

a better position to explain the ideas of the Russian Government when he came back.

His Excellency referred with much satisfaction to the tone of the English newspapers, and particularly to the article which appeared in the "Times" of yesterday—an article which, as I reminded him, was founded upon information supplied to the "Times" by its St. Petersburg Correspondent, and apparently derived from official sources. I said that I had not yet had any opportunity of discussing this important question with the Prime Minister. I felt sure, however, that he would be as ready as I was to approach in the most friendly spirit such a negotiation as that at which His Excellency had hinted. My own feeling was that it would be a mistake to attempt too much, or to allow it to be understood that the two countries were on the eve of a comprehensive transaction analogous to that which had taken place between France and Great Britain. My idea of the procedure to be followed was rather that we should take up in detail any outstanding points as to which differences of opinion had manifested themselves and endeavour to dispose of these, and that we should then pass on to others, if we found that our work proceeded successfully.

I had in my mind, although I did not refer to it, the question of the relations between Russian and Afghan officials, which His Excellency and I had on more than one occasion discussed before the war broke out.

I ended by saying that, in the meanwhile, I thought it satisfactory that we should be working together harmoniously in Crete, and also in regard to the Macedonian question.

Count Benckendorff expressed agreement with what I had said, and said that he would repeat the substance of our conversation to Count Lamsdorff.

I am, &c.

LANSDOWNE.

No. 195.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.*

F.O. Russia 1703.

(No. 594.) Very Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. October 4, 1905.

My Lord,

R. October 9, 1905.

The French Ambassador called upon me this afternoon and told me that he had had an interview with Count Witte whom he found filled with an exaggerated idea of the rôle which he had lately played in international politics at Portsmouth, completely under the impression of his recent reception in Germany,<sup>(1)</sup> and in a state of rabid irritation over the Anglo-Japanese alliance. He told Monsieur Bompard that it was absolutely necessary that the Powers should make a reply to the Anglo-Japanese agreement, that it should be met by a Franco-Russian and German coalition, and that he had urged this at Berlin, where he found Germany a strong partisan of the Dual Alliance. Monsieur Bompard replied that, although it might suit Germany for the time being to be a partisan of the Dual Alliance, in this case it was not likely that the coalition he suggested would be realised, since no advantage would be gained from it by France who enjoyed friendly relations with England, against whom the coalition was apparently (to be ?) directed.<sup>(2)</sup>

Monsieur Bompard told me that the French Government were anxious as to the situation here and as to the possibility of a *rapprochement* between Russia and Germany, that Count Lamsdorff was very reserved whenever he alluded to the Anglo-Japanese agreement, and that Count Witte must now be regarded as absolutely

<sup>(1)</sup> [cp. *supra*, pp. 202-3, No. 193.]

<sup>(2)</sup> [*ib.* and p. 204, *encl.*]

German in his sympathies and as a dangerous element for the future. Owing to the anxiety of the French Government he had been obliged to defer taking leave, and as he gathered that his Government anticipated that His Majesty's Government would make some move towards the establishment of more friendly relations with the Russian Government in which they would be able to co-operate, he asked me if I was aware of any such project being in view.

I replied that although I knew that Your Lordship had a sincere desire for friendly relations with Russia and for the settlement of all questions pending between the two countries, I had received no instructions to formally raise the question, and in my own opinion to do so at the present moment would be premature and might tend to frustrate the object in view. As regards the possibility of a *rapprochement* between Russia and Germany, it was difficult to see what advantage Russia would gain in the Far East where Germany is powerless, while Russian interests and aspirations would necessarily suffer from such an alliance in the Near East. So long as France maintained her present attitude any coalition proposed by Germany would be almost certain to end in failure.

Monsieur Bompard asked me whether a coalition between Russia, Germany and the United States was possible, to which I replied that it appeared to me in the highest degree improbable in view of President Roosevelt's relations with both England and Japan and of his attitude towards the question of the "open door" which both Powers were pledged to maintain.

Later in the afternoon I saw Count Lamsdorff at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs and, the conversation having turned to the Russian press, I remarked that I was on the whole very satisfied with the attitude assumed by the Russian press towards the Anglo-Japanese agreement, and that the criticisms made had been reasonable and not generally unfriendly. As however the press in Russia cannot be regarded as an indication of the attitude of the Government, I begged him to tell me quite frankly, and unofficially if he wished, the real opinion of the Government on the subject of the Anglo-Japanese agreement.

Count Lamsdorff expressed the desire that our conversation should be regarded as unofficial and of a private character and proceeded to inform me that the Agreement had created a most unfavourable impression in Government circles, that the fact of its being aimed at Russia could not possibly be denied, and that the Russian Government resented the introduction of a third Power like Japan in questions which did not concern her, but which affected England and Russia in Central Asia. Had there been no such treaty the moment of the conclusion of peace would have been a most favourable opportunity for the settlement of all questions pending between England and Russia which he himself had always ardently desired, but that the hostile criticism provoked by the new treaty precluded such a possibility at present.

