

No. 840.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/169.

(No. 588.)

Sir,

*St. Petersburg, D. September 6, 1906.**R. September 17, 1906.*

I informed M. Isvolsky yesterday that His Majesty's Government had received some months ago an application from the Persian Government for a loan, but that the latter had been told that this request could not be entertained.⁽¹⁾ In respect to the recent application for an advance and a loan, I told His Excellency that my Government were of opinion that if some financial aid were really required and if the Persian Government were likely to seek it elsewhere than in England and Russia, you were prepared to send instructions to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at Teheran to ascertain, in conjunction with the Russian Minister, what amount would suffice to meet urgent requirements and also what means could be taken to assure that the advance was properly applied. In respect to a loan I said that you considered that, owing to the condition of the health of the Shah and the uncertainty of the immediate political future in Persia, it would be advisable to defer, if possible, embarking on so serious a matter as a loan. Moreover as we understood that the Russian Government were in accord with us in supporting the succession of the Valiahd it would be advisable to enable His Highness to start his reign with our common financial assistance should a loan be eventually necessary. I had prefaced my remarks, as I am sure you would have wished me to do, by expressing your appreciation of the loyal and friendly communication which His Excellency had made to me, as reported in my Despatch No. 575 of the 1st instant.⁽²⁾

M. Isvolsky took note of what I had said, and stated that he would telegraph to the Russian Minister to place himself in communication with Mr. Grant Duff. He added that he presumed that the British and Russian Representatives at Teheran were not themselves to decide the amount and mode of making the advance, but merely to procure the necessary information for the subsequent decision of their respective Governments. I said that this, I was sure, was also your view.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 378, Nos. 324-5.]⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 386-7, No. 336.]

IV.—THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN RAPPROCHEMENT, 1906-7.

No. 841.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 871/126.

Tel. (No. 272.)

Foreign Office, September 7, 1906.

D. 1:15 P.M.

You are authorised to open discussion with M. Isvolsky on Afghanistan on the basis of the instructions enclosed in Sir C. Hardinge's private letter to you of the 5th inst[ant].⁽¹⁾

You should also inform M. Isvolsky that if he desires to discuss Persia we shall be ready to receive any proposals put forward by him without waiting till the discussion on Afghanistan is concluded.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 388, No. 339, and note ⁽⁴⁾.]

No. 342.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.*F.O. 371/110.
Tel. (No. 274.)Foreign Office, September 7, 1906.
D. 5.45 P.M.Meshed-Seistan Telegraph. Mr. Grant Duff's tel[egram] No. 227.⁽¹⁾

You should take an early opportunity of pointing out to M. Isvolsky that if the news of the transfer of the Meshed-Seistan Tel[egram] line to Russian control is confirmed an important modification of the *status quo* which we have been so careful to maintain recently in Persia will have been created. We can hardly believe that such a step can have received his authorisation, but, if so, it will become necessary to consider what counter-concession we may be compelled to demand.

The Meshed-Seistan line runs so close to the frontier of Afghanistan that a change in its control will require some step on the part of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] to secure their interests, unless the matter can be adjusted by discussion with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t: in this connection I would draw your attention to suggestion 3 in Viceroy's telegram of September 3rd.⁽²⁾ which seems a possible solution.

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 385-6, No. 335.]

⁽²⁾ [This suggestion was to the effect that a proposal should be made to Persia for the transfer to Russia of the control of the whole line from Meshed to Tehran and to Great Britain of the control of the whole Meshed-Seistan line. It was communicated to M. Isvolski by Sir A. Nicolson, and is referred to, *infra*, p. 394, No. 349, and p. 399, No. 353.]

No. 343.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, September 8, 1906.

F.O. 371/110.
Tel. (No. 214.)D. 7.50 P.M.
R. 11.10 P.M.

Meshed-Seistan Telegraph.

Minister for Foreign Affairs spontaneously spoke to me this afternoon on above question, and read me a telegram from Russian Ambassador in London reporting a conversation with Sir C. Hardinge. His Excellency assured me this was the first he had heard of any such project, and that on inquiry in his Department he had been told that the Russian Minister on his own initiative had made some arrangement with the Persian authorities as to some interchange of telegraph apparatuses, but being a minor technical question had not been considered sufficiently important to submit to him. He asked me what I knew.

I said that my information was that a Concession had been given, or was on the point of being given, to the Russians to take complete control of the telegraph line, and this had naturally caused some surprise as being a disturbance of the *status quo*. I added that I was expecting a telegram on which I could speak to him on the subject, and that when I received it I would call on him.

His Excellency said he would never (?authorize) any disturbance of the *status quo*, and that he had never heard of so large a measure as I had indicated. By the time I called on him he would have more information on the subject, but that matter had come as a complete surprise to him.

I am sure he was sincere.

No. 344.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, September 14, 1906.*

F.O. 971/169.

Tel. (No. 220.)

D. 12:30 P.M.

R. 2:30 P.M.

Your telegram No. 290.⁽¹⁾

Joint advance to Persian Government.

I communicated to M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] yesterday evening the conditions on which H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would be prepared to join with Russian Government in meeting an advance.

His Excellency seemed to see no objection in principle to what I proposed but said he could not give a reply offhand. He told me that he had been informed that a delegate from the German Bank would arrive at Tehran at the end of this month and that probably Persian Government would inform him of our conditions. His Excellency seemed to fear that German delegate would offer an advance without any conditions at all which would be attractive to Persian Government, and he appeared anxious that our joint advance should consequently be arranged as soon as possible. His Excellency appeared also to doubt whether it would be prudent in these circumstances to attach conditions to our advance but he did not actually say so.

He inquired what guarantees Russian Government could secure: and I told him that he had the whole of northern and western Persia wherein to seek them. I did not allude to joint guarantee of customs in western ports of the Gulf as it seemed unnecessary for the moment. He asked if I would give him a memorandum as soon as possible as to our proposals and I said I would do so very confidentially.

The Emperor is on a yachting cruise till next Tuesday and M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] will have to submit the matter to H[is] M[ajesty's] consideration.

(¹) [Not reproduced. It refers to the conditions on which the loan might be granted. These are sufficiently indicated in Sir A. Nicolson's despatches of September 20, and September 24, *infra*, pp. 393-4, Nos. 348-9.]

No. 345.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, September 14, 1906.*

F.O. 971/169.

Tel. (No. 221.) Very confidential.

D. 12:35 P.M.

R. 4:30 P.M.

My immediately preceding telegram.⁽¹⁾

My impression is that Minister for Foreign Affairs will make no difficulty as to assenting to our conditions, as Germany is interested apparently in financially assisting Persia. (Group omitted: ? He would) be disposed to exercise pressure on Persian Government to apply to Russia and to us alone, and to refuse other aid.

He would like, I think, to see joint advance an accomplished fact before arrival of German Delegate, and thus be able to explain that Persians applied to both of us in the first instance, and that we had met her wishes; but I have doubts if matter were still an open question when German Delegate arrived that he would exercise active pressure on Persian Government to refuse any German offer.

(¹) [*v.* immediately preceding document.]

These are my first impressions, but I may have to alter them when I have further discussed the matter with Minister for Foreign Affairs. I shall see him again on Monday, by which time he will have had opportunities of consulting others, and I may find that his views have undergone a change.

No. 946.

Sir Edward Grey to Mr. Grant Duff.

F.O. 971/112.
Tel. (No. 142.)

Foreign Office, September 16, 1906.
D. 11:30 A.M.

Your telegram No. 244.⁽¹⁾
Refugees.

Russian Ambassador has communicated views of his Government on joint action proposed by you.

Telegram from them expresses gratification at implied desire for establishment of joint action in Persia but states that Russian Government consider it doubtful whether joint representations would have desired effect, and that a joint audience of Shah might be misinterpreted as implying interference in internal affairs of the country and might furnish those elements which are hostile to England and Russia with a weapon and argument which it would be easy to use against them.

Russian Government suggest that you should concert with the Russian Minister as to tendering friendly advice to the Persian Government with a view to securing the pacification of the country but that it should be given by each of you separately.

(Repeated to St. Petersburg, No. 919.)

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. It refers to the proposal for joint Anglo-Russian representations to the Shah in connection with his refusal to sign the proposed Regulation for the Assembly which had led certain of the leaders of the people's party to take refuge in the British Legation. M. Hartwig had said he would refer to St. Petersburg for instructions.]

No. 947.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/169.
Tel. (No. 225.) Secret and Confidential.

St. Petersburg, September 17, 1906.
D. 3:20 P.M.
R. 5:45 P.M.

My immediately preceding telegram.⁽¹⁾

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me his personal views were in favour of line which I had submitted, viz., from Birjand to Bunder Abbas, but that he must consult the Emperor and his colleagues. He anticipated some objections, but would combat them. He said that we were opening up the whole question of Persia, as to which he did not complain. On the contrary, he considered that we should delimitate our respective spheres of influence as soon as possible, but not associate them with a simple advance or even (?) a serious loan.

⁽¹⁾ [Tel. No. 224 from Sir A. Nicolson of September 17, 1906, states that M. Isvolski was of opinion that the question of the spheres of influence in Persia should be connected with the Anglo-Russian loan, but not with the preliminary joint advance to be made to the Persian Government. The substance of the rest of the telegram is contained in Sir A. Nicolson's No. 636, v. immediately succeeding document.]

He hoped to be able to give me the opinions of the Emperor and his colleagues in a day or two, and in the meantime he begged me not to telegraph officially on the subject.

He hinted that in Russian sphere of influence access to some part of Gulf would be necessary. I on my part hinted that I did not think this would present an insuperable difficulty.

MINUTE.

If we take the Birjand-Bunder Abbas triangle as our sphere of influence we must not abandon the whole of the rest of Persia to the Russian sphere. There will have to be a sphere open to general or common interests.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 348.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/169.

(No. 636.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 20, 1906.

R. October 1, 1906.

At his weekly reception yesterday, M. Isvolsky told me that he had no further statements to make to me in regard to advances, loans, and spheres of influence in Persia, as the Emperor had postponed his return to Peterhof from his cruise, and he could add nothing to what he had already said until he had consulted with His Majesty. His Excellency added that he maintained his opinion that a delimitation of spheres of influence was the only method of solving the Persian question so far as Russia and England were concerned; and he intended to urge this solution on the Emperor and those of his colleagues who were interested in these matters. He asked me if I had telegraphed to you as to the advance and explained the matter as he had suggested. I replied in the affirmative, and said that I had laid before you his desire that (1) the Imperial and Russian Banks should permit a postponement of the repayment of the sums due to them by the Persian Government. (2) that we should content ourselves, as regards our share of the advance, with a lien on the Customs revenues in the south of Persia and the Persian Gulf, and (3) that we should make our part of the advance at once, the Russian Government, for certain reasons, being desirous of postponing the advance of their moiety.

His Excellency said that this was quite correct, and enquired if I had received any reply. I told him that there had been hardly time for me to do so, but that I had no doubt that I should receive one very shortly.

M. Isvolsky remarked that it was a fact that the Germans had received permission to establish a bank at Teheran, and that he believed that the German delegate would arrive shortly in the Persian capital.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 349.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/169.

(No. 647.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 24, 1906.

R. October 1, 1906.

M. Isvolsky informed me yesterday that he had spoken with the Minister of Finance with respect to the sphere of interest which we required to the eastward of the line from Birjand to Bunder Abbas, and that His Excellency was in agreement with

him that our proposal was a perfectly acceptable one. He wished me to understand that he was speaking to me unofficially, and that what he expressed was merely the personal views of the Minister of Finance and himself. Both he and his colleague were of opinion that the main object of any arrangement to [sic] which the two Governments might arrive was to avoid any possibility of future collisions, and that in tracing spheres of influence this object should be kept in view. The sphere of influence which he was desirous to see adopted by the Russian Government would consequently be in the north of Persia, removed at some distance from the British sphere, and leaving the whole of the rest of Persia open to general enterprize. With this view the Minister of Finance quite agreed, so that there were two of them in the Cabinet ready to support what he considered to be a fair and reasonable arrangement. At the same time he must warn me that the General Staff might have different views, and that it might be considered that the proposed British sphere of interest might be not only of commercial but also of political and strategical importance. He further wished to tell me frankly that it was probable that when the spheres had been finally allotted, the Russian Government might find it desirable to construct railways in their zone, and for that purpose they would have to apply for neutral foreign capital. The recent war and the construction of the Siberian Railway had greatly diminished the funds which were available in Russia for such undertakings. They would seek for such capital in Belgium or Holland, but not in France; as they wished to apply to countries who were absolutely neutral in Persian affairs.

