of having an intervening neutral zone between the respective spheres, and thus avoid their being contiguous.

No. 272.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/321.

(No. 180.) Confidential.

Sir,

Foreign Office, May 14, 1907.

I transmit to Y[our] E[xcellency] herewith copy of a despatch which has been received from H[is] M[ajesty's] Ambassador at Constantinople⁽¹⁾ reporting the substance of a private enquiry which has been made by Ghalib Pasha, Grand Master of the Ceremonies on the subject of the Anglo-Russian negotiations.

It will be seen from this despatch that Sir N. O'Connor is apprehensive lest the German Government should succeed in obtaining information from the Russian Government with regard to what has passed between the British and Russian Governments on the subject of the possible opening of the straits of the Dardanelles to foreign ships of war, and lest such information should be communicated to H[is] I[mperial] M[ajesty] the Sultan.

(¹) [Not reproduced.]

The attention of the Russian Ambassador, who called at this office a few days ago, has been called to this danger and to the undesirable consequences which might ensue if the Sultan should be induced to lean still more upon the support of Germany or indeed actually conclude an alliance with that country.

Count Benckendorff stated in reply that he fully realized the danger in question and that he would point it out to his Government.

[I am, &c.
E. GREY.]

No. 273.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/321.

(No. 273.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. May 22, 1907.

Sir,

R. May 27, 1907.

I mentioned to M. Isvolsky to-day that the Sultan of Turkey appeared to have been interesting himself in the scope of our negotiations, and I believed that the matter had been mentioned to Count Benckendorff in London. His Excellency said that he doubted if the Sultan had any inkling as to the question of the Dardanelles having been mentioned between the two Governments, and in any case it was quite impossible that any leakage had occurred from the Russian side on that subject. The Turkish Ambassador had, from time to time, enquired as to our negotiations, and he had always told Husny Pasha that they dealt merely with matters in Central Asia and Persia.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 274.

Sir C. Hardinge to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nico,

Foreign Office, July 10, 1907.

. . . .⁽²⁾ Your recent telegrams on Afghanistan are not reassuring. We cannot admit the possibility of Russian intervention in Afghanistan nor the limitation of our own right of intervention. They must trust us to act in a friendly way to them in our relations with the Ameer and to honestly endeavour to carry out the engagements which we have undertaken. It looks however as though the influence of the military party was again in the ascendent, and as if Isvolsky was no longer so keen to sign quickly owing to Stolypin being now more firmly in the saddle. Anxious as we are to conclude these long negotiations we feel that it would be a mistake to show too much "empressement," but I am sure you will realise that we cannot push questions through so quickly as we have recently done when Parliament rises and the Cabinet is scattered in different directions. Recently we have left the Gov[ernmen]t of India entirely out of our account, and the questions which have arisen have been treated directly between us and the India Office, reference being made only to the Prime Minister and Lord Ripon.

I think we may regard the Persian Convention as practically completed. We have referred to the India Office the last proposal for the deflection to Khaf of the frontier of the Russian zone and we have recommended its acceptance. I do not see what the Russians gain by bringing Khaf into their zone, but it may be a matter of "amour propre" with them. Also I do not see any particular disadvantage to us in the

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [The omitted paragraph refers to the procedure for the signing of the Conventions.]

proposal. This I think is the only outstanding point, as we are writing to you by this bag to say that we accept the modification in the drafting of Art[icle] V proposed by Isvolsky.

As regards the tel[egraph] lines all we want is that our southern and central tel[egraph] lines may retain their connection with Tehran. To get the renewal of this concession we are willing to hand over the Tehran-Khanikin line and to renounce the section of the Meshed-Seistan line within the Russian zone. If the Russians are obstinate upon this point, we must retain the lines we now hold, except the Tehran-Meshed line, until the close of our concessions in 1925. I cannot think that they would like this. This question is however outside the Convention.

Having practically finished the Russian and Thibetan Conventions it will be a great pity if they are to be wrecked over the Afghan Convention, but we have to be firm in our treatment of Afghanistan, and any attempt at encroachment on our position in that country will only show that the Russians have sinister designs for the future. . . .⁽³⁾

Yours ever,
CHARLES HARDINGE.