I replied to Count Lamsdorff that I must remind him of the friendly assurances that I had already given him on Your Lordship's behalf, but that even if the agreement was aimed at Russia which I would not admit as conclusive, its defensive character could not possibly be denied. As he had spoken to me frankly I would do the same to him in discussing that part of the agreement to which he had referred and to which he seemed to take special exception. While insisting on the fact that the agreement was a form of national insurance against a condition of affairs which I trusted would never arise, I called his attention to what had been going on in Central Asia during the past ten years. There, a system of railways of purely strategic importance had been built by the Russian Government at the cost of great sacrifices and had been brought down to the frontier of Afghanistan, which the Russian Government had repeatedly declared to be outside their sphere of influence, and to the very gates of Herat. If it were asked against whom these preparations were directed the only possible reply was that they were intended to facilitate an attack on Afghanistan or India. I had never believed that any person connected with the Russian Government seriously contemplated the invasion of India, but there was no doubt that it was intended that there should be a perpetual means of exerting pressure upon England by military movements

on the Afghan frontier in the event of any cause for disagreement or any incident arising, whether in the Near East, the North Sea or elsewhere. Such a situation would resemble that of Turkey and the Great Powers with their naval demonstrations, and would constitute a standing menace to India. As England had no pretension to be a military Power with forces on a continental scale, she was fully justified in taking steps to assure her frontiers from attack and to ensure the *status quo* in Asia, while herself harbouring no aggressive intentions.

Count Lamsdorff did not refute my statement but argued that when an agreement had been arrived at between the two countries no reasons for discord or menace would exist, and that it was hardly fair to state that the Russian railways in Central Asia were for purely strategic purposes.

I did not pursue this point further but I asked Count Lamsdorff whether, in his private opinion, he considered the question of the resumption of negotiations with a view to the settlement of outstanding differences as inopportune for the time being or as indefinitely deferred, and I remarked that, although there might be disadvantage in being too precipitate, I could see no reason for the latter view.

Count Lamsdorff replied that, in spite of all present impressions and speculative eventualities, he was still sincerely desirous of placing the relations between England and Russia on a firm and friendly basis, but that he considered that it would be a mistake to attempt at the present moment the resumption of the previous negotiations. He thought however that both Governments should endeavour to settle between them in a friendly manner such questions as could be dealt with singly so as to convince public opinion of the advantages to be obtained from friendly relations and thus to prepare the way for the settlement of all outstanding differences. He warned me at the same time that systematic and untiring efforts were being made here to render impossible the attainment of the object which we had in view.

I thanked Count Lamsdorff for his frankness and he begged once more that what he had said might be regarded as unofficial.

It appears to me that Count Lamsdorff has to a certain extent fallen under the influence of Count Witte who makes no effort to conceal his anger at the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese agreement, and that he is now more outspoken in his objections than when he last spoke to me a fortnight ago. The annoyance which is felt is, I believe, due to the knowledge that the weapon of offence, which has been forged with so much care and outlay for use in Central Asia, has lost its edge, thus bearing the highest testimony to the value of the extended form of the Anglo-Japanese alliance. (\*)

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

*A most interesting dispatch!*

*E.R.*

(\*) [Language approved by Lord Lansdowne in No. 305 of October 11 to Sir C. Hardinge.]

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No. 196.

*The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.*

F.O. Russia 1697.

(No. 300.)

Sir,

*Foreign Office, October 5, 1905.*

During the course of a long conversation with the Russian Ambassador this afternoon I recurred to the possibility of an amicable arrangement between Great Britain and Russia of the kind which we had discussed on the 3rd instant (see my

despatch No. 296 of that date).<sup>(1)</sup> I told His Excellency that I was about to leave for Balmoral where I should see the King and the Prime Minister, and that I was extremely anxious to be exactly aware of His Excellency's views. He repeated to me that he believed the Russian Government and an influential section of the Russian public to be strongly in favour of such an understanding. His own view however was that the matter should not be too much pressed at the present moment. Although our Treaty with Japan had not been badly taken, it had undoubtedly come as a shock to public opinion in Russia, and in His Excellency's opinion it would be better to give time for the effect to pass off. He would visit St. Petersburg in November, and would take an opportunity of more fully ascertaining Count Lamsdorff's views. It would then be possible for us to resume our conversation.

His Excellency volunteered the statement that, in his view, the Persian question was the only one presenting serious difficulties. He did not however see why we should not be able to come to terms with regard to it. Russia did not want to annex Persian territory or to acquire a port on the Persian Gulf, although she might want a *débouché* for her trade in those waters. I said that neither had we any desire to encroach upon the integrity of Persia, and that our policy as to foreign commerce was well known. I should be quite ready to discuss the Persian question with His Excellency whenever he was ready to do so.