I thanked M. Isvolsky for the information which he had given me, and said that I trusted that he and the Minister of Finance would be able to overcome any objections which might be raised to the respective spheres of interest which he had indicated. It might be perfectly true that our proposed sphere was of political and strategical importance, but it should be remembered that the Russian sphere, as indicated by him, had also the same characteristics, and I must tell him with equal frankness that my Government considered that it was of primordial importance that our sphere of interest should be such as I had stated.

I added that it seemed to me that the discussions over these points would take some little time, but that I desired to see them terminated without undue delay. In the meantime I thought that it was desirable that we should arrange as to the two telegraph lines from Teheran to Meshed and from Meshed to Seistan. I had recently made him a very fair offer of an exchange, and information which had subsequently reached me rendered it, to my mind, advisable that we should deal with this question apart from the general arrangement. M. Isvolsky said that he really thought that the question of the two telegraph lines could be treated much more conveniently and naturally in connection with the whole arrangement, and that they were not such important matters, or of such urgency, as to demand separate and immediate consideration. He said, further, that there was also the question of Afghanistan to be considered, which stood in close relations with that of Persia. I said that I was well aware of this, and that I had received instructions to speak to him on this subject when the proper moment arrived.

M. Isvolsky said that the Emperor would probably not return to Peterhof till towards the end of this week; and that he must speak with His Majesty fully on the questions which he had mentioned to me.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

*Sir Edward Grey to King Edward.*Private.⁽¹⁾*Fallodon, September 24, 1906.*

Sir Edward Grey presents his humble duty to the King, and has had the honour to receive Your Majesty's telegram of the 22nd through Colonel Davidson.

It does not seem that the Russian Government is likely to make any definitive proposals respecting the Persian Gulf, and Sir Arthur Nicolson was originally instructed to refer home before committing H[is] M[ajesty's] Government to anything definitive on this point. Though, therefore, Sir Edward Grey is personally of opinion that access in some form to the inside of the Persian Gulf must eventually be a part of any agreement with Russia respecting Persia, the question of how this should be arranged is likely to remain in abeyance for the present.

On the other hand, it does seem to Sir Edward Grey to be urgent, in view of the present unrest in Persia, that there should be some understanding with Russia on the subject of Seistan and the part of Persia east of the line from Birgand to Bunder Abbas. The trouble, which has already arisen and about which the Indian Government has shown much concern, with regard to the Meshed-Seistan telegraph, is an instance of this.⁽²⁾ It can be avoided only in two ways:—1. By something equivalent to an occupation or Protectorate of Seistan and the south of Persia, or 2. By diplomatic arrangement. Of these alternatives the former would entail heavy expense and the constant burden of defending a new land frontier, and the second appears to Sir Edward Grey to be preferable. But in return for a diplomatic arrangement guaranteeing to us freedom from interference within this Seistan triangle, it would be necessary to give Russia an equal guarantee as regards some part of the North and West of Persia: and eventually, as part of any lasting arrangement, Russia must in some form share at any rate in commercial access to the Persian Gulf. If the mouth of the Gulf is retained in the British sphere of interest, such an arrangement could hardly be regarded as a serious menace to the security of India by sea, and meanwhile if Russia ceased to push her influence by telegraphs, roads, and other means in the Seistan triangle the security of India from any menace on land would be complete.

Sir Edward Grey proposes, therefore, if negotiations proceed, to ask from the Russian Government an agreement on their part to withdraw all influence whatever from the Seistan triangle as defined by the line from Birgand to Bunder Abbas, and to agree in return to recognize a similar sphere of interest for Russia in the North and West part of Persia, reserving the centre as common ground for commercial enterprise. If Russia raises the question of access to the Persian Gulf, Sir Edward Grey considers that this should not be negatived in principle, but become the subject of discussion.

The desire of the Indian Government, as contained in the telegram from the Viceroy of India, is to secure for ourselves a line from North of Birgand to Khanikin. Such a line could not, Sir Edward Grey feels sure, be obtained by diplomacy, and if it were to be adopted as the object of British policy, it would have to be secured by independent action and eventually by occupation of the whole of Southern Persia, a very serious addition to Imperial responsibilities.

(1) [Grey MSS., Vol. 64.]

(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 385-6, No. 335.]

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Lascelles.

F.O. 371/114.

(No. 265.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, September 25, 1906.

The German Chargé d'Affaires called on the 18th instant, and drew attention to a statement in the "Times" to the effect that a German Bank is to be established in Tehran. He said that, in order to avoid the possibility of any misunderstanding, he had been instructed to state the following facts:—

The Persian Government had recently offered a concession for a German bank in Tehran, and although nothing had so far been decided it was proposed to accept this concession, since German merchants wished to have such a Bank through which they could transact their commercial business. M. Tchirsky however, wished it to be understood that the acceptance of this suggestion indicated no change in German policy as regards Persia, where Germany had no political interests and only wished to develop her trade.

Sir C. Hardinge, who in my absence received Baron Stumm, asked if the concession was for a State Bank and said that if this were so it would be an infringement of the charter of the Bank of Persia, which had the monopoly of Government business and in which British capital was largely interested. He replied that he believed it to be a purely commercial bank like any ordinary English or foreign bank in London.

Sir C. Hardinge informed Baron Stumm that at Cronberg, M. Tchirsky had repeated to him more than once that Germany had no political interests whatever in Persia, her interests being purely commercial, and that he took note of the repetition of this statement, which he would not fail to report to me.

Sir C. Hardinge then said that a report had been current to the effect that German financiers were offering a loan to Persia and asked if this were so.⁽¹⁾ Baron Stumm replied that he had heard nothing of such a report and did not believe it to be true. Sir C. Hardinge added that the Persian Government had applied to us and to the Russians for a loan, and that the question of each country offering to advance a small sum was under consideration, but that if a German loan should be also in prospect there would necessarily be a conflict on the subject of the security to be offered, since the Customs receipts were the only security worth having in Persia, and the Northern Customs had already been hypothecated as security for a Russian loan and the Southern Customs for an English loan. Baron Stumm repeated his assertion that he had heard nothing of this rumour and disbelieved it.⁽²⁾

[I am, &c.

E. GREY.]

⁽¹⁾ [*cp. supra*, p. 382, No. 329, and p. 391, No. 345.]

⁽²⁾ [*cp. infra*, p. 401, No. 356.]

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/169.

(No. 662.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. September 29, 1906.

Sir,

R. October 15, 1906.

I called on M. Isvolsky this morning, and enquired of him, in the first place, whether he could give me a reply to the proposal which I had made that all details as to the mode in which the proceeds of the first moiety of the advance to the Persian Government should be applied,⁽¹⁾ should be settled by the two Representatives

⁽¹⁾ [*cp. supra*, p. 393, No. 348.]

at Teheran, His Excellency said that he was consulting with the Minister of Finance on the subject, and that he would let me have a reply very shortly.

I then said that I wished to inform him that His Majesty's Government considered that it was desirable that the Russian Government should recognize at once a line from Birjand to Bunder Abbas as the western limit of a British sphere of influence. I pointed out that in co-operating with Russia in a joint advance to Persia, we desired to obtain a general settlement of the relations between Russia and Great Britain in that country, and that we should much prefer if the acceptance of our line should be adopted as a starting-point for common action.

M. Isvolsky said that he must repeat to me what he had stated on a former occasion that the question of spheres of influence should, in his opinion, not be associated with that of a simple advance. He dwelt at some length on the importance of spheres of influence, and the grave questions to which they gave rise, and that they were not matters which could be decided off-hand. He wished to understand clearly what I had said, and so he would ask me the direct question whether my Government wished to make their cooperation with Russia in an advance to the Persian Government conditional on the acceptance of the line from Birjand to Bunder Abbas. I replied that I would tell him frankly that my Government did formulate that condition, in any case with respect to the second moiety of the advance. His Excellency observed that in these circumstances he must explain to me fully and frankly how matters stood.

He had come to me, I would remember, as soon as he had received news from Teheran that the Persian Government were in urgent need of funds, and had given me full particulars as to the requests which had been made to the Russian Legation. He had done so in a loyal desire to act in harmony with the spirit of the tacit agreement which had been made between Count Lamsdorff and Sir C. Spring Rice,⁽²⁾ and also with the view of taking the first step towards common action in Persia which, he trusted, would lead later to a mutual agreement. It was then decided that the advance or at any rate, a portion of the advance, should be made conjointly. I had later communicated to him the desire of my Government to obtain as part of the guarantees for their portion of the advance a certain sphere to be under exclusive British influence. He had, at the same time, expressed to me his objections to associating so large a question as spheres of influence with so relatively small a matter as an advance.⁽³⁾ He had told me frankly his own personal views as to the line in question, which were of a favourable nature, but he had requested me to take them as simply his own personal views and not those of the Russian Government. He had hoped that the above considerations which I had doubtless communicated to my Government, would have shown that it was desirable not to make the larger question dependent on the lesser. I had, however, returned to the charge, and if my Government still maintained their standpoint the treatment of the negotiations would be rendered exceedingly difficult. He wished to be perfectly frank and loyal with me and he would speak without reserve. The question of spheres of influence in Persia was not a matter to be settled off-hand at twenty-four hours notice. It was an extremely delicate question requiring much thought and consideration. The sphere I had mentioned was a most important one, involving great political and strategical considerations, and though he was personally in favour of it, he would have to fight hard to procure its acceptance by others. That was one point to be taken into consideration. There were other points also which could not be left out of account.

We were engaged in negotiations of a very far reaching character, involving complex questions interdependent and connected with one another. They treated of matters which had engaged both countries for many years, and which had on more than one occasion brought the two countries into difficult crises. We both

⁽²⁾ [*cp. supra*, pp. 378-9, No. 326, and *encl.*]

⁽³⁾ [*cp. supra*, p. 392, No. 347, *note.*]

desired, if possible, to lay down the bases of an arrangement which would preclude all danger in the future of possible collisions and rivalry; and we also both wished to settle our mutual relations in regard to Thibet, Afghanistan and Persia, in such a manner, as would enable us to live in mutual amity and peace. I had explained to him at the outset of the negotiations that I did not wish for three separate conventions, but for one convention covering all the three great questions, and in fact that we both should follow the same procedure as had been adopted in the negotiations leading to the Anglo-French agreement. He thought that this was a good method of procedure, as one country could make concessions on one question, and the other country yield a little on another. This was in the proper spirit of a negotiation. But His Majesty's Government now wished apparently to settle one part, and an important part, of one question before an agreement had been reached on other questions, and the reason which was given for this procedure was based on what he could but consider insufficient grounds viz., a relatively small advance of a few million francs to Persia.

He sincerely trusted that the negotiations would not be "rushed," and that he should be allowed time to clear away the obstacles which lay in the path of a successful issue. If His Majesty's Government continued to insist on the condition which I had mentioned as to the second moiety of the advance, the Russian Government would have, if the exigencies of the Persian Treasury required it, to make that portion of the advance out of their own resources. It might be inconvenient, but they would be able to find the £200,000. He trusted that I would lay all these considerations before you, and see if you would not be disposed to reconsider your decision.