⁽³⁾ [The concluding paragraphs are of a purely formal character.]

No. 275.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/847.

(No. 871.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, July 10, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a memorandum which M. Isvolsky gave me today relative to the question of revising Treaty arrangements connected with the Dardanelles and the Bosphorous. His Excellency said that he had thought it as well to take note of the reservations which you had made in your memorandum of April last, and that his memorandum was in substance merely an acknowledgement of the receipt of your communication.

I believe that a copy of the Russian memorandum will be handed to you by Count Benckendorff.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 275.

Memorandum communicated by M. Isvolski, July 10, 1907.

Dans son memorandum du 26 avril⁽¹⁾ courant Sir E. Grey récapitule les conversations qu'il a eues avec le C[om]te Benckendorff relativement à une révision éventuelle des arrangements internationaux existants pour le passage des détroits et constate que la proposition originale formulée par notre Ambassadeur à Londres n'excluait pas le droit de sortie de la Mer Noire pour les navires de guerre des autres Puissances riveraines de la Mer Noire et admettait l'usage des Dardanelles et des détroits jusqu'à l'entrée de la Mer Noire par toutes les Puissances sur un pied d'égalité complète.

Ne voulant pas discuter les conditions spéciales d'une révision possible des traités sur les détroits, Sir E. Grey ne désire d'un côté ni être considéré comme lié à

⁽¹⁾ [It was really of the 27th and enclosed in despatch No. 166 of May 1, to Sir A. Nicolson, v. *supra*, pp. 290-1, No. 268.]

une proposition spéciale de solution de cette question, ni, de l'autre, poser dès maintenant des conditions qui empêcheraient la discussion libre de toute proposition qui pourrait être faite à un moment opportun.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] prend note des observations formulées par le Gouv[ernemen]t de S[a] M[ajesté] B[ritannique]. Les deux premières étaient déjà connues par les rapports du C[om]te Benckendorff, et si elles n'étaient pas mentionnées dans le memorandum du Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] du 14 avril, c'est que dans l'opinion de ce Gouv[ernemen]t elles se rapportaient à des questions de détail qui pouvaient être laissées ouvertes jusqu'au moment où la révision des traités sur les détroits deviendrait possible.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] constate avec le plus vif plaisir que dans les grandes lignes le point de vue du Gouv[ernemen]t Royal sur cette question est conforme à celui de la Russie. Cette identité de vues ressort aussi du fait que le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] non plus ne désire pas être considéré dès à présent comme engagé par une certaine formule de solution de la question des détroits. Mais il aime à espérer que quand le moment viendra de soumettre une proposition précise à la considération du Gouv[ernemen]t Royal, il trouvera auprès de Lui un accueil [sic] favorable auquel le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] sera justifié de s'attendre après l'échange de vues amical qui vient d'avoir lieu entre les deux Gouvernements.

St. Petersburg,
le 27 Juin/10 Juillet, 1907.

MINUTES.

The Russian Gov[ernmen]t take note of your *Pro-Memoria* of April 27 respecting the right of exit from the Black Sea for vessels of war belonging to other Black Sea Powers than Russia and respecting the use of the Dardanelles as far as the entrance of the Black Sea by all Powers.

L. M.

I think there is nothing in the Russian memorandum to take exception to as placing a wrong construction upon anything in ours. M. Isvolsky does not refer to the fact that good relations in Asia were a preliminary condition to a discussion of the Straits, but that was clear in our memo[randu]m.

E. G.

No. 276.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. O'Beirne.

F.O. 371/347.

(No. 291.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, July 31, 1907.

I told Count Benckendorff to-day that I had received M. Isvolsky's last Memorandum on the subject of the Passage of the Straits.⁽¹⁾ It was not put in a form which required any reply.

I wished to observe, however, that both my Memoranda⁽²⁾ on this subject had contemplated a friendly agreement about Asiatic questions, which should work well, as being a preliminary condition to any arrangement about the Straits.

Count Benckendorff said it was quite understood that this was so. And I told him I had concluded that M. Isvolsky's Memorandum assumed this, but as it was not explicitly mentioned I had made the observation.