His Excellency added that he had only one more observation to make, viz. that any arrangement of the kind should not be conceived in a spirit of hostility towards Germany. I said that nothing was further from my thoughts; I failed altogether to see why such an understanding as we both desired should contain any element of hostility either towards Germany or towards any other Power. I thought it most unfortunate that some people's minds should be so constituted as to make them see, in every neighbourly arrangement arrived at between two or more Powers, a coalition aimed at another.

His Excellency ended by expressing a hope that I would authorise you to take a suitable opportunity, perhaps while His Excellency was in St. Petersburg, to speak to Count Lamsdorff somewhat in the sense of the remarks which I had made.

I am, &c.

LANSDOWNE.

<sup>(1)</sup> [v. *supra*, pp. 204-5, No. 194.]

No. 197.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.*

F.O. Russia 1708.

(No. 604.) Confidential.

My Lord,

*St. Petersburg, D. October 8, 1905.*

*R. October 14, 1905.*

During the past few days articles have appeared in the "Novoe Vremja," a journal notorious for its Anglophobia, in which it is pointed out that no counter-combination to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance is in the present disposition of the Powers possible, and that, the aim of the new Treaty of alliance being to maintain peace and to prevent aggressive designs in Eastern and Central Asia, Russia and other interested Powers should agree to the maintenance of the *status quo*, provided that guarantees in the same sense were given by England and Japan.<sup>(1)</sup>

These articles have been the subject of favourable comment in the English press, and have certainly been the means of affecting a *détente* in the relations of the press of the two countries, but I have not considered it necessary to send translations

<sup>(1)</sup> [cp. *supra*, pp. 202-4, No. 193 and *encl.*]

to Your Lordship since the views of the Russian press do not necessarily represent the views of the Russian Government, and I do not wish to attach undue importance to newspaper articles which the French Ambassador told me in confidence had been directly inspired by the French Embassy. They may however be regarded as pleasing indications of our friendly relations with France and of the desire of the French Government for an amicable understanding between England and Russia.

The action of the French Embassy must not be regarded as entirely disinterested, since it is inspired by anxiety on the part of the French Government lest the sequel to the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement should be a *rapprochement* of Germany and Russia. Monsieur Bompard has twice within the last week suggested to me that His Majesty's Government should make some advance to the Russian Government in order to show their conciliatory disposition, and should propose that Russia and the other Powers interested in China should be invited to adhere to a declaration of their intention to maintain the independence and integrity of China and the principle of the "open door" as defined in the preamble of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty,<sup>(2)</sup> this being the only common ground of agreement between England, Russia and the other Powers. He had already made this suggestion to his Government, and Your Lordship may consequently have cognisance of it. The object of this step, as M. Bompard explained to me, would be to forestall any action on the part of Germany and to frustrate any overtures for a Russo-German combination in the Far East which the Russian Government might be disposed to accept as a salve to their wounded *amour-propre* if His Majesty's Government held aloof. He fully realised that the moment was not yet ripe for the resumption of the previous negotiations which had been interrupted by the war.

Although it is impossible to know whether any negotiations are in progress between Russia and Germany relating to the Far East or elsewhere, it is difficult to imagine that even Count Witte with his present Germanophil tendencies would advocate co-operation with Germany in the Far East, in a sense contrary to the spirit of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement, after the disastrous experiences of the Russian Government in the Manchurian adventure, which was inspired and precipitated by the German adventure at Kiao-Chao. In the near East, German and Russian interests are in direct conflict, and with the lapse of time this divergence is likely to become more acute, but it is essential for Russia, especially at the present moment of internal disturbance, to maintain friendly relations with her western neighbour. I have pointed out these considerations to M. Bompard who appears very nervous as to the possible action of Germany, but whether his anxiety is well founded or not time alone can shew.

It appears to me however to be doubtful whether the French Ambassador's suggestion, if carried out, would be of any practical utility or advantage to His Majesty's Government unless the proposed declaration were of wider scope embracing the maintenance of the *status quo* in Asia, and unless it were made by England and Japan conjointly, since a separate and isolated communication by England would tend to impair the solidarity which should exist between the two Allies. The Russian Government, in their adherence to the Anglo-German agreement of 1900, affirmed that the integrity of the Chinese Empire constituted the fundamental principle of their policy in China, and in reply to Mr. Hay's Circular of 1901 they announced their acceptance of the principle of the "open door." A reaffirmation of these principles would hardly be worth more than the previous declarations.