I told M. Isvolsky that of course I would faithfully repeat to you all that he had said. At the same time I would wish to point out to him that the sphere which I had been authorized to propose might be strategically important, but only to us from a defensive point of view. Russia would probably, as I had understood him, seek for a similar zone somewhere in the north, which also would possibly have strategical importance. But our views, as his, were to make for peace and so to arrange matters as would separate and remove all chances of collision. I understood that our respective zones were not to be contiguous; it was better to my mind that they should not be; and I thought that a recognition of our line would not have all the consequences which he had foreshadowed. Still I said that I had perfect confidence in his loyalty, and I did not wish to undervalue the considerations he had put forth. Although I considered and I did not doubt that I reflected your opinion, that the treatment of the three large questions, Thibet, Afghanistan and Persia, must be taken as a whole, it would be necessary to arrive at a clear understanding on each question before drawing up the final convention. We had practically done so on Thibet, and we could equally do so as to Persia. I did not doubt that his task would be a difficult one, but at the same time protracted delay was undesirable as third parties had, as he said, watchful eyes, and might intervene.

I had intercalated in our conversation the question of the Meshed-Seistan line, but for sake of lucidity I reserve this for another despatch.

My own impression is that M. Isvolsky is perfectly sincere, and that he in no wise is raising unnecessary or imaginary difficulties. I am afraid that if we continue to insist on a preliminary and immediate recognition of the Birjand-Bunder-Abbas line, we may frighten him off the whole question. Underlying much of what he said to me is I think, a suspicion that we may be trying to take advantage of the financial and internal difficulties of Russia to force her hand. It is for the ultimate success of our negotiations desirable to remove this suspicion, and, if I may venture to say so, I think it would be prudent to take the advance to Persia as a first step towards joint action, without insisting on other conditions which M. Isvolsky may at present feel it impossible to accord.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTES.

The Russians always move slowly and do not like being "rushed."

C. H.

But they sometimes like "rushing" e.g. the Seistan telegraph. If M. Isvolsky would put that right I should have no fault to find with his attitude.

E. G.

No. 353.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/110.

(No. 663.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 29, 1906.

R. October 15, 1906.

I told M. Isvolsky this morning that I wished to speak to him seriously on a question, which, I feared, unless promptly settled might become a troublesome one. I alluded I said, to the Meshed-Seistan line⁽¹⁾; and I observed that since I had last spoken to him on the subject, further steps had been taken and that now the Seistan end of the line had been brought into the Russian office at Nasretabad which was a separate room, whence connection was led into the Persian office. This therefore gave control over that end of the line as well as over the terminal line at Meshed to the Russian authorities. This was a condition of affairs which was extremely unfortunate. I said that I had proposed to him a very fair and reasonable compromise, to be effected by an exchange of our supervision over the Teheran-Meshed line for the Russian control over the Meshed Seistan line. The Teheran-Meshed line might be of use to the Russian authorities, while the other line was of little value to them, and as matters at present stood, there would be constant causes for trouble and inconvenience. I was, therefore, instructed to repeat my above mentioned proposal and to express the hope that it would be immediately carried into effect, and before we discussed further the question of making a joint payment of the second moiety of the advance to the Persian Government.

M. Isvolsky repeated to me the arguments which he had used on the former occasion, and said that he would be prepared to study my proposal, but he feared that the transfer of the two lines would make a noise ("retentissement") throughout Persia, and awake the curiosity of other parties. Was it wise for us, he asked, to disclose prematurely to the watchful eyes of third parties any portion of our cards? Should we before we had advanced very far in our general negotiations afford to others an insight into the aims of our discussions? He thought we should be very careful in this respect. I said that I did not see why more "retentissement" should be caused by the step I had suggested than by the fact of our making a joint advance. His Excellency observed that the Persian Government might be alarmed at so striking an evidence of our cooperation, and I replied that I did not think that this would be a disadvantage. M. Isvolsky said that it might induce the Persian Government to turn to a third party; but with this view I did not agree, or attribute great importance to it. His Excellency said that Germany had no political interests in Persia, and was unable to make her presence felt there in the way that Russia and England could; and in these circumstances Persia might regard her as an disinterested friend to whom she could apply for advice and assistance. He did not wish to hasten this possible intimacy before our general arrangement was concluded. I maintained that it was of importance that all causes of friction between us should be removed, and I foresaw possibilities in the near future of trouble and annoyance if the Russian

(¹) [*cp. supra*, pp. 385-6, No. 335, and *note*.]

authorities retained their hold over the Seistan line. His Excellency said he would examine the question, though he confessed he did not see the urgent importance of it.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

Of course M. Isvolsky does not feel the urgency of it because it is the Indian Gov[ernmen]t and not his own that has been annoyed by the change.

The fact is that the military and some of the official party in Russia are opposed to the suggested agreement about Persia; on our side the Indian Gov[ernmen]t is equally opposed to it. But our country not being in a state of revolution and our Government being properly organized we can overrule the opposition on our side: M. Isvolsky cannot tackle the opposition on his; hence the difficulty of the situation.

E. G.

No. 354.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/169.

(No. 664.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 29, 1906.

R. October 15, 1906.

I mentioned to M. Isvolsky that I thought that it would be most desirable, and I was also repeating the opinion of my Government, that during our negotiations a truce should be declared in regard to the rivalry of our respective agents in the Persian provinces. I said that it was natural that those in the distant districts of Persia who had inherited the traditions of rivalry should continue the course which their predecessors had followed, but I trusted that he would issue instructions, which would lead his officials to lay down their arms.

M. Isvolsky said that he entirely agreed with the above views, and that he had already issued instructions to that effect, but that he would repeat them in a positive form. He added that he had already removed from the Russian Legation an official whose influence he considered was injurious.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 355.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.⁽¹⁾

F.O. 371/169.

(No. 144.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 1, 1906.

The Persian Minister asked me to-day, by instruction from his Government, whether it was true that an Agreement had been come to between ourselves and the Russian Government on Asiatic Questions, and containing a clause respecting Persia.

I said that no such Agreement had been come to.

In reply to further questions as to whether such an Agreement was imminent or was under discussion, I said that owing to the present state of Persia we did discuss matters with the Russian Government concerning telegraphs, loans, and other emergencies. It was inevitable that we should do so, in order to prevent differences from arising between us. But we had not discussed anything which in any way would prejudice the independence or the integrity of Persia.

I am, &c.

EDWARD GREY.

⁽¹⁾ [Also to Sir A. Nicolson, No. 447, October 3, 1906.]

No. 356.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Lascelles.

F.O. 371/114.

(No. 271.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 2, 1906.

With reference to my despatch No. 265 of the 25th ult[imo],⁽¹⁾ I have to inform Y[our] E[xc]ellency that the German Chargé d'Affaires called on the 24th ult[imo] and, under instructions from his Gov[ernmen]t, informed Sir C. Hardinge, who in my absence received him, that owing to the lack of interest shown in the proposal by German financiers, it was not unlikely that the project of a German bank in Tehran would never be realised, but that in any case, if it should be realised, it would be a purely private bank, and in no sense a State bank.

With reference to Sir C. Hardinge's enquiry as to a rumoured German loan to Persia, he was instructed to say that the German Gov[ernmen]t had no knowledge of any such proposal being discussed in German private financial circles, and that they themselves would refrain from entering into any question of a loan to Persia.

Sir C. Hardinge took notes of Baron Stumm's statement, which he read to him, thanking him for the communication which he had been instructed to make.

I am, &c.

EDWARD GREY.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 396, No. 351.]

No. 357.

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

My dear Nicolson,

October 3, 1906.

I am not anxious to hurry matters about Persia now. We have shown enough of our hand to convince the Russians that a fair agreement with us is a practicable policy.

We may now wait for them to produce to us the proposals, which M. Isvolsky says he has prepared though he cannot disclose them yet. I am not inclined for a big joint loan to Persia after the present advance of £400,000; we cannot finance Persia for ever. And this advance to enable a new Shah to make a fair start might be a reasonable thing, but I do not like lending money to a country, which is going down-hill and getting deeper and deeper into debt. It means that some day we shall have to realize our securities by force and undertake new responsibilities. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,

E. GREY.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]⁽²⁾ [The remainder of this letter deals with other matters.]

No. 358.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 257.)

Sir,

*Tehran, D. October 7, 1906.**R. October 29, 1906.*

I have the honour to report that on the 3rd instant I called on the Ala-es-Saltaneh, the Minister for Foreign Affairs. His Highness, who, as you are aware, has been for 15 years Persian Minister in London, received me with great cordiality. I submit a brief résumé of a long conversation.

His Highness said that he was most unwilling to leave London and that he had only yielded to the pressure exercised on him by the Shah and the Grand Vizier. The appointment was not pleasing to the Russians : but he had pointed out that the Grand Vizier's son was Minister in St. Petersburg, and was regarded as a decided pro-Russian : so that his supposed English sympathies would, if they existed, be counteracted.

He expressed great anxiety as to the pourparlers said to be going on between England and Russia. For years England had been the natural and necessary friend of Persia. Was she going to abandon her ancient ally to her new friend? I reminded him of the explicit assurances made both by Lord Lansdowne and yourself,⁽¹⁾ to him personally, and asked him if, in view of these assurances, he could believe that England had changed her views as to the necessity of maintaining the integrity and independence of Persia.

He said he had himself no doubts : but there was undoubtedly a feeling of doubt in the air and especially in the Shah's mind. It was feared that England, in order to arrive at a friendly arrangement with Russia, might consent to a general surrender of her interest in Persia, or what would be even worse, would negotiate a partition of the empire, into so-called spheres of interest, which was a convenient term for a veiled protectorate. Was England contemplating a Persian agreement with Russia on the model of the Moroccan agreement with France? If so Persia would seek her salvation elsewhere than in the advice of England, and would throw herself on Europe. Or was she contemplating a division of Persia, on the model of the African settlements? In that case Persia would claim the right of a voice in deciding her own fate, and would appeal to the sympathies of the world at large.

Another matter which had deeply impressed the Shah was the apparent apathy of England and Russia in the matter of the Frontier agreement with Turkey. So extreme had now become the violence of the Turkish attitude that it was plain that the Persian Government would be obliged to have recourse to arbitration. He himself would prefer that of Sir Nicholas O'Connor : he thought, however, that some independent sovereign would be appealed to, and I understand from other quarters, that the sovereign in view is the Emperor William.

A third and most serious consideration was suggested by the joint loan of which he had recently been informed. Did it mean, as some said, that Russia had been obliged, owing to her financial necessities, to give up her former design (prosecuted up to the last moment, and defeated mainly owing to the opportune offer of certain English capitalists) of obtaining extortionate terms for a large advance, and had been compelled to have recourse to England? And had England submitted to the Russian conditions, and consented to join hands with the Russian Government in coercing the Persian Government? He reminded me of the great objection of the Amin-es-Sultan to Lord Salisbury's former proposal of a joint loan, on the ground that it would be the first step to a joint protectorate, and said that it could not be wondered at if the news had aroused the gravest apprehensions.

I reassured His Highness as well as I could, pointing out the unequivocal nature of your declarations, and my conviction that the first principle of English policy in Persia was the maintenance of her independence in the fullest sense of the word.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 377, No. 323.]

No. 359.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 258.)

Sir,

Tehran, D. October 7, 1906.

R. October 29, 1906.

I called on the 5th instant on the Russian Minister who is still in his country residence. He received me with the greatest cordiality.

We discussed the situation in general terms. As you are aware, when in Russia, he was an advocate of the agreement with England, mainly on European grounds. I did not gather from his conversation that his views had changed; but he has undoubtedly, whatever are his intentions, found the traditions of his office, and the sympathies of his subordinates a considerable obstacle to carrying out the policy of conciliation which is so much to be desired.

With regard to the joint loan he said he would immediately take the matter in hand. I am in consultation with Mr. Rabino of the Imperial Bank, and my colleague and I will draw up and submit a scheme for the reasonable control of expenditure, on the lines already agreed on. The necessities of the Government are such that there will not be much difficulty in proving to our satisfaction, that the money demanded is really required. I will bear in mind the necessity of an accurate definition of our guarantee, in view of the doubts which have arisen with regard to the Gulf Ports. I trust that no difficulty will arise in this connection: but if it does, I fear we shall have to insist on a satisfactory settlement.