[I am, &c.]

E. G[REY].

(1) [v. immediately preceding document.]

(2) [v. *supra*, pp. 280-1, No. 258, and pp. 290-1, No. 268, *encl.*]

No. 277.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. O'Beirne.

F.O. 371/326.

(No. 300.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 6, 1907.

Count Benckendorff observed to me to-day that he hoped the fact that M. Isvolsky had been present at the meeting of the Tzar and the German Emperor⁽¹⁾ had not given rise to any apprehension in our minds that the discussions at the meeting were in any way prejudicial to the negotiations now proceeding, or to the good relations, between England and Russia.

He especially called my attention to the penultimate paragraph of the semi-official communiqué from St. Petersburg, in which the pending Convention between Russia and Great Britain was referred to, and it was recognised that it would conduce in the highest degree to the peace of the world.

I told him we understood perfectly that, Russia and Germany being neighbours, it was natural for them to have discussions and communications with each other. We relied on the Russian Government to see that, in any communications which took place, she was not influenced to our prejudice by Germany in matters which affected Russia and ourselves alone.

Count Benckendorff was certain that there was no danger of this.

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

(1) [This was the meeting at Swinemünde August 3-6, v. G.P., XXII, pp. 67-72.]

No. 278.

*Mr. O'Beirne to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, August 10, 1907.*

F.O. 371/326.

Tel. (No. 139.)

D. 6.5 P.M.

R. 9 P.M.

Interview of two Emperors.

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me to-day that he desired to correct a statement which had appeared in the press to the effect that he had communicated to Prince Bülow terms of proposed Anglo-Russian Agreements. He had communicated no details whatever. He had informed Chancellor, as he had previously done, that the proposed Agreements did not in any way affect German interests, and he might tell me that Prince Bülow seemed completely satisfied by this assurance.

He had found the Prince equally conciliatory with regard to French policy in Morocco. His Highness expressed himself as quite contented with assurance conveyed by French Government to Prince Radolin that France contemplated no action which would infringe Algeciras Arrangement. His Excellency said that, generally speaking, the gist of his conversation with Prince Bülow was given in the communiqué transmitted in my despatch No. 402,⁽¹⁾ and he seemed highly pleased with result of interview.

(1) [This despatch, dated August 6, enclosed a translation of a communiqué issued through the St. Petersburg Telegraphic Agency, describing the interview. It referred to "the Agreements about to be concluded between Russia and England" as "contributing in the highest degree to the maintenance of general tranquillity."]

MINUTE.

The German Government are naturally delighted at French difficulties in Morocco. They anticipate that as these difficulties increase, the French will become more and more disgusted at their position and dissatisfied with an Agreement which has been so beneficial to Great Britain and which brought them nothing but trouble.

L. M.
E. G.

No. 279.

Mr. O'Beirne to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/926.

(No. 407.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. August 10, 1907.

R. August 19, 1907.

By my telegram No. 139⁽¹⁾ I have had the honour to report to you the substance of a statement made to me by Mr. Isvolsky this afternoon with regard to the recent meeting between the German Emperor and the Czar. I have not much to add to that report. Mr. Isvolsky made it clear that he desired to show His Majesty's Government the courtesy of giving me some account of what took place. He said that before doing so he must first contradict a report which had appeared in the "Neue Freie Presse" to the effect that he had communicated to Prince Bülow the terms of the proposed Anglo-Russian Agreements. He had communicated no details on the subject. He had once more said that the Agreements were intended to remove possible causes of conflict between the interests of the two Powers in the regions adjoining their respective frontiers in Persia and Central Asia; and contained nothing which could affect the interests of Germany.

His Excellency then went on to speak generally of what passed at Swinemünde; and his description was excessively *couleur de rose*. He seemed to have found the Emperor William and the Chancellor in the most amiable disposition. Prince Bülow had shown himself quite free from suspicions as to the aims of the pending negotiations between Great Britain and Russia. His Highness had expressed himself as perfectly satisfied with the explanation given to him, as above described, by Mr. Isvolsky; and he had stated that Germany's only concern was that her commercial interests in Persia should be respected. I asked whether anything was said as to the Bagdad railway. His Excellency said no, and added that the Chancellor was as a rule not prepared to go into the details of any of the questions touched upon, which they treated only in their general aspect.