I would also point out that if an international declaration asserting the principles of the maintenance of the independence and integrity of China and of the "open door" were made by the Powers especially interested in the Far East, the Anglo-Japanese agreement might become depreciated in the eyes of the Japanese, since it would no doubt be argued that some of its most important provisions, affecting chiefly Japan, had been guaranteed by the Powers, while the obligations of Japan towards

(2) [*v. supra*, p. 165, No. 155.]

England in Central Asia remained binding without any corresponding guarantee. This might possibly have the effect of making the Treaty appear to the Japanese one-sided and burdensome, although in reality there is a wide difference between a platonic declaration and an agreement which two Powers bind themselves to maintain by force of arms.

An alternative course which would not present the same objections as that suggested by the French Ambassador would be a joint communication by England and Japan to all the Powers interested in the Far East stating in approximately the same words as in the preamble of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement that the object of the Treaty is the maintenance and consolidation of the general peace throughout Asia, the preservation of the common interests of all the Powers, the independence and integrity of existing Asiatic Governments and the principles of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations.

Such a communication made jointly by the two Allies would strengthen and not weaken the force and authority of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement. It would have an eminently pacificatory effect on the world at large, and in view of the frequent assurances made by the Russian Government with regard both to Afghanistan and Persia could hardly fail to elicit a satisfactory reply from Russia on the general principle.

Finally, if it should be considered desirable by His Majesty's Government to make a friendly advance towards Russia in this or in any other sense, it would be as well to combine it with the negotiations, which, I learn from a private source, are in progress for the issue of part of a Russian loan in London, since the natural desire of the Russian Government to place their paper on the English market will help to facilitate such an understanding as would have a reassuring effect on the British financial public.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

#### MINUTES.

The communication which Sir C. Hardinge suggests might be made jointly by Great Britain and Japan would, as far as Russia is concerned, be almost a repetition of the communication already made at St. Petersburg by Sir C. Hardinge.

But this was less formal than what Sir C. Hardinge advocates.

W. L.

F. A. C.

14.10.

\* I agree with Sir Charles Hardinge that there would be no advantage in volunteering an announcement which would in effect merely be an iteration of the Preamble of the Treaty. A joint communication on the part of Great Britain and Japan inviting a general acceptance of the status quo in Asia might be worth considering, but we shall have to be extremely careful how we make such a proposal to the Japanese Government, who would probably regard it with no little suspicion. They would certainly ask what was meant by "the maintenance of the status quo in Asia," or by "the preservation of the independence and integrity of existing Asiatic Governments."

For the moment however the Russian Government do not seem to be ready to receive any such overtures, and it will be better to take no further action at present.

The financial negotiations to which Sir Charles Hardinge refers in the last paragraph of his despatch must, I think, be allowed to take their course independently of any negotiations having reference to political affairs.

L.

Oct. 17, 1905.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.*

F.O. Russia 1708.

(No. 616.) Very Confidential.

*St. Petersburg, D. October 14, 1905.*

My Lord,

*R. October 18, 1905.*

The French Ambassador left for Paris to-day. Before leaving he had a conversation with Count Lamsdorff on the subject of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement and he has kindly given me the following account of what passed between them.

Count Lamsdorff showed great reluctance to discuss the question and it was only on Monsieur Bompard insisting that it was a matter of interest to France as the Ally of Russia to know his views that he consented to disclose them. He spoke at first in somewhat strong terms of the Anglo-Japanese agreement which, he said, had in spite of the pacificatory explanation which accompanied it shocked Russia by the directness of its intention. Previous to the outbreak of war England had been in negotiation with Russia on many pending questions in Asia and these discussions had been necessarily interrupted on the commencement of hostilities. Before even the war had been concluded England, regardless of her previous negotiations, had changed the whole situation and had endeavoured to impose her will and that of Japan upon the remaining Powers in Asia. This proceeding had caused deep dissatisfaction not merely in Russia but also in Germany and the United States.<sup>(1)</sup> England had repeated in Asia the same policy which she had followed in Africa and had caused such a shock to the whole world that it became necessary to put an end to such proceedings once and for all. The way to do so would be to form a coalition of Powers, which need not have an aggressive character, as a counterpoise to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, in the same manner that the political equilibrium of Europe was maintained by the Dual and Triple Alliances, and a combination of Russia, France, Germany, and the United States would serve that purpose.

Monsieur Bompard replied that if Russia had really a grievance as to the manner in which England and Japan by their agreement sought to impose their will in Asia, France might equally claim to be aggrieved, but that there could be no possible question of France entering into any coalition with Russia and Germany after the treatment recently experienced by France at the hands of the latter Power. He reminded Count Lamsdorff that the action of Germany in Morocco, of which the object had been to detach France from England, had only served to draw them closer together, and that any counter-combination would necessarily tend to consolidate the Anglo-Japanese alliance. The only course for other Powers to follow was to assimilate their action to that of England and Japan and to publicly adopt the principles enunciated in the preamble of the agreement affirming its object to be the maintenance of the independence and integrity of China and of the principle of the "open door." This would harmonise with the announcement made by Russia and France in 1902 in reply to the first Anglo-Japanese Treaty. As regards Central Asia the matter was one which concerned only England and Russia. It was evident that the policy of England had been to guarantee her position in that part of Asia, but that there was no indication of any aggressive intention on her part and consequently no reason why an agreement should not be arrived at between the two Powers.