Monsieur Hartwig spoke of the question of spheres of interest. He said that the great objection to this proposal was that if it came to be known to the Persians, it would infallibly throw them into the arms of Germany, while it would be an endless cause of difficulty between the Governments of England and Russia. The best course to take, in his opinion, was a specific Convention dealing with railways, telegraphs, &c. To this the Persian Government could not object, and it would leave no opening for disputes as to what was or was not an infraction of this shadowy expression "influence."

I told him that I had despatched the telegram, copy of which I enclose,⁽¹⁾ to His Majesty's Consular officers in Persia, recommending them to adopt a conciliatory attitude towards their Russian colleagues, and he said he would send similar instructions. The cordial co-operation between our Consular officers, was, he said, especially necessary at Tabriz, where the Valiahd's attitude was of so much importance.

We did not enter specifically into any of the questions now pending between our Governments in this country. We parted on the most friendly terms and with mutual assurances of the desire to facilitate the task of our Governments by the personal relations of ourselves and of our respective subordinates.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced.]

No. 360.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 264.)

Sir,

Tehran, D. October 11, 1906.

R. October 29, 1906.

It is, of course, too early for me to give any opinion on the general situation. I venture, however, to submit the following observations.

Whatever be the immediate practical effect of the new popular institution, there appears to be little doubt that it is the outward sign of a considerable change through

which Persia is passing. From all I hear I gather that the spirit of patriotism has come to life and may be come to stay. This is the natural result of the educational work of the Babis, the Pan-Islamic movement, and the feeling of personal dignity which has been revived in the Asiatic mind by the successes of Japan. Whatever may be the strength and practical value of the movement, I venture to submit that it should not be lost sight of.

From this point of view it would appear that in any negotiations with regard to this country which we carry on with Russia, we should put on record, as the first and principal point of our policy, our traditional desire to obtain, in a definite and final shape, the formal recognition of the principle of Persian integrity and independence, and the maintenance throughout Persia of equal opportunity for the commerce of all nations. I submit that our hands would be greatly strengthened in dealing with this Government should we be able to point to indisputable evidence that this was our first and foremost demand, in negotiating with Russia for the final settlement of our differences.

Should we desire to effect a settlement of those differences by a mutual agreement to restrict our diplomatic activities to certain respective portions of the Persian Empire, I submit that such an agreement should be of a specific and definite character, relative to the prosecution under English and Russian influence respectively of certain industrial enterprises, the definition of the measures against the infiltration of plague and other details of a commercial or administrative character, but that all proposals, liable to be misinterpreted as a demand for exclusive territorial control should be sedulously avoided.

I fear that an English proposal, of a territorial character, would be a valuable instrument in the hands of any one anxious to prove to the Persian people that the policy of Great Britain, which has so long and so ably striven to maintain the principle of Persian integrity and independence, had now changed: and that we were striving to buy off the hostility of Russia by surrendering to her exclusive control over the greater part of Persia, on condition that we were permitted to hold as our exclusive possession that small remaining portion which we considered necessary for the defence of our Indian possessions.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

No. 361.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Grey,

Tehran, October 12, 1906.

. . . . I have had many conversations with Mullahs Ministers and private individuals. I gather that it is generally believed that we encouraged the congress movement in order to dish the Russians and that we have been successful. Of course I have stated over and over again that we had no such intention—that the Persians owe their liberties to themselves and not to us—that if the popular party lean on one foreign nation the reactionaries will lean on another; and that Persian independence will inevitably suffer from the consequences of foreign interference. One prominent preacher appeared to understand the danger and I think I convinced him that the best course our Legation could follow was to abstain from all interference on condition, and on the understanding that Russia also would abstain. The general impression left by my remarks I gather to be a disappointment. People here cannot conceive of England as being anything else but opposed to Russia and

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 31.]

they believe that if we make an agreement with Russia about Persian affairs it will be of the nature of a bargain: England ceding part of Persia to Russia in exchange for another part: or England ceding the whole of Persia in exchange for a consideration elsewhere. They cannot conceive the two countries giving up their secular rivalry and agreeing to live together amicably. This is why I think it would be desirable to have it on record, to produce if necessary, that our first step in making the negotiations was to ask for a formal confirmation of the old assurances as to the independence and integrity of Persia.

I have instructed consuls to adopt a friendly attitude to their Russian colleagues and have given Hartwig a copy of the telegram. He tells me he has done the same. I regret to say that the accounts which reach me do not show any evidence of a change for the better and Hartwig's long silence about the loan is significant. The Persians very strongly object to a joint loan and so do the Russians. Grube, our chief enemy, is now in St. Petersburg and he always openly maintained that he was opposed to an understanding with us in Persia. He is clever and convincing and very probably has seen the Emperor. At least this is what I have been told here⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,
CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽²⁾ [The omitted parts of this long letter describe the general situation in Persia.]

No. 362.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Tehran, October 13, 1906.

F.O. 371/169.

Tel. (No. 282.)

D. 10.50 A.M.

R. 2.10 P.M.

In conversation with Russian Minister we agreed that it would be to the joint advantage of both countries here if some public statement were made to the effect that first object of our negotiations was to strengthen and confirm the principle of independence and integrity of Persia which we had both always advocated.

I have made communication to Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] in the sense of your telegram No. 172.⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ [This is the same in substance as despatch No. 144, *v. supra*, p. 400, No. 355.]

No. 363.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 694.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. October 15, 1906.

R. October 29, 1906.

The French Minister, M. Boutiron, enquired of me the day before yesterday whether my discussions with M. Isvolsky were making any progress. I told him, in confidence, that the two Governments would shortly make a small advance in common to relieve the most pressing necessities of the Persian Government and that M. Isvolsky and myself were still engaged in discussing the broad outlines of a future agreement. I did not go into any details with M. Boutiron, nor give him

any indication of the points which were at present under treatment, but I said that I anticipated that, later on, the military party would place considerable difficulties in the way of a satisfactory arrangement. I added that I was sure that M. Isvolsky would do his best to overcome any such difficulties, but that I was unaware whether his influence and position were sufficiently strong to enable him to meet with success. In any case, I expected that the negotiations would be protracted. . . .⁽¹⁾

M. Boutiron went on to say that M. Hartwig had been imbued with the old traditions prevalent at the Ministry here, and that his views on the Persian question were probably divergent from those held by his Chief, and that possibly with his greater knowledge of the details of the questions, he might exercise an influence on Monsieur Isvolsky which would hamper a smooth course of the negotiations. He asked me if I had observed any "German tendencies" on the part of M. Isvolsky. I replied that, hitherto, I had not, but it would be foolish to imagine that Germany would view with complete satisfaction the conclusion of a durable understanding between England and Russia.

M. Boutiron said that, before returning to St. Petersburg, M. Isvolsky would pay a visit to Paris, where he would see the President and Monsieur Bourgeois and that he would naturally make a halt at Berlin where probably he would have an audience of the Emperor, to whom he was a *persona gratissima*, and also see Prince Bülow. I remarked that it would be of interest to observe what impression these visits would leave on the mind of M. Isvolsky when he returned here.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

M. Hartwig's views on the Persian question are said to differ widely from those of M. Isvolsky. This may explain the divergent information we receive from St. Petersburg and Teheran.

E. G[ORST].

C. H.

E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [The omitted paragraph refers further to the French Minister at Tehran, but gives no new information.]

No. 364.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 701.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. October 19, 1906.

R. October 29, 1906.

I enquired of M. Goubastoff this afternoon whether he had received from the Russian Minister at Teheran any suggestion that some statement should be published to the effect that the object of our negotiations with regard to Persia was chiefly to strengthen the independence and integrity of that country. His Excellency replied that he had received no information in regard to such a proposal, and seemed a little puzzled as to the drift of my enquiry. I explained to him what had been reported by Sir C. Spring Rice as the result of a conversation which he had held with M. Hartwig on the subject,⁽¹⁾ and I thought that the latter might have mentioned the matter to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

I said that my Government had made no comments on the communication from His Majesty's Minister, so that I was unaware what were your views, but apart from local considerations to which undoubtedly weight should be given, it seemed

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 405, No. 362.]

to me as a matter of personal opinion, that the less public reference that was made to our negotiations the better it would be. I understood that both His Majesty's Government and the Russian Government had given assurances in the sense desired to the Persian Government, and I thought that there the matter might be allowed to rest. At the present stage of our negotiations it was, to my mind, undesirable to draw public attention to them; but I should be glad to hear his views on the question.

M. Goubastoff said that he agreed with me that as little publicity as possible should be given to our negotiations, though if the Persian Government desired to reassure the public they might be permitted to make the statement, in the manner they considered to be the most appropriate.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 365.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Tehran, October 23, 1906.

F.O. 371/170.
Tel. (No. 300.)

D. 3 P.M.
R. 7.45 P.M.

Your telegram No. 187 and Sir A. Nicolson's No. 270.⁽¹⁾

I have shown translation of your despatch No. 144⁽²⁾ to Minister for Foreign Affairs, who said he would at once show it to Shah, who had been assured by the Russian Legation that Russia was defending the principle of Persian integrity against proposals of His Majesty's Government. This probably refers to our proposal for a "sphere of influence."

The Shah's surroundings are all anti-English, and a frank and open statement is the best corrective.

⁽¹⁾ [Tel. No. 270 from Sir A. Nicolson of October 19, 1906, reports a conversation with the Russian Assistant Minister for Foreign Affairs with reference to the desirability of a public statement being made in Persia as to the Anglo-Russian negotiations. Sir A. Nicolson had said he thought at that stage "the less said publicly, the better." In Tel. No. 412 to Sir A. Nicolson (repeated as No. 187 to Sir C. Spring-Rice) Sir E. Grey approved the language, adding "but as so much has appeared in the Press I shall be asked questions in Parliament and shall have to refer to the integrity of Persia as being one object of the joint advance."]

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 400, No. 355.]

No. 366.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/170.
Tel. (No. 431.)

Foreign Office, October 31, 1906.
D. 4.5 P.M.

It is desirable that M. Isvolsky should feel that we expect to make progress with Persian negotiations after his return from Berlin. It will be well to make our line include Kerman if possible. It would be better to avoid use of the term spheres of influence. The first point should be agreement between ourselves and Russia that neither of us will seek or maintain influence in the districts, which border upon the territory of the other. These districts we will define with each other. We can then get from the Persian Gov[ernmen]t an assurance not to allow either district to be disturbed by admitting another Power to interests in it.

No. 367.

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

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 735.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. November 4, 1906.

R. November 12, 1906.

I called on M. Isvolsky yesterday afternoon, and stated to him that now that he had returned to St. Petersburg I trusted that our negotiations would proceed with reasonable despatch. I told His Excellency that the details of an immediate advance of money to the Persian Government were practically settled, and that we were now at liberty to deal with the wider question of our future relations in Persia. During his absence from St. Petersburg I had been in communication with you on the subject, and that you were of opinion that progress should be made in the discussions. It seemed to me that there were no serious obstacles in the way of a fairly speedy settlement, and, indeed, owing to certain indiscretions which had given the public press occasion to comment on our negotiations it was desirable that we should come to terms with as little delay as possible.

M. Isvolsky replied that he need not repeat to me that he was sincerely desirous of arriving at a final arrangement, but that he must be allowed time to overcome the opposition which existed in certain quarters not perhaps so much against the principle of a friendly understanding with Great Britain, as against the basis on which we proposed to found an agreement. He was personally quite in accord with our views (*je suis parfaitement dans votre ordre d'idées*), but the proposal to delimit spheres of influence was by several important authorities regarded with much hesitation and doubt. For instance the general staff, with whom he had not yet discussed the matter seriously, were, he gathered, indisposed to abandon Scistan absolutely to our influence and control. To the Military mind those districts were of great strategical importance, and might in the future be of great value. He would then have to be armed with strong arguments to overcome their opposition, and to remove their objections, and he would have to be able to prove to the military Authorities that compensatory advantages would be acquired elsewhere. Then again there was a great mass of public opinion to be converted and be brought over to the new direction which would be given to Russian Foreign Policy. In view of these considerations it was evident that some time must elapse before we could approach the end of our negotiations.