Prince Bülow, His Excellency continued, had been equally well disposed in reference to the question of French policy in Morocco, and had intimated that the assurance given by Mr. Pichon to the German Ambassador, to the effect that France contemplated no action which would infringe the Algeciras settlement, was quite satisfactory to Germany.

In general, Mr. Isvolsky said that the tenour of his conversations with the Chancellor was fairly represented by the communiqué given to the Press. I had the honour to transmit to you a translation of this communication in my despatch No. 402 of the 6th instant.

I have, &c.
HUGH O'BEIRNE.

(¹) [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 280.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. MacDonald

F.O. 871/882.

(No. 168.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 14, 1907.

I told the Japanese Ambassador to-day, when he communicated to me the Convention with Russia,⁽¹⁾ that our negotiations with Russia were proceeding. We were agreed on the main lines. There were some points, however, which it was difficult to reduce to writing, and I doubted whether they could be arranged before next month.

Russia had said nothing more to us about Mongolia or the Chinese frontier, possibly because she had now succeeded in settling that with Japan. Our Agreement with Russia would, therefore, relate only to Thibet, Afghanistan, and Persia.

There had been a question of including the Persian Gulf in our Agreement, but it had been decided not to do that. It was thought better to limit the Agreement to regions in which no other Powers besides Russia and Great Britain had any concern: and one side of the Persian Gulf was outside Persian territory.

But I reminded the Ambassador that we had made public declarations previously of our interests in the Gulf, and we should probably reaffirm them on our own behalf.

[I am, &c.]

E. G[REY].

⁽¹⁾ [*i.e.*, the Russo-Japanese Convention of July 30, 1907. *cp. supra*, pp. 285-6, *Ed. noto.*]

No. 281.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, August 20, 1907.*

F.O. 371/325.

Tel. (No. 154.)

D. 2.5 P.M.

R. 6 P.M.

Form of Convention.

Minister for Foreign Affairs, in a Memorandum communicated to me, says Arrangements as to Persia and Thibet should not be in the form of a Convention, as they treat in the first place of an independent country not a party to Arrangement, and in second place of a vassal of a third Power. He cites the case of our Agreements with France as to Morocco, Egypt, and Siam, which were Declarations, while Newfoundland Question was a Convention. He considers we should of course maintain Preambles in both Arrangements, and sign for our Governments duly authorized thereto. These Arrangements would have exactly the same binding force as a Convention signed with full powers and ratified. He is also of the opinion that formal Conventions would annoy Persian and Chinese Governments, while an Agreement, Declaration or Arrangement simply defining the line of conduct which Russia and Great Britain mutually agree to follow in regard to Persian and Thibetan questions would not have character of an encroachment on sovereign rights of Persia and China.

As to Afghanistan, in view of its special position towards Great Britain, a Convention in due form can be concluded.

Would you agree to Persian and Thibetan Conventions being termed "Arrangements," and signed by us as duly authorised thereto? As we will have to obtain consent of Ameer to terms of the Convention before it comes into force he cannot be offended, and also we have charge of his foreign relations.

MINUTE.

Our wish, as will be seen from 2178,⁽¹⁾ was that all 3 instruments sh[oul]d be drawn in the most formal way possible as "Conventions," but I don't know that they are really more binding

⁽¹⁾ [This paper contains a telegram from Sir A. Nicolson, No. 116 of July 1, 1907, enquiring as to the form of the proposed agreements. Minutes were written on the subject by Mr. W. Maycock, Mr. Mallet and Sir C. Hardinge; and Lord Sanderson wrote a letter upon the subject. These are not reproduced as being technical in character.]

than agreements or any less formal kind of understanding. If a Power wishes to disregard her obligations she will be just as ready to do so whatever they are called. It seems undesirable to argue about what is really only a matter of form, and I should advise agreeing to Sir A. Nicolson's suggestion. It will put the instruments back into the shape they were originally drawn more or less but Sir A. Nicolson (who spoke to me about the question) may be safely left to settle the details.