Count Lamsdorff stated in reply that there could at present be no question of resuming the previous negotiations, since a new and entirely different situation had been introduced by the intrusion of a third Power, but he frankly admitted that the Anglo-Japanese agreement had apparently no aggressive intent, and that therefore there was no immediate danger to be foreseen and no pressing necessity for any action being taken. At the present moment all that was known of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was the text, but the important part to know was the spirit in

<sup>(1)</sup> [Marginal comment by Lord Lansdowne: "This is quite unsupported by evidence."]

which it would be carried out. Time could only show this and what, if any, action was necessary by the other Powers to counteract its effects. He admitted that the German Emperor was making strenuous efforts to induce the Russian Government to take some definite step in connection with the agreement.

Monsieur Bompard told me that the impression left upon his mind was that Count Lamsdorff regarded him in this matter as the advocate of England, and that in the earlier part of his conversation he had been to a certain extent "bluffing," but that Germany was making a serious endeavour to inveigle Russia into some sort of agreement or undertaking to which Count Lamsdorff was personally unfavourably disposed. Count Lamsdorff would, he considers, in view of the ideal of a Russo-German-French-American coalition being unrealisable, prefer to remain with his hands free and to await further developments, since any sort of agreement with Germany might prove prejudicial to the French alliance and might place Russia in a false position. The question however was whether Count Lamsdorff would be strong enough to resist the pressure which might be placed upon him by the two Emperors.

Monsieur Bompard laid stress on what Count Lamsdorff had said to him respecting the dissatisfaction of the United States Government with the Anglo-Japanese agreement, more especially as it was the second time that Count Lamsdorff referred to it in conversation with him. The danger of such an attitude on the part of the United States Government would consist in the fact that Russia might be disposed to enter into a coalition with Germany and the United States while she would be unwilling to enter into an agreement with Germany alone.

I replied that as far as I knew there had been no indication of any ill-will on the part of the United States, and that it seemed to me very improbable in view of the repeated declarations of the American Government of their desire for the independence and integrity of China and for equal opportunity for the trade of all nations which the Anglo-Japanese agreement was designed to maintain.

Monsieur Bompard asked that what he had told me might be regarded as confidential.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

MINUTE.

This is an important conversation.

We have had no indication of the views of the U[nited] S[tates] Gov[ernmen]t resp[ectin]g the Anglo-Japanese Agreement since they received the text, but when the substance was communicated to the President, he appeared quite satisfied.

\* Note that C[oun]t Lamsdorff says there can be no question of resuming the previous Anglo-Russian negotiations at present; and that the German Emperor is making great efforts to induce the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to take some action.

F. A. C.

18 Oct.

L.

No. 199.

*The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir F. Bertie.*

F.O. France 3704.

(No. 662.)

Sir,

*Foreign Office, October 17, 1905.*

The French Ambassador told me today that, during his visit to Paris, M. Nelidoff had spoken to him with much frankness as to the possibility of an understanding between Great Britain and Russia. Such an understanding was earnestly desired by M. Nelidoff himself and by Count Lamsdorff. They feared however that the matter could not be much advanced at the present time. The resentment created in Russia



by the recently concluded Anglo-Japanese Agreement was deeper than would be supposed from the language used by the Russian Press. We had, M. Cambon observed, fortunately taken the precaution of explaining our policy to the Russian Government in the most considerate terms,<sup>(1)</sup> and we had thereby disarmed a good deal of hostile criticism. The feeling of hostility nevertheless existed and must be taken into account. For this reason both M. Nelidoff and Count Lamsdorff were not in favour of an early discussion. On the other hand, Germany was taking advantage of the opportunity in order, if possible, to estrange France and England. M. Witte, upon whom his interview with the German Emperor had produced a great effect, was working strenuously for this purpose, and it was suggested that, as Great Britain and Japan had formed a coalition which would give them a preponderating influence in Eastern Asia, the time had come for the other Powers interested in that part of the world to form another coalition by which the balance of power might be maintained. In these circumstances His Excellency could not help thinking that we should do well to be prepared for an exchange of views with the Russian Government at the earliest possible moment. As to this, M. Nelidoff had suggested, and His Excellency thought the suggestion a valuable one, that His Majesty's Government should consider in good time the requirements which would be put forward on behalf of Great Britain whenever the moment arrived for opening negotiations. It was, His Excellency said, Great Britain which had constantly complained of Russian encroachments, and we ought to be in a position to define clearly the grounds of our complaint and the terms which we could afford to accept.