I told M. Isvolsky that the military mind only saw one side of the question, and that opposition to an arrangement from military quarters was to be expected perhaps not exclusively in Russia. He should not imagine that there was a consensus of opinion among all the Authorities who had been consulted on our side; but the responsible directors of the negotiations did not give undue weight to the Military point of view.

I intend to go into this portion of the question more fully on another occasion, as I wished yesterday to lead the conversation on to other grounds. In connection with the Military point of view, I would beg leave to call your attention to the enclosed letter from Colonel Napier whom I had desired to sound the Chief of the General Staff on the subject of an Anglo-Russian understanding.

I further told M. Isvolsky that so far as I was able to ascertain, public opinion in Russia was, generally speaking, in favour of an arrangement with Great Britain, and journals so wide apart in politics as the "*Novoe Vremya*" and the "*Okó*" were singing pœans in praise of an agreement.

His Excellency said that it was possible that a portion of the press were well disposed, but he cited one or two papers who were opposed to an abandonment of the secular policy of Russia. There was, he added, another point which somewhat perplexed him. He presumed that our Convention, when signed, would be published, and he was puzzled how a preamble would be composed which would satisfy the

(¹) [Summarized in Tel. No. 287 of November 8, 1906.]

Persian Government and other Countries that we were not proceeding to a division of Persia, and were not departing from the principle of the "open door."

I observed to M. Isvolsky that I did not consider that the drafting of a suitable preamble would be a matter of great difficulty. We could place at the beginning a phrase testifying our mutual desire to maintain the integrity and independence of Persia, and we could then proceed to mention that in view of our respective geographical frontiers marching with those of Persia, it was desirable, in the interests of peace and good order, that neither Great Britain nor Russia should seek or maintain influence in the districts which bordered on the frontier of the other. We could define those districts in the course of our negotiations. We had indeed already specified the districts which we considered essential to the security of our frontiers, and I understood from him that what I might term the Russian district would lie in the North of Persia. The two districts would, I trusted, not be contiguous, but that there would be an intervening space between them. To my mind that was a most desirable condition. We could then obtain from the Persian Government an engagement not to allow either district to be disturbed by admitting another Power to interests in it. No Power could possibly take exception to such an arrangement, as our rights to secure our frontiers from disturbances or interference were incontestable. It would, I said, be well not to mention "spheres of influence or interest." I had not, I added, a ready drawn formula to submit to him, but what I mentioned was the general outline, and I knew that it was in accordance with your views.

M. Isvolsky remarked that as we wished to exclude the grant of concessions to other Powers in our districts, some of the latter, Germany for instance, might contend that we were not upholding the principle of the "open door."

I replied that I could not agree with that view. It was quite true that we should not admit that other Powers should seek for concessions in our district, and he knew well that concessions for railways and other enterprises in countries such as Persia carried more with them than appeared on the surface. But I did not think that it was desired to shut the door to legitimate commerce, and in any case throughout the whole of the rest of Persia the door would be sufficiently wide open to any concessions and trade which other Powers might wish to promote. He had mentioned Germany; was I to understand that that Power had raised any objections to our arriving at an understanding between ourselves?

M. Isvolsky said that he had carefully abstained from allowing Germany to have any insight into the nature of our negotiations, as he considered that these were matters which concerned us alone. Although Germany had shown no disposition to place spokes in our wheel (*de mettre des bâtons dans nos roues*), it was evident that she had no interest in seeing us arrive at an understanding (*elle n'avait pas d'intérêt de nous voir arriver à une entente*). I would naturally recollect what had occurred in the matter of the Anglo-French Agreement in respect of Morocco, and the difficulties in which M. Delcassé had been placed by not having previously or opportunely acquainted the German Government with what had been arranged. Moreover, I had not made it clear to him how the Persian Government would be induced to view with complacency the arrangement which I had sketched. Supposing they were to regard it as a partition, in a disguised form, of their country, and were to turn to Germany to intervene in the matter? I was not to suppose from these observations that he was raising unnecessarily imaginary difficulties to an arrangement. He was wholly and sincerely in favour of our coming to an understanding, but he wished to lay before me the different aspects of the case, especially as it would present itself to other parties, and to show me that the question was not one which could be solved easily or speedily.

I did not think it prudent at our first meeting after his return to go more fully into the attitude and views of Germany, as he may still be under the influence of his recent visit to Berlin, and disinclined to be probed on the matter. I will obtain another opportunity before this messenger leaves of questioning him more closely on the subject, and I did not desire to give him the impression that I was

either anxious or distrustful as to what had passed at his interview at the German Capital.

Before leaving the question of Persia I put to him the direct question as to whether the Emperor was still in favour of an understanding with Great Britain, M. Isvolsky replied that undoubtedly His Majesty was still of the same mind, but that when the question, for instance, of a delimitation of our respective spheres in Persia came before His Majesty, he would naturally consult with his military advisers as well as with the Minister for Foreign Affairs. M. Isvolsky added that he wished to be in such a position on that occasion as to be able to show His Majesty that the weight of argument did not lie on the side of the military.

The impressions which my conversation with M. Isvolsky left on my mind are that, though personally desirous of coming to an arrangement, he is disposed to proceed with extreme and deliberate caution, and to make such slow progress as would unduly prolong the negotiations and permit the introduction of elements which might be of a disturbing character. It will, I think, be necessary to stimulate M. Isvolsky to proceed more rapidly, and I would suggest that it would be of advantage if I could be furnished with the draft of an article which would serve as a preamble to our agreement in regard to Persia, and which would be drawn on the lines which I hastily sketched to M. Isvolsky. I think that if he were placed in possession of such a draft some of his hesitations would be removed, and he would see that our proposals were not so difficult to frame as he at present appears to imagine. We could in this article or articles lay down our mutual desire not to disturb the political status of Persia, and also specify the districts in which, in view of the propinquity to the Afghan and Belooch frontiers, we are anxious to maintain peace and order and in which we could not admit the interference of other Powers. We should be obliged to leave in blank the districts in which Russia has a similar interest, but this lacuna would afford a good reason for urging the Russian Government to supply the omissions. I also believe that M. Isvolsky, had he this document in hand, would be in a better position to discuss matters with the Emperor and with his colleagues.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 367.

Lieutenant-Colonel Napier to Sir A. Nicolson.

Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, November 3, 1906.

I have the honour to report that, in accordance with Your Excellency's desire that I should endeavour to ascertain what are the views of the Military Party on the question of an agreement about Persia, I took the opportunity yesterday, when paying my respects to General Palitzin on my return to duty after a prolonged absence, of sounding him on the subject.

General Palitzin, Chief of the General Staff, is at present, with exception of the Grand Duke Nicolas, the most influential officer at Head-Quarters; he received me with great cordiality, and conversed on a variety of topics, so that I was able to introduce the subject of Persia without raising any suspicion of that being the special object of my visit.

General Palitzin expressed himself, I believe sincerely, in favour of friendship with England, and declared that all through Asia we had a great many interests in common, but that the mutual distrust and misunderstandings which had lasted so long could not be put aside in a moment, and made an agreement very difficult. As regards Persia, he did not believe in, and was opposed to, spheres of influence. In his opinion it was not a practical policy. The trade of Persia was a matter of real importance, and it was impossible to set limits to its operations which were governed by the laws of supply and demand, geographical considerations, means of transport, &c., which enabled one or other country to push its trade in various directions at the expense of its rivals. Of course it was possible to divide up Persia,

but if Russia and England each took spheres of influence, Germany and other countries would also demand their share, and then we should have to conquer Persia.

General Palitzin did not look with favour on the prospect of the Bagdad railway with a branch to Khanikin, but thought the prospect was remote, and meanwhile he was not an advocate for prolonging the Russian railway from Erivan towards Terehan. He avoided giving any strategical reasons for his objection to spheres of influence, and I could not press him on that point without putting forward the actual proposals of our Government and betraying my purpose, which Your Excellency wished me to avoid.

I have, &c.

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

MINUTE.

If the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, at the instigation of the Military party, refuse to recognise our proposed sphere of influence, the obvious conclusion is they have aggressive intentions against India for which they want Seistan as a base. In that case further negotiations would be useless.

In the preamble to be d[ra]fted it might be distinctly stated that the door will be open in the spheres of influence to the trade of all countries and the concessions to be reserved might be limited to roads, railways, telegraphs, harbours and irrigation.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 368.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 798.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. November 5, 1906.

Sir,

R. November 12, 1906.

I called on the German Ambassador to-day, who conversed with me as to the visit of M. Isvolsky to Berlin, where the latter had created a most favourable impression, and had been, he thought, gratified by the cordial reception which had been accorded to him. M. de Schoen said that M. Isvolsky had appeared anxious to ascertain the views of the German Government in regard to the negotiations between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia in respect to Persia, and he trusted that any uneasiness which His Excellency might have felt with regard to the attitude of Germany had been dispelled.

Germany, M. de Schoen continued, had no desire to place any obstacles in the way of an understanding between Great Britain and Russia, and had no wish to secure any concessions for herself in Persia either as to banks or railways. All that she desired was that the principle of the open door should be upheld as regards trade. No German Bank appeared to be desirous of establishing an institution in Persia, where the Imperial Bank already occupied the ground. There had been some absurd talk in the papers of Germany establishing schools, and even a University at Teheran. Nothing could be farther from the fact; all that had been done was to open a German school for little German girls. He understood from M. Isvolsky that our negotiations were likely to last for some time, as there was considerable opposition to be overcome in certain quarters in Russia, and that after having terminated our discussions as to Persia, we should then deal with Afghanistan and Thibet in regard to which he presumed there would be no difficulty.

I told M. de Schoen that our negotiations in regard to Persia had for their main object the removal of all possible causes of friction between the two countries; that the principle of the open door was a cherished one in my country; and that it was possible that our negotiations would proceed slowly as it would take time to create a fresh departure from the traditional policy which had hitherto been pursued, and

which was only of advantage to the politicians of Persia who delighted in playing one country off against the other.

M. de Schoen voluntarily touched the subject of our negotiations, and I will communicate to M. Isvolsky the substance of our conversation at my next interview with him. I reported the outline of the above conversation in my telegram No. 289 of to-day's date.⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced as its tenour is indicated.]

No. 969.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/170.

(No. 745.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. November 7, 1906.

R. November 12, 1906.

I took an opportunity at the weekly reception of M. Isvolsky to-day to give him the substance of the remarks which the German Ambassador made to me a day or two ago on the subject of the attitude of the German Government towards the negotiations between Russia and Great Britain in regard to Persia, and which I had the honour to report to you in my despatch No. 798 Confidential of the 5th instant.⁽¹⁾

M. Isvolsky said he was gratified to receive the information which I had given him, and was pleased with the reply which I had made to my German Colleague, as it was conceived in the sense of the language which he had himself held at Berlin.*

M. Isvolsky said that he had, he confessed, always been a little uneasy as to the attitude of Germany, and was afraid that she would suddenly appear as a *Deus ex machina*, and place obstructions at Teheran in the way of our negotiations. He had, therefore, determined to broach the subject himself at Berlin, and ascertain directly what views were held by the German Government. He had told Prince Bülow that the negotiations which he was conducting in St. Petersburg were not conceived in any hostile sense towards Germany, but had simply for object the removal of all causes of friction between the two Countries in Central Asia, and the establishment of more amicable relations between Great Britain and Russia. He had carefully abstained, and he particularly begged me to inform you of this, from giving Prince Bülow any insight into the nature of our negotiations or into the tenour of the proposals which we had respectively made to each other. It would be undignified on our part to acquaint a third Power with the details of our discussions, and he should certainly decline either to take any one into our confidence, or to submit any conclusions to [sic] which we might arrive to the approval of another party. Our negotiations were matters which concerned us alone.