W. M.
21 Aug.

No. 282.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

(No. 426.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. August 20, 1907.

R. September 3, 1907.

I wrote a private letter to M. Isvolsky in regard to the form in which the several Conventions should be drawn up, and I told him that His Majesty's Government would wish that they should be signed by himself and me as Plenipotentiaries of our respective sovereigns and furnished with full powers. I said that as the instruments treated of questions of great importance and, in fact, laid down the bases on which the future relations of the two countries in Central Asia would in great measure be conducted, it would seem advisable that they should be cast in a formal shape. It was of especial importance that the preambles should be retained, and these, to my mind, would more naturally preface a Convention than an Arrangement.

M. Isvolsky, in conversation, had some doubts on the subject and subsequently embodied his views in an *aide-mémoire*, of which I have the honour to transmit a copy.

I have telegraphed to you on the subject, but this despatch will reach your hands after your decision has been received by me, and I therefore simply forward the document which M. Isvolsky has communicated to me.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 282.

Aide-mémoire.—St. Petersburg, August 6, 1907.

Dans la série d'accords qui ont été conclus entre l'Angleterre et la France, un seulement a été revêtu de la forme d'une Convention, celui qui concerne la Terre-Neuve et l'Afrique.

Il semblerait que dans les relations internationales entre deux Etats il ne peut être question de Convention que lorsqu'il s'agit de droits rentrant dans l'idée de la souveraineté. En effet, les accords anglo-français concernant les territoires susmentionnés, sur lesquels les deux Etats ont respectivement des droits souverains, forment l'objet d'une Convention, tandis que les actes ayant trait au Siam, au Maroc—Etats indépendants,—et à l'Egypte—Etat vassal d'une tierce Puissance,—revêtent la forme de déclarations. Or, dans le cas actuel d'un accord à conclure entre l'Angleterre et la Russie, il est à prendre en considération que la Perse étant un Etat indépendant et le Thibet étant un Etat vassal d'un autre Etat indépendant—la Chine, les deux Parties Contractantes n'ont sur ces régions aucuns droits souverain [*sic*] dont elles pourraient disposer à leur guise.

Quant à la question du Préambule, sa présence n'implique pas inévitablement la forme de Convention et par conséquent l'obligation de faire ratifier l'acte international dans lequel il se trouve—à preuve l'accord russo-japonais qui vient d'être signé le 17/30 juillet il contient un Préambule et n'a pas été muni de la ratification Impériale.

Il n'y aurait donc aucun inconvénient à ce que les arrangements projetés même étant qualifiés de déclarations, arrangements ou accords, conservent leur préambule, dont l'importance est incontestable.

D'ailleurs, au point de vue des intérêts de l'Angleterre et de la Russie, la préférence accordée à ces derniers termes sur celui de "Conventions" n'aurait aucun

caractère préjudiciable, toutes ces formes ayant la même validité d'actes internationaux et engageant les Parties Contractantes les unes aussi bien que les autres.

L'idée de la possibilité de conclure une Convention dans les questions persane et thibétaine devrait, semble-t-il, être absolument exclue.

Une Convention ne pourrait à la rigueur être conclue que par rapport à l'Afghanistan, vu la situation spéciale de ce pays vis-à-vis de l'Angleterre.

Il est à noter en outre que les bruits ayant trait à l'accord anglo-russe rencontrent un intérêt très vif en Asie; sa publication est attendue anxieusement tant en Perse qu'en Chine, et si cet accord revêt la forme solennelle d'une Convention cela froissera certainement les susceptibilités légitimes des cercles gouvernementaux persan et chinois, qui pourraient prendre ombrage de la manière dont l'Angleterre et la Russie disposent de leur pays, avec lesquels elles entretiennent d'égal à égal des relations diplomatiques directes. Au contraire, une déclaration, arrangement ou accord, constatant purement et simplement la ligne de conduite que les deux Etats s'engagent mutuellement à observer dorénavant par rapport aux questions persane et thibétaine, n'aurait pas le caractère d'une atteinte aux droits souverains de la Perse et de la Chine et n'entraînerait pas de suites défavorables au point de vue politique.