His Excellency referred briefly to the relations of this country with Russia in regard to Afghanistan, Persia and the Near East. I said that in regard to Afghanistan we had already defined our position with considerable distinctness. We had laid it down—and I did not believe that Russia would dispute our contention—that the external relations of Afghanistan must remain under the direction of this country. We had, on the other hand, indicated our readiness to enter into arrangements which would provide for the prompt settlement, by direct negotiation between the Russian and Afghan frontier officials, of purely local disputes having no serious political importance. As to Persia, it seemed to me that the main object should be to put an end to the unfortunate rivalry of the two Powers whom the Persian Government invariably endeavoured to play off against one another, and we of course desired that an equal opportunity should be afforded to our commerce in Persian territory. As for the Near East, I thought it was for Russia, rather than for us, to indicate what she wanted.

I told His Excellency that I had already had an informal discussion with Count Benckendorff, who had given me an account of his views not dissimilar from that just given to me by His Excellency.

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

<sup>(1)</sup> [*v. supra*, pp. 172-9, Nos. 164-172 (b).]

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No. 200.

*The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.*

F.O. Russia 1697.

(No. 380.)

Sir,

*Foreign Office, October 20, 1905.*

Count Benckendorff asked to see me this morning, and told me that he had been instructed to speak frankly to me with regard to a very serious matter which had recently come to the knowledge of the Russian Government. They had learned from a trustworthy source that during the war, and since the conclusion of peace, negotiations, of which His Majesty's Government were fully cognizant, if they were not actually

parties to them, had been on foot between Japan and Turkey with the object of bringing about co-operation between those two Powers at Constantinople and extending the scope of the Anglo-Japanese Agreement to the Near East.

I told His Excellency that the Russian Government had apparently discovered a mare's nest of prodigious dimensions. No proposal of the kind had ever been on the tapis, nor, to the best of my belief, had such an idea ever been discussed in this country even in unofficial circles. I could not help wondering at the credulity of the Russian Government, and I asked His Excellency whether the terms of the recently concluded Anglo-Japanese Agreement ought not in themselves to have been sufficient to show that neither of the Contracting Parties were likely to encourage a scheme so inconsistent with the carefully limited provisions of that Agreement. I also reminded His Excellency that, when communicating the new Treaty to the Russian Government, you had been instructed to assure them that there were no secret clauses attached to it. His Excellency said that he did not recollect that you had given such an assurance with regard to the absence of secret clauses. He was however greatly relieved by my statement. I asked him whether it was not clear that these rumours were the fabrication of some "agent provocateur" who desired to sow distrust between us.

[I am, &c.]

L[ANSLOWNE].

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No. 201.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.*

F.O. Russia 1708.  
(No. 628.) Confidential.  
My Lord,

St. Petersburg, D. October 21, 1905.  
R. October 31, 1905.\*

Since I had the honour to address to Your Lordship my despatch No. 616 of the 14th instant<sup>(1)</sup> reporting the substance of a conversation between the French Ambassador and Count Lamsdorff, the political situation here has been to a certain extent modified, owing chiefly, I believe, to the language held by Monsieur Bompard on that occasion.

There is, I think, little doubt that Count Lamsdorff was personally unfavourably disposed to any sort of agreement or undertaking with Germany as a counterpoise to the Anglo-Japanese alliance, but being partially under the influence of Count Witte and perhaps acting on instructions from the Emperor, he proposed to the French Ambassador an anti-English coalition with the hope, or even knowledge, that his proposal would be flatly rejected. Monsieur Bompard's uncompromising attitude has evidently sufficed to convince those who harboured unfriendly intentions towards England that the French Government would not countenance them for an instant, and I am reliably informed that the idea of any combination with Germany has now been definitely dropped. This result is all the more satisfactory in view of the fact that, as I hear from a good source, the removal of Count Lamsdorff formed an important item of the German programme, to which the Imperial Rescript of the 19th instant and the high decoration conferred upon Count Lamsdorff afford a satisfactory and reassuring reply.

The extravagantly Germanophil attitude of Count Witte since his return has also shown some modification during the past few days, and he has openly stated that there is now no question of an alliance with Germany and that he is in favour of a policy of friendly isolation of Russia while maintaining the best possible relations with all Foreign Powers and relying upon the French alliance as the corner-stone of Russian policy.

At an interview which I had with Count Lamsdorff yesterday the change in his

<sup>(1)</sup> [v. *supra*, pp. 211-2, No. 198.]

attitude was very marked and his manner was far more friendly than it has been since the communication of the text of the Anglo-Japanese agreement.