His Excellency said that he had told Prince Bülow further that he, for his part, would always be careful to avoid taking any step which could injure the legitimate interests of Germany, or indeed of any Power, and had added that to enable him to guide his course it would be desirable if the German Government would indicate what interests they had in Persia, which they would desire to preserve intact.

Prince Bülow had replied that the only interests with which Germany was concerned were the Bagdad Railway, and an open door for her commerce.

M. Isvolsky said that this statement, corroborated as it had been by what M. von Schoen had told me, relieved his mind, and gave him every hope that the course of our negotiations would continue without interruption. He had, he said, previously observed that there had been misgivings in the German mind that an understanding between Great Britain and Russia would in a sense isolate Germany, and that she

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]

would see growing round her a ring in which she would be confined. He thought he had satisfied the German Government that there was no such intention, and he was glad that I had employed to M. von Schoen the phrase that the main object of our negotiations was to remove "causes of friction," as these were the identical words which he had used at Berlin. No doubt M. von Schoen had been instructed to give me the assurances which he had spontaneously conveyed to me, and he was of opinion that the atmosphere was considerably cleared.

M. Isvolsky said that his course was not without difficulty. He was most honestly and sincerely desirous of coming to a thoroughly friendly understanding with us; but he had to walk with care and prudence as the maintenance of good relations with Germany was very essential. His visit to Berlin had removed much uneasiness which he had previously felt, and he wished to assure me that he had found in his conversations at Berlin no suspicions or misgivings. They had put to him no leading or embarrassing questions, nor had they evinced any desire to ascertain on what lines our discussions were proceeding.

He added that the Councillor of the German Embassy M. von Miquel had intended to make a journey to Persia, but had now abandoned it, owing to the lateness of the season. This, he imagined, was an excuse, and he believed that he had received instructions to desist from his project.

I told M. Isvolsky that I had been a little surprised at M. von Schoen mentioning to me that Germany did not intend to establish a Bank at Teheran, as I had understood that a concession had already been granted and was on the point of being put into execution. His Excellency said that the concession had undoubtedly been accorded, and the magniloquent language which the German Chargé d'Affaires had held at Teheran in regard to it had caused him some anxiety. He had, however, ascertained that the Chargé d'Affaires had allowed himself to hold a language which was not authorized, and that, hitherto, no German Bank had been willing to undertake an enterprise which offered little remunerative prospects. In any case he had been assured at Berlin that the Bank would have no political character or aims, and would merely serve as an intermediary for purely commercial interests.⁽²⁾

M. Isvolsky assured me again that his mind was now at ease, and that he intended to devote all his energies towards facilitating an understanding with Great Britain which he was convinced was the right policy for his Government to pursue.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 396, No. 351, and p. 401, No. 356.]

No. 370.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nicolson,

November, undated⁽²⁾, 1906.

In answer to your Despatch of the 4th of November, No. 735, and your private letters on the same subject,⁽³⁾ I would say that I see no objection to your giving to M. Isvolsky a sketch of an agreement as you propose, and one is being sent in a despatch.⁽⁴⁾ You should, however, make it clear to him that it does not pretend to

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [This letter is undated, but the reference to the despatches of November 4 (*v. supra*, p. 408, No. 367) and November 17 (*v. infra*, p. 416, No. 371) suggests that it was dated between November 12 and November 17.]

⁽³⁾ [*cp. supra*, pp. 250-1, No. 236.]

⁽⁴⁾ [*v. immediately succeeding document.*]

be in treaty form and is rather in the nature of an *aide-mémoire* of what has been thrown out in conversation.

I do not wish the negotiations to go to sleep. But, on the other hand, we must avoid raising in M. Isvolsky's mind the suspicion that we wish to force the pace in order to take advantage of Russia's present situation.

I should, however, omit the last paragraph from the draft which you propose. It is not essential to an arrangement with Russia that we should each of us become parties to a promise to prevent third Powers from obtaining concessions in the parts of Persia in which we have each of us respectively renounced influence ourselves. It would be enough that we should each agree not to seek or maintain influence in the specified district reserved for the other. After our arrangement with Russia was completed, we could obtain from Persia an undertaking not to make concessions which would have any political character to a third Power in our specified district. Russia could do the same for herself, and it would follow from the arrangement which we and Russia had made that neither of us would oppose the other in making these separate arrangements with the Persian Government.

Such a settlement between Russia and us would give absolutely no opportunity or pretext to any other Country for saying that the settlement had infringed the principle of the open door.

Of course I understand M. Isvolsky's difficulty with the military party. Seistan is, no doubt, a place of strategic importance in their eyes. But it is only of such importance if they wish to attack the Indian frontier, or to put pressure upon us by making us think that they intend to attack it. The benefit which we expect from an arrangement with Russia is that we should be set free from any such apprehension, and this is precisely what we ask in the settlement.

If, as you suppose, M. Isvolsky will say at this point "But what is Russia to get in return," you will naturally reply that she gets in a certain specified district the same security that we get in Scistan. He will then probably point out that our gain in this matter is much greater than that of Russia, who is not really disturbed by the apprehension that aggression on our part in the North and North-West of Persia is practicable; and that he must, therefore, have a further *quid pro quo* with which to overcome the opposition of the military party, or at least to convince the Emperor that the opposition of the military party is unreasonable. *But it is for him to say what he wants.*

Probably, he already has something in his mind, but is hesitating to propose it. I think he should let us know what it is. If it is access to the Persian Gulf, that is a matter which should be referred to us for discussion. But I doubt, myself, whether any complete arrangement with Russia can be made unless it includes the Near East as well. It is the differences in the Near East that have been the original cause of the hostility and friction between Russia and us.

So far as the Russian Government are aware officially, our attitude in the Near East has not been changed. But it is not for us to propose changes with regard to the treaty conditions of the Dardanelles. I think some change in the direction desired by Russia would be admissible, and we should be prepared to discuss the question if Russia introduces it. If M. Isvolsky mentions it you might, therefore, say that it is a matter on which you are at present without instructions to speak to him, but which you will refer home. I enclose for your information only a departmental Memorandum on the Dardanelles.⁽⁵⁾ It shows that much may be possible, but it must not be taken yet as committing even me, much less the Cabinet, who have not seen it.

The difficulty is, of course, that the question of the Dardanelles concerns the other Powers of Europe. Our settlement with Russia, when completed, will have to be published, and so important a matter as a promise on our part to give diplomatic support in favour of any modification of a European treaty could not be introduced

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

as a secret article. The fact that this is so makes it proper that M. Isvolsky, and not we, should be the first to mention the matter. It cannot be pressed without raising a European question, which it is Russia's interest and not ours to raise, though we might no longer object to seeing it reopened, as we should have objected a few years ago.

The sketch of a Persian agreement is founded upon yours, but the preamble was expanded by John Morley, and Hardinge has used the Anglo-Russian China Railway agreement as a model for the rest, so as to introduce terms already familiar to Russia.

I fear the temporary ascendancy of the reactionary party round the Tsar will not make the atmosphere favourable for these negotiations of ours.

Yours sincerely,
E. GREY.

No. 371.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 521.) Confidential.

Sir,

Foreign Office, November 17, 1906.

I have received Y[our] E[xcellency's] despatch No. 735 of the 4th inst[ant],⁽¹⁾ reporting a conversation with the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs on the subject of the understanding respecting Persia.

I approve the language which you held to M. Isvolsky on this occasion, and I enclose the sketch of a draft agreement which you are authorised to communicate to H[is] E[xcellency].

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

Enclosure in No. 371.

Draft Agreement.

The Gov[ernmen]ts of G[reat] B[ritain] and R[ussia], being mutually pledged to respect the integrity and independence of Persia, and animated by a sincere desire for the maintenance of good order and pacific development throughout the Persian Empire as well as for the establishment of equal opportunities for the commerce and industry of all nations have resolved that a Convention be concluded between them in the following terms:—

The Gov[ernmen]ts of Great Britain and Russia mutually recognise that each has for geographical and economic reasons special interest in peace and order being maintained within certain provinces of Persia contiguous with, or in proximity to, the Russian frontier on the one hand and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Beluchistan on the other; and each of the two Gov[ernmen]ts, being impressed with the detrimental effects of local friction on their relations with Persia and with one another, is anxious to avoid all ground for interference with the special interests of each in the Persian provinces to which reference has been made above.

It is therefore hereby agreed as follows:—

1. Great Britain engages not to seek or maintain for her own account, or on behalf of British subjects, any concessions of a political or commercial nature within a line

and not to obstruct, directly or indirectly, applications for such concessions in that region supported by the Russian Gov[ernmen]t.

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 408–11, No. 367.]

2. Russia, on her part, engages not to seek or maintain for her own account, or on behalf of Russian subjects, any concessions of a political or commercial nature within a line passing from the Afghan frontier through Gazik, Birjand, Kerman and Bunder Abbas and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Beluchistan, and not to obstruct, directly or indirectly, applications for such concessions in that region supported by the British Gov[ernmen]t.

No. 372.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 796.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. December 2, 1906.

R. December 10, 1906.

M. Isvolsky called on me today to inform me that the Minister of Finance had received a telegram from the Director of the Russian Bank at Teheran stating that the Persian Prime Minister had expressed his willingness to sign the loan contract without having obtained the consent of the Assembly. M. Isvolsky said that it seemed to him that it would be desirable to obtain the opinions of the Russian and British Representatives as to whether it would be prudent to meet the wishes of the Prime Minister, and as to whether the refusal of the Assembly to sanction the loan could be ignored.

I told His Excellency that I was unaware what the precise functions and authority of the Assembly were in respect to loans, but that as its sanction had I understood been in the first instance solicited for the conclusion of the loan, it appeared to me that if we agreed with the Prime Minister in ignoring the opinions which the Assembly had expressed, we might cause some trouble in Persia. It was however a question on which it was clearly necessary to obtain the opinions of the Russian and British Representatives who, being on the spot, could give valuable advice on the point.

I read to M. Isvolsky the substance of Sir C. Spring Rice's telegram No. 348 of November 25th,⁽¹⁾ and said that it appeared that at that date the Prime Minister considered the consent of the Assembly as necessary. Possibly financial pressure had induced him to change his opinion; but it was impossible to judge of the situation at this distance.

M. Isvolsky agreed with my observations and said that he had heard nothing from M. Hartwig on the subject. So long as the Russian and British Governments continued to act in concert in regard to Persian affairs, he viewed occurrences in that country with calm. He would be glad to hear your views on the present question, and said that he had also telegraphed to Count Benckendorff.

I telegraphed the communication made to me by M. Isvolsky in my telegram No. 305 of this day's date.⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced.]

No. 373.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 801.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. December 3, 1906.

R. December 10, 1906.

I had the honour to receive your despatch No. 521 of the 27th ultimo⁽¹⁾ by last week's messenger, transmitting the draft text of an agreement in respect to Persia.

⁽¹⁾ [Despatch No. 521 was dated November 17, not November 27, *v. supra*, pp. 415-6, No. 371.]

I called on M. Isvolsky this afternoon and I reminded His Excellency that some few weeks ago he had intimated to me the difficulties in his mind as to the mode in which it would be possible to reduce to a written form the views which we had interchanged in regard to an arrangement concerning our respective interests in Persia, without causing anxiety to the Persian Government and without disquieting other Governments who might have some Commercial interests in that country. I had, I said, received from you the outline of a draft agreement on the subject of Persia, which I begged leave to hand to him, and which I should be glad if he would treat as Confidential, and which, I thought, would remove the doubts which he had formerly expressed. I added that the documents was not drawn up in Treaty phraseology nor was it to be considered as a draft convention; it was merely an *aide-mémoire* of the views which we had interchanged presented in a convenient form.

M. Isvolsky read the document, and observed that he did not presume that I required an answer off hand. He added that even as drawn up others might regard it as a division ("partage") of Persia into spheres of influence.