Saint-Petersbourg, le 6 août, 1907.

No. 283.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

St. Petersburg, D. August 23, 1907, 9.50 P.M.

Tel. (No. 163.)

R. August 24, 1907, 8 A.M.

Conventions and Agreements.

Minister for Foreign Affairs proposes that there should be a general preamble and a single ratification for all instruments. General preamble would be in following terms:—

“His Majesty the King, &c., and His Majesty the Emperor, &c., animated with a sincere desire to settle by mutual consent different questions touching the interests of their States in the Continent of Asia, have resolved to conclude arrangements destined to prevent all causes of misunderstanding between Russia and Great Britain in regard to said questions, and have named to that effect, as their respective Plenipotentiaries, namely,

who, after having communicated their full powers, &c., have agreed on following:—

“Then would come ‘Arrangement as to Persia’ with its special preamble and full text, then ‘Convention as to Afghanistan’ with its special preamble and full text, then ‘Declaration as to Thibet’ with its special preamble and full text and Arrangement as to Chumbi Valley. After these would come the following: ‘The present Agreements will be ratified, and ratifications exchanged at St. Petersburg, as soon as possible. In faith whereof the Plenipotentiaries have signed present Arrangements, &c.’”

By this means he considers he would avoid three ratifications, and the whole Arrangements form one instrument. He would like to know if you concur in this arrangement, and whether you would wish Arrangements as to Persia, Afghanistan, and Thibet signed also, or whether one signature at the end of the whole document after clause as to ratifications would suffice.

The idea seems a good one. Question of scientific missions in Thibet, and transfer of telegraph lines in Persia, would be settled by exchange of notes signed simultaneously.

I should be grateful for reply by Tuesday next.

MINUTES.

The Afghan Convention is not to come into force until the Amir has consented to its terms. I do not know whether this would be an objection to the three arrangements being included in a single instrument with one signature.

If we adopt the proposed general preamble I do not see how the special preambles of the Russian and Afghan agreement as they now stand can be included, as they w[oul]d contain many repetitions of the words used in the general preamble. E.g. "animated by a sincere desire" occurs in the Persian preamble and "being desirous of avoiding all cause of conflict etc" is almost the same as "to prevent all causes of misunderstanding etc" in the general preamble.

W. E.

Aug. 24.

The Afghanistan Treaty does not come into force until the Ameer consents but that does not affect this question.

The effect of adopting the Russian—for which the Treaty Dep[artmen]t can find no precedent—would be that all three agreements will stand or fall together and the only objection which I can see to this, is that if it is desired to introduce any changes into—say—the Persian agreement, it might open the door to proposals for changes in the other two agreements.

Mr. R. Ritchie and Mr. Morley are away but there will be time to discuss this on Monday and I have asked Sir C. Hardinge to write his views.

I will discuss this on Monday.

L. M.

E. G.

25.8.07.

The ratifying article should be called a "Convention" and should read "La présente Convention sera ratifiée."

E. G.

No. 284.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

(No. 432.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. August 24, 1907.

R. August 27, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit, herewith, the French texts of the several Agreements as agreed upon between Monsieur Isvolsky and myself, including the Annexes.⁽¹⁾ His Excellency has still to secure the approval of His Majesty the Emperor and the interested Ministries, but I do not consider that any modifications will be made. Should any such occur I would at once telegraph them to you: and I would be grateful if you would also inform me by telegraph of any alterations which you may wish inserted. Monsieur Isvolsky would be deeply sensible if your reply could be sent to me with as little delay as possible.

As regards the Afghan Convention I have no remarks to make. With respect to Persia it was found most difficult to devise a clause which would render it quite clear that the localities through which the respective lines ran lay within the respective spheres. I trust that the final clauses to Articles I and II will meet this difficulty to your satisfaction.

(1) [The French text of the Agreement is printed *infra*, pp. 618-20, Appendix I.]