He referred with evident satisfaction to Your Lordship's conversations with Count Benckendorff, on October 3 and 5<sup>(2)</sup> relating to Anglo-Russian relations, and on my observing that the tenour of our conversation on the 4th instant (reported in my despatch No. 594 of the same date)<sup>(3)</sup> was almost exactly analogous he remarked that it was a confirmation of the friendly intentions actuating both Governments and was of happy augury for the future.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

<sup>(2)</sup> [*v. supra*, pp. 204-5, No. 194, and pp. 207-8, No. 196.]

<sup>(3)</sup> [*v. supra*, pp. 205-7, No. 195.]

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No. 202.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.*

F.O. Russia 1703.

(No. 639.) Confidential.

My Lord,

*St. Petersburg, D. October 24, 1905.*

*R. October 31, 1905.*

When I announced to Count Lamsdorff a few days ago my intention to leave St. Petersburg tomorrow on leave of absence I told him that as it was a long time since I had had the honour of being received by the Emperor I thought that perhaps His Majesty might care to see me in case he should have any message or communication which he would like me to convey to the King.

Count Lamsdorff replied at once that he was sure that the Emperor would like to see me before I left and an audience of His Majesty was promptly fixed for today at Peterhof.

On being received in private audience by the Emperor I at once conveyed to His Majesty a message which I had received from the King expressing the warmth of his personal sentiments towards him, His Majesty's most earnest desire that the best and most durable relations should be established between England and Russia, and that all important points should be discussed in an amicable spirit and settled as soon as possible. I at the same time added that the King watched with interest the internal reforms which the Emperor had introduced and was about to grant and that a liberal policy would be of the greatest advantage both to the Emperor himself and the Russian people.

At the same time I endeavoured to impress upon the Emperor the sincere desire of His Majesty's Government to maintain friendly relations with Russia, and I pointed out that complete unanimity prevailed in England on this subject, since it constitutes part of the policy not only of the Government but also of the Opposition, while the press without exception was favourably disposed towards the idea. As evidence of the change of sentiment which had taken place I cited the presence in St. Petersburg of Lord Revelstoke who, with the countenance of His Majesty's Government, was endeavouring to negotiate with an international group of bankers a loan to the Russian Government. I added that His Majesty's Government considered, and their opinion was shared by Count Lamsdorff, that in endeavouring to arrive at a settlement of all questions in dispute it would be better not to embark on an ambitious programme but to deal with each question separately until all existing difficulties had been finally removed. The points of difference between the two countries were after all few in number and not of a nature to render agreement impossible. I assured the Emperor that His Majesty's Government entertained no aggressive designs and no desire nor intention of extending the British frontiers beyond their present limits.

The Emperor expressed himself as very gratified at receiving the King's friendly message and as being very desirous of arriving at a friendly agreement with England on all matters in dispute. He assured me that I might accept his word that neither he nor the Russian people desired a policy of expansion or extension of the Russian frontiers, that since both Powers were agreed on the maintenance of the integrity of Persia, all questions connected with Persia should be settled without delay and that the only difficulties which could present themselves would be technical difficulties such as spheres of influence &c., which should be easily adjusted.

I remarked to the Emperor that in the event of an agreement being concluded between England and Russia it was to be hoped that it would not be regarded as directed against any other Power, as has unfortunately been the case with regard to the Anglo-French Agreement and Morocco, that the desire for peace was deeply ingrained in the English people and that without seeking alliances in Europe England was anxious to be on friendly terms with all nations.

The Emperor expressed his assent and observed that he had never understood why the Anglo-French Agreement had been regarded in Germany as directed against that country and added that he regarded the recent revelations in the "Matin" as purely imaginary.

Referring to the Anglo-Japanese Agreement His Majesty made a curious statement to the effect that objection had been taken to it by certain people in Russia as constituting a breach of neutrality, since the Agreement was signed before the conclusion of peace, and it was thought that this fact had given encouragement and moral support to the Japanese. He himself had not shared this view, but there were many who held it.

I told His Majesty that such an idea appeared to me to be very far-fetched, since in one of the Articles of the Agreement it was expressly stated that it was not to apply to the recently concluded war, that negotiations had been in progress since the month of April, and that it was a mere coincidence that the Agreement had been signed a few days before the conclusion of peace. It proved however to have been a fortunate coincidence since it enabled the Japanese to make peace on terms that were acceptable to Russia while without the safety assured to them by the Agreement they would probably have preferred to continue the war. I alluded at the same time to the happy impression produced by the Emperor's recent Manifesto.

The audience lasted nearly an hour during which the Emperor was pleased to discuss many other subjects of secondary importance, but before dismissing me His Majesty asked me to convey a very friendly message to the King expressing his entire acquiescence with the desires expressed in the King's message and giving an assurance that the King could rely on him.