I replied that I did not view it in that light; the document specified our respective spheres of interest, though the Russian sphere had to be left blank, and he would observe that in the preamble the principle of the open door had been duly recognised. I could not myself see how any objection could be raised in any quarter to the terms, tenour or objects of the document.

His Excellency said he would be glad if I would leave the paper with him to study carefully.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 374.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F. 371/170.

(No. 803.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. December 4, 1906.

R. December 10, 1906.

The German Ambassador asked me to-day whether M. Isvolsky had mentioned anything to me in regard to his recent visit to Berlin. I told M. von Schoen that M. Isvolsky had expressed great satisfaction at finding that the German Government viewed with a friendly eye the discussions which were proceeding between the British and Russian Governments for the purpose of removing all causes of friction between the two countries in Persia and Central Asia, and that he had been pleased to ascertain that the only interests as to which the German Government were concerned were the Bagdad Railway, which lay outside of the Persian question, and the maintenance of the open door for commercial intercourse. This satisfaction on the part of His Excellency had been confirmed by the speech of Prince Bülow in the Reichstag.

M. von Schoen again confirmed what he had said to me on a previous occasion, and which I had the honour to report in my despatch No. 798 Confidential on the 5th ultimo,⁽¹⁾ and added that M. Isvolsky had enquired whether in the future the German Government would have any objection to Russia obtaining concessions for railways in the north of Persia. His Excellency had been informed that no objection would be raised to such concessions, as Germany had no desire to embark on such enterprises in Persia. M. von Schoen observed that he doubted if Russia would for a long time to come be in a position to take advantage of any concessions she might obtain, as she was exceedingly slow to move in those directions. If Russia would construct a railway which would eventually be linked on to the Bagdad Railway, so much the better for all parties.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 411-2, No. 368.]

I remarked that I believed that in some Russian quarters there was no great desire to facilitate inter-communications which might lead to foreign trade competing with the practical monopoly Russian commerce enjoyed in the North of Persia; and that this fear had caused her to hesitate at one time to welcome the project of the Bagdad Railway.

M. von Schoen said that it was true that such views had been held in Russia in regard to the Bagdad Railway, but that a change had now come over Russian public opinion. The moment had not yet arrived for the German Government to approach those of France, Great Britain and Russia, as to a participation in the Bagdad Railway, or perhaps it would be more correct to say for financial groups in the several countries to commence negotiations on the subject. The question was not yet quite ripe for such discussions.

M. von Schoen said further that as regards a German Bank in Persia, he could tell me that the Persian Government when in urgent need of money, and when they were not meeting with a ready response from the British and Russian Governments, had approached the German Chargé d'Affaires and had suggested that a German Bank should be established in Tehran which would effect loans and other financial transactions.⁽²⁾ The Chargé d'Affaires, anxious to play a part, had accepted this suggestion, and had asked the German Government to enquire if any German Bank would be willing to establish a banking institution in Tehran. Several Banks had refused to entertain the proposal, but one Bank, M. von Schoen did not mention the name, which had branches at Constantinople and Beyrout had expressed its readiness to enquire into the matter, and was sending an agent to Persia who should arrive there next month. M. von Schoen did not think that the Bank would establish a branch at Teheran, probably at some other place in Persia, but in any case the branch would have nothing to do with loans or concessions, but confine itself to strictly commercial affairs.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

Interesting.

E. G.

(²) [*v. supra*, p. 396, No. 351, and p. 401, No. 356.]

No. 375.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, December 15, 1906.

F.O. 371/170.

D. 8.8 P.M.

Tel. (No. 807.)

R. 10.30 P.M.

Persian Loan.

I have received private letter from Min[iste]r for F[oreign] A[ffairs] stating that Russian Gov[ernmen]t agree with you that the advance should be made publicly and responsibility lie with Persian Gov[ernmen]t. They also agree that it would be preferable to wait till Persian Gov[ernmen]t and assembly had arranged between themselves, but they see no objection to furnishing the advance on a formal demand from Persian Prime Min[iste]r even if latter had not succeeded in overcoming opposition of the assembly. Russian Gov[ernmen]t also consider that it would be well if Russian and British Representatives were to inform heir apparent of the loan question.

Instructions have been sent in the above sense to the Russian Min[iste]r and Min[iste]r for F[oreign] A[ffairs] would be glad if similar instructions could be sent to Sir C. Spring Rice.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 821.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. December 16, 1906.

R. December 24, 1906.

On the 9th instant I wrote a private letter to M. Isvolsky stating that he had doubtless heard from Teheran that the Russian and British Representatives were of opinion that the advance to be made to the Persian Treasury should be done publicly and on the responsibility of the Persian Government; and that it would be desirable to await a settlement of the differences between that Government and the popular party. I added that His Majesty's Government were in agreement with these views.

I further stated that I had received information from Teheran to the effect that the Assembly had collected sufficient money to pay the arrears due to the troops, and that I knew that his view was that no steps should be taken on our part, as the money was at the disposal of the Persian Government, on the conditions laid down by the two Governments, and that neither Government had any desire to force its acceptance on the Persian Government.

At my interview yesterday with His Excellency he read and handed to me a reply of which I have the honour to transmit a copy. On reading this letter again it seemed to me that there might be a possibility that the Russian Minister might act on his instructions before His Majesty's Government had had an opportunity of expressing their views as to whether a formal demand from the Grand Vizier for the advance, irrespective of the assent of the Assembly, should be immediately accepted. I therefore wrote a letter to M. Isvolsky, of which I beg leave to enclose a copy, expressing the hope that M. Hartwig would not carry out his instructions without a previous agreement with Sir Cecil Spring Rice.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

P.S.—Since writing the above I have received a reply from M. Isvolsky, of which I have the honour to transmit a copy, in regard to the instructions given to M. Hartwig.

Enclosure 1 in No. 376.

M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

Saint-Petersbourg, le 2 (15) Décembre, 1906.

Le Gouvernement Impérial partage le point de vue du Gouvernement Britannique au sujet de l'avance pécuniaire à faire à la Perse et trouve en effet indispensable que l'avance soit faite publiquement et que la responsabilité en soit assumée par le Gouvernement du Schah.

Tout en pensant, d'accord avec le Gouvernement Britannique qu'il serait peut être préférable d'attendre que le Sadrazam parvienne à établir une entente avec le Medjliss au sujet de l'avance, le Gouvernement Impérial ne verrait pourtant pas d'objections à ce que les sommes promises fussent délivrées au Gouvernement Persan sur une demande formelle de Mouchir-oud-Dovleh, même dans le cas où ce dernier ne parviendrait pas à vaincre la résistance de l'Assemblée Nationale. Dans tous les cas il paraît désirable qu'à son arrivée à Téhéran le Valiahd soit prévenu par les Représentants d'Angleterre et de Russie de l'opération financière en question.

Des ordres détaillés dans ce sens ont été expédiés au Ministre de Russie à Téhéran et je vous serais fort reconnaissant si vous pouviez contribuer à ce que des instructions dans le même sens soient envoyées à M. [sic] C. Spring-Rice.

ISVOLSKI.

Enclosure 2 in No. 876.

Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

Mon cher Ministre, *Saint-Pétersbourg, le 3 (16) Décembre, 1906.*
 J'ai relu la lettre que vous avez bien voulu me communiquer hier au sujet de l'avance à faire au Gouvernement Persan et je n'ai pas manqué d'en transmettre le sens à mon Gouvernement. Je présume que les instructions envoyées à M. Hartwig ne seront mises en exécution qu'après accord préalable avec Sir C. Spring-Rice, car je sais bien que vous désirez autant que nous que les deux Ministres agissent dans cette question en parfaite harmonie. Sir C. Spring-Rice recevra sans doute des instructions de mon Gouvernement et il serait à désirer si M. Hartwig voudrait bien attendre jusqu'à ce que son collègue anglais soit mise en demeure de connaître les vues de Sir E. Grey.

Veuillez, &c.
 A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure 3 in No. 876.

M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

Mon cher Ambassadeur, *Saint-Pétersbourg, le 4 (17) Décembre, 1906.*
 Le principe fondamental des instructions que nous avons données à M. de Hartwig, dès le début des négociations au sujet de l'avance commune à faire aux Persans, étant d'agir en parfaite harmonie avec son Collègue d'Angleterre, je pensais qu'il était superflu de lui donner des indications complémentaires à cet égard. Mais, puisque Vous m'en avez exprimé le désir, je m'empresse de lui expédier par télégraphe des ordres dans le sens de Votre lettre.

Votre bien dévoué
 ISVOLSKY.

No. 877.

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

My dear Sir Edward,

December 21, 1906.

. . . Private news of Hartwig's language doesn't look as if Russia had any intention of debarring herself from access to Seistan and eventually the Gulf of Oman. But personally he is most friendly and so are his subordinates. Of course it isn't hard to be friendly under the circumstances as since I have been here, the popular party have learned that they must not lean on England for support, and this has made an enormous difference to the power of Russia—so that the evil year or two after the Japanese war—can be, in all probability, lived through without any serious diminution of prestige. We must all remember that in July August and September the influence of England was quite supreme and that Russia had no power at all. Now, of course, this is changed and though England is looked to with respect she is not looked to for protection and support, and the popular party is therefore become more purely Persian. Also the rumours of an understanding with Russia have given the impression that we have sold out our interest to Persia. Altogether whether successful or not, the negotiations between England and Russia have been of enormous

(1) [Grey MSS., Vol. 81.]

value to the latter. We have voluntarily surrendered our position here, in exchange for a *promise*. I hope that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t may realise this: It is certainly true. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,
C. A. SPRING-RICE.

⁽²⁾ [The opening paragraphs of this letter give a detailed account of the Persian internal situation and the Russian attitude. The closing sentence is purely personal.]

No. 378.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/170.

(No. 830.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. December 22, 1906.

R. December 27, 1906.

With reference to my despatch No. 821 of the 16th instant,⁽¹⁾ I have the honour to transmit, herewith, copy of a letter which I have addressed to M. Isvolsky relative to His Excellency's proposals that in the event of the Mushir ed Dowleh making a formal demand for the payment of the joint advance no difficulty should be made to meeting his wishes, and also that the Valiahd should be made acquainted with the question of a loan to the Persian Government.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 378.

Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

*Ambassade d'Angleterre, Saint-Petersbourg,
le 9 (22) Décembre, 1906.*

Mon cher Ministre,

En réponse à la lettre que vous avez bien voulu m'adresser le 2/15 courant, relative à l'avance au Gouvernement Persan, mon Gouvernement pense qu'il serait peut-être mieux si les deux Légations à Téhéran continuent à observer l'attitude de réserve qu'elles ont jusqu'ici adoptée à ce sujet.

Si le Mouchir ed Dowleh nous fait une demande formelle nous pourrions alors examiner sa proposition en tenant compte des circonstances qui pourraient exister à ce moment; et il nous paraît plus prudent de ne pas en saisir le Valiahd de l'opération financière vu qu'il a déjà eu des entretiens avec une députation de l'Assemblée au sujet des questions financières.

La situation en Perse en ce qui concerne les fonctions et les relations de l'Assemblée avec le Gouvernement semble toujours être un peu indécise, et dans ces circonstances une attitude de complète réserve de la part des deux Légations serait à l'avis de mon Gouvernement la plus prudente.

J'espère que vous partagerez cette manière de voir et croyez-moi toujours.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 419-20, No. 376.]

No. 379.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Tehran, December 26, 1906.

F.O. 371/170.

Tel. (No. 376.)

Persian advance.

Following is result of conversation with Russian Min[iste]r.

D. 12.35 P.M.

R. 5.40 P.M.

Popular movement against the loan is still strong but it is possible, owing to severe financial pressure, that the Valiahd and Grand Vizier may apply for loan, throwing the odium on us on the ground that they acceded under pressure. The two Banks are obliged to restrict their advances to merchants owing to uncertainty as to whether advance will be asked for and this gives rise to the impression that we are trying to force loan on the Gov[ernmen]t against the will of the people.

We think that it would be advisable to inform Grand Vizier officially that the two Gov[ernmen]ts withdraw their offer and let this be known. Otherwise the two Legations may be accused of contributing funds to the Gov[ernmen]t in order to suppress popular movement.

No. 380.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, January 3, 1907.

F.O. 971/369.

Tel. (No. 2.)

D. 3.55 p.m.

R. 6.30 p.m.

Persian advance: My telegram No. 1.

I have received another private letter from Minister for Foreign Affairs, stating that he hears from Russian Minister at Tehran that Sir C. Spring-Rice is of opinion that if the two Governments notify withdrawal of offer, an arrangement may be made with financiers of other countries. Russian Minister would therefore wish to be authorized not to notify withdrawal of the offer until he and his British colleague are agreed as to the proper moment for doing so.

Russian Government see no objection to this course, and if His Majesty's Government concur in above view necessary instructions will be sent to Russian Minister.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asks for early reply. Shall I inform him that you concur?⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ [Tel. No. 2 to Sir A. Nicolson of January 4, 1907, replied to this: "Your tel[egram] No. 2. Persian advance. We concur." This was repeated to Tehran as Tel. No. 2 of the same date.]

No. 381.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/369.

(No. 4.)

Sir,

Tehran, D. January 3, 1907.

R. January 21, 1907.

In obedience to your instructions I have carefully abstained from entering into any discussion with M. Hartwig as to the possible basis of an agreement between England and Russia with regard to Persia. At the same time I venture to think it may be useful if I were to communicate to you any indication as to the general policy pursued here by the Russian Legation which may reach me from indirect but authentic sources. To quote Sir A. Hardinge's words: "At London and St. Petersburg the European, here in Asia the Tartar, head of the Russian double eagle is most plainly visible"⁽¹⁾ and I venture to hope that I may be excused if I

⁽¹⁾ [cp. *supra*, p. 373, No. 321 (b).]

present for the consideration of His Majesty's Government the *local* aspect of the Asiatic policy of Russia.

From conversations which some of my colleagues and a newspaper correspondent who has been sent here to represent the Russian view of the Persian question, have had with M. Hartwig and which they have, in general outline, communicated to me, it appears that the policy of the Russian Legation here is wholly opposed to any form of division of Persia into spheres of interest which would debar Russia from obtaining access to a port outside the Gulf or from constructing such railways or means of communication as would best serve her commercial and political interests. Persia is to be assured her independence and integrity as long as she is willing to obey the dictates of her Russian advisers and accord to Russia such advantages as may be in accordance with Russian interests.

And, specifically, the policy of Russia must be continually concerned with the whole of the East of Persia, where, as M. Hartwig puts it, it is a vital interest of Russia to obtain such influence and control as may enable her to prevent the spread of infection from Indian sources, the importation of arms, and, above all the absorption of Seistan by Great Britain or the establishment in that province of English control.

At the same time M. Hartwig is sincerely desirous of improving the relations between England and Russia, and while safeguarding Russian influence, to live on the best possible terms with the British Legation. He is considerably embarrassed by the independent action of the financial agent and by the separate policy pursued without the knowledge and consent of the Russian Foreign Office, by other Departments of the Russian Government. He is anxious to avoid any form of active interference in Persian domestic politics and has done all in his power to convince popular opinion that the Russian Legation is not hostile to the popular movement and has even exerted his influence with the Valiahd to secure a compromise with the Assembly. He is opposed for the moment to any active measure of interference and is doing all in his power to dissuade his Government from yielding to the dictates of the advocates of a forward policy.

I venture to ask your most careful attention to Sir A. Hardinge's despatch No. 126 of the 10th June, 1905, in which he explains in a singularly clear and striking form, what he takes to be the policy of Russia in Persia, viewed in the light of the actual proceedings of Russian agents on the spot. I am inclined to believe that what he wrote then is true now. Since he wrote however, there has occurred, what he anticipated—namely a great popular awakening and protest against the sale of Persia, through corrupt officials, to a foreign Government. And the "antiseptic treatment" of which he speaks, is now being inaugurated, not by a concert between England and Russia, but by the Persian people themselves. I venture to think that in this way possibly lies the hope of the salvation of Persia, and the solution of the Persian question. Should foreign powers, and especially England and Russia consent to lend a friendly hand, or at any rate not to impede the process of regeneration Persia may yet save herself. But if she does the designs of Russia, which have so long aimed at her practical absorption, will be as definitely frustrated as they have been in Bulgaria, and it cannot be hoped that the Russian Government, at least as at present constituted, will tamely acquiesce in such a conclusion.

I have, &c.
CECIL SPRING-RICE.

No. 382.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/302.

(No. 15.) Secret.

Sir,

*Tehran, D. January 4, 1907.**R. January 21, 1907.*

I have the honour to state that I had good reason to believe that some days ago a long cyphered despatch was received by the German Legation from Berlin on the subject of Russo-German relations in Persia and that a report had been called from the German Minister. Since then I have received information to the effect that Russia has offered to withdraw her objections to the Bagdad Railway and generally to German enterprise in Mesopotamia on the condition that she herself should have the right of constructing the Kanikin-Bagdad branch and of fixing the tariff on the railway when constructed. I need not point out that the tariff as fixed by Russia would make all trade from the South or West to Persia by that route impossible and would give Russia the monopoly of Persian trade which, so far at least as concerns imports, would be reserved for Russian industry and the Tiflis-Tabriz-Hamadan route. I believe that the German Minister's reply was in this sense.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

MINUTE.

We have no corroboration of this story, which looks as though it came from a Persian or German source with the object of sowing distrust between England and Russia.

C. H.

E. G.

[*ED. NOTE.*—On the death of Shah Muzaffur-ud-Din on January 8, 1907 (*v. supra*, p. 356, *Ed. note*), his eldest son, Mohammed Ali Mirza, was recognized as the new Shah. The British and Russian Governments then exchanged notes on January 11 recognizing his second son, Sultan Ahmed Mirza, as Valiabd or Heir-Apparent. He was publicly proclaimed Valiabd on January 25. The new Shah had already been crowned on January 19, and the fact that he did not invite the Deputies to the ceremony was commented on at the Assembly the same day.]

No. 383.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/301.

(No. 21.)

Sir,

*Tehran, D. January 27, 1907.**R. February 18, 1907.*

I have the honour to transmit herewith a translation of the Persian Constitution⁽¹⁾ which has been prepared by Mr. Churchill.

It provides for a National Assembly composed of from 160 to 200 members chosen by popular election and of a Senate of 60 members, half of whom are elected and half nominated by the Government.

The Assembly is elected for two years and the Shah by a separate rescript has promised not to dissolve it before the expiration of its first term. After the first term it can be dissolved on a motion passed by two-thirds of the Senate and approved by the Shah.

The members take oath "so long as the rights of the Assembly are respected to be loyal to the Sovereign and the rights of the Nation."

The Ministers, who are appointed by the Sovereign, can be summoned before the Assembly to give explanations as to their conduct of affairs and are made responsible to the Assembly for any derogation of their powers, or infraction of the laws. They can address the Assembly on the invitation of the President and have the right of proposing bills in person.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. The texts of the Constitution and of certain related documents are given in E. G. Browne: *The Persian Revolution, 1905-1910* (1910), Appendix A.]

The Assembly must give its consent before any concession is granted, or loan foreign or internal is concluded, and must be consulted as to any treaty with a foreign power, except such arrangements as in the opinion of the Government, should be kept secret in the public interest. It has control of all financial matters and must give its consent before the budget is passed, or any new tax is instituted. The Senate has concurrent legislative power, except in financial matters on which however it appears to have the right of veto.

In case of disagreement between the two houses a joint committee is appointed and if an agreement is not arrived at, the Senate can, by two-thirds majority, require the dissolution of the Assembly, provided that this does not take place more than once in the two years' term.

General powers of examination into the conduct of affairs by the Government, and of direct access to the Shah are provided for. The members are inviolable and the proceedings are public, with certain reservations as to the proceedings of secret committees.

Full liberty of reporting proceedings and of comment (provided this is not of a libellous character) is accorded to the press.

It will be seen that if the Constitution is carried into effect the Persian Government is now a limited monarchy, the Ministers however, although responsible for their conduct to the Assembly, being nominated by the Sovereign, and not elected members. The powers of the Assembly include financial control and no loan can be made by the Government without its consent.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

No. 384.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.⁽¹⁾

Tehran, February 11, 1907.

F.O. 371/369.

D. 6 P.M.

Tel. (No. 28.)

R. 10:30 P.M.

All quiet here, though definite arrangement is not made with Shah. British Consul at Tabreez reports that people have taken possession of arsenal and Government offices.⁽²⁾ No disorder, but people are determined, and have received assurances of support from Kurdistan. Russian Minister says that he thinks that a demonstration on frontier and in Gulf may become necessary if situation gets worse.

As yet no movement against foreigners personally, but on first appearance of this I think Russian Government will be bound to make some sort of military demonstration. I hope that this will be delayed until it is justified by overt act against foreigners, but preparatory arrangements should, I think, be agreed on at once between the two Governments.

Zil-es-Sultan has sounded Russian Minister as to possible military action.

⁽¹⁾ [Sir E. Grey replied as follows to Sir C. Spring-Rice, Tel. No. 18 of February 12, 1907, D. 7 P.M. :

Your tel[egram] No. 28. I entirely approve your statement that we cannot consent to any demonstration in favour of Persian Government and against reform movement.

I see the difficulty of the Russian position but we must on no account be drawn into any show of force unless made absolutely necessary for protection of foreigners and even then for physical reasons our action must be confined to the Ports. You should therefore use all your influence to discourage the Russians from contemplating any demonstration with a view to political effect; which would be clearly contrary to the principle of non-intervention.

(Repeat to Sir A. Nicolson, No. 18.)]

⁽²⁾ [The Shah was reported as accepting the demands of the people on February 11.]

I have explained to Russian Minister that I do not believe that His Majesty's Government will consent to any political demonstration in favour of Government, but only to action justified by considerations of self-defence. Russian view may be different, in view of political situation in Caucasus and Central Asia.

(Addressed to Foreign Office; sent to India and St. Petersburg.)

MINUTE.

The Russian Gov[ernmen]t are evidently anxious for a pretext for intervention to which we are opposed. Any discussion of arrangement for military demonstration would only encourage them in this idea. As Sir C. Spring-Rice still thinks that we should concert measures with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t for a military demonstration, I think he should be informed very categorically of our views which he does not as yet seem to understand. At present there appears to be no danger to foreigners.

C. II.

No. 385.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.

F.O. 371/303.

Tel. (No. 16.)

Foreign Office, February 11, 1907.

Advance to Shah.

Your tel[egram] No. 24.⁽¹⁾

You may use your discretion acting throughout in concert with your Russian colleague; we wish if possible to avoid any pretext for an accusation of interference in internal affairs of Persia.

Repeated to St. Petersburg, No. 16, February 11, 1907.

⁽¹⁾ [This telegram of February 10, 1906, suggests that the British and Russian Ministers should use their discretion as to the advance, and advocates a policy of non-interference.]

No. 386.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/303.

(No. 79.)

St. Petersburg, D. February 11, 1907.

Sir,

R. February 18, 1907.

I called on M. Isvolsky the day before yesterday and communicated to him the substance of Sir C. Spring-Rice's telegram of the 8th instant⁽¹⁾ regarding an advance to be made to the Shah in view of the disquieting situation in Teheran. I asked His Excellency if he had heard from M. de Hartwig on the subject, and he replied in the negative. He said that he was anxious to act entirely in concert with His Majesty's Government in all matters concerning Persia, and asked me if I would let him take note of the details of the proposed transaction so that he might consult with the Minister of Finance with whom he had an appointment the same evening. He enquired if Sir C. Spring-Rice had already made the advance or whether he was awaiting instructions from his Government. I said that I gathered from the telegram

⁽¹⁾ [This telegram, No. 24 of February 8, 1907, reports application by the Shah to M. Naus for an advance. Upon M. Hartwig's representation that the Russian