An Annex, which provides for the transfer of the Tehran-Meshed and Meshed-Seistan telegraph lines, is also sent herewith: and it will be signed simultaneously with the Agreements. In accordance with the *Aide-mémoire* of the 12th of August, drawn up in London you expressed your approval of this arrangement provided that Khaf was the point from which the British control was to commence. Monsieur Isvolsky considers that if he and I simply sign this Annex it will be sufficient, without any interchange of Notes, and I venture to agree with him but would be grateful for your concurrence by telegraph.

I have informed Monsieur Isvolsky that, though it does not form part of our agreements, we expect to receive an assurance from the Russian Government that they will adopt a friendly attitude towards the prolongation of some British telegraph concessions, and I reminded him of our communication that we would be prepared to concede the rights we possess over the Tehran-Khanikin line. He said that he would send me a communication assenting to this in principle, but that the Russian Government were awaiting information as to the financial position &c of the Tehran-Khanikin line and could not go further than the above at present. I should be glad to be informed if His Majesty's Government would be satisfied with this. I should be sorry to delay signature of the Conventions in regard to a matter outside their scope. The Russian Government will of course write me a Note in reply to mine regarding scientific missions in Thibet. Monsieur Isvolsky, on second thoughts, considers that it would be best to describe the agreement as to Thibet as an "arrangement" and not as a "Declaration" so as to bring it into conformity with that respecting Persia.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 285.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/325.
Tel. (No. 165.)

Foreign Office, August 27, 1907.
D. 6-30 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 163 and despatch 432 received.⁽¹⁾ We agree to one general Preamble and one ratification, but in that case there must be one instrument styled a convention since it includes one of that category and two agreements. The Ratifying article should therefore run:—"La présente Convention sera ratifiée etc." Russian draft, as worded, implies separate ratifications for each, which is what they wish to avoid.

In sixth line of general Preamble substitute "Russia and Gr[ea]t Britain" for "Their States" and in eighth line substitute "Them" for "Russia and Gr[ea]t Britain."

And in Article III of Persian agreement, last paragraph we prefer "dans les limites" to "en deça."

We do not attach great importance to these amendments.

It is of course understood that in our copy of Instrument Great Britain should throughout be mentioned before Russia.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 301-3, Nos. 283-4.]

No. 286.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, August 28, 1907.*

F.O. 971/325.

Tel. (No. 172.)

D. 2.35 P.M.

R. 4 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 165.

M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] agrees to insert in ratifying articles the words "the present convention will be ratified etc."

As to amendments in general preamble of 6th and 8th lines he pointed out that "Them" (with capital T) would indicate sovereigns and it could not be said that any misunderstandings could exist between the sovereigns. He pressed for the retention of Russian text and I agreed as you mention you do not attach great importance to the matter.

As to Article III of Persian agreement he is anxious as we are to make meaning quite clear but in french "dans les limites des lignes" would not be clear. He suggests "dans les régions" designated in Article I and Article II. In these Articles the word "regions" is used and there would then be no doubt that concessions in our respective zones are maintained. I hope you will agree. I have no doubt we shall sign on Saturday but cannot tell till this evening which alternative council will accept. Council is to be held this afternoon.

No. 287.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 971/325.

Tel. (No. 168.)

*Foreign Office, August 28, 1907.*Your telegram 172.⁽¹⁾

We agree.

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 288.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.*Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

St. Petersburg, August 30, 1907.

I cannot refrain, on the eve of the signature of the Convention, from writing a line to thank you most sincerely for the kind support you have given me throughout these negotiations, and for the considerate manner in which you have always acted towards me. Your guidance and advice have been invaluable.

I do not think that the opponents can knock many holes in the Convention: and if it be loyally executed on both sides, a great improvement should come over our relations with Russia. I wish that M. Iswolsky would steel his heart and stiffen his back against press criticisms. At present he is over anxious to propitiate the papers—especially the "Novoe Vremya." He has acted most loyally to us throughout, and I have not detected the slightest attempt to take an unfair advantage. The game has been played most fairly. I was pleased that you sent him a kindly message. He was much gratified. I have written a letter to Hardinge which doubtless he will send on to you.

Y[ou]rs sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 88.]