Altogether the impression left on my mind by the interview was of a favourable nature, for the Emperor gave me a positive assurance that he was opposed to a policy of expansion and appeared to reciprocate the desire for the maintenance of friendly relations between the two countries. In talking over the incidents which arose during the war he showed no rancour, nor in his reference to the Anglo-Japanese Agreement did he show any sign of ill-humour. The improvement which has already shown itself in the relations between England and Russia only requires careful fostering to bear fruit in due season.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

*The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir F. Bertie.*

F.O. France 3704.

(No. 680.)

Sir,

*Foreign Office, October 25, 1905.*

The French Ambassador referred again today to the relations of Great Britain and Russia, about which he had spoken to me on the 17th instant (see my despatch No. 662 of that date).<sup>(1)</sup> His Excellency said that he had been at Paris since I had last seen him, and had had interesting conversations both with M. Nelidoff and with M. Bompard, who happened to be there. He had gathered from their statements that the prospects of an understanding were rather less favourable than he had imagined. Count Lamsdorff was as well disposed as ever towards this country, and so far as the Russian Government were concerned there was no serious difficulty. But the Emperor had to be reckoned with, and there could be no doubt that he was at this moment much under the influence of the German Emperor, who was in constant correspondence with him and who, on the occasion of the interview between the two Sovereigns at Bjoerkoe, had succeeded in convincing him that this country was actuated by a feeling of hostility towards Russia. An attempt was evidently being made to bring about an arrangement under which France, Russia and Germany would combine as a counterpoise to the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. M. Nelidoff had indeed quite recently suggested an idea of this kind to M. Rouvier, by whom he had been told that there could be no question of French participation in such a project. M. Cambon felt sure that the suggestion had been made by Count Lamsdorff's orders, and with the anticipation that it would elicit a refusal.<sup>(2)</sup> The moral of all this, His Excellency said, was that this country should watch for a good opportunity of re-establishing friendly relations with Russia. It was not, in his view, a case for suddenly proposing a comprehensive settlement of outstanding questions, but rather for finding a good excuse to commence an amicable conversation about some subject which obviously required to be dealt with without loss of time. His Excellency thought that such an opportunity might be found in connection with the proposal of the German Emperor that the Powers should withdraw the international troops now stationed in Northern China. At this point His Excellency described to me at some length the manner in which this proposal had been made to the French Government. The German Emperor had telegraphed to President Loubet in the following terms:—

“L'ordre ayant été restauré en Asie par la conclusion de la paix, je propose de faire rentrer les troupes de couverture qui se trouvent échelonnées dans la province de Tschili. Le mode d'évacuation serait fixé par les commandants des contingents en conseil et aura lieu d'un commun accord.

“S[a] M[ajesté] l'Impératrice de Chine est informée.

“Les gardes des Légations à Pékin resteront.”

This message had been received by the President when he was on the point of starting for Spain, and he had returned an answer in the following terms from Hendaye:—

“Je remercie Votre Majesté de sa communication. J'en fais part au Gouvernement qui en délibèrera pour l'échange de vues auquel Elle propose de procéder entre les Puissances intéressées.”

I then informed His Excellency of the purport of the telegram which had been received by King Edward, of the terms of His Majesty's reply, and of my conversation

<sup>(1)</sup> [*v. supra*, pp. 212-3, No. 199.]

<sup>(2)</sup> [*cp. supra*, pp. 205-6, No. 195, and p. 214, No. 201.]

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

No. 204.

*Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Spring-Rice.*

F.O. Russia 1697,  
(No. 427.)  
Sir,

*Foreign-Office, December 19, 1905.*

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

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

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*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*

Private.<sup>(1)</sup>

Dear Sir Edward,

*St. Petersburg, January 8, 1906.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

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

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No. 206.

*Sir C. Hardinge to Sir Edward Grey.*

F.O. 971/122.

(No. 41.)

Sir,

*St. Petersburg, D. January 10, 1906.*

*R. January 20, 1906.*

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

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

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

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

No. 207.

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*

Private.<sup>(1)</sup>

Dear Sir Edward,

*St. Petersburg, January 16, 1906.*

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

Yours very sincerely,

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

<sup>(1)</sup> [Grey MSS., Vol. 83.]

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

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*Private.<sup>(1)</sup>

Dear Sir Edward,

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Yours sincerely,  
CECIL SPRING-RICE.

No. 209.

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*

F.O. 179/128.

(No. 119.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. February 12, 1906.

Sir,

R. February 19, 1906.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

#### MINUTES.

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

C. H.

E. G.

There is much matter for reflection in this.

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

*Mr. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.*

Private.<sup>(1)</sup>

Dear Sir Edward,

*St. Petersburg, March 1, 1906.*

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

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

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

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

<sup>(1)</sup> [Grey MSS., Vol. 33.]

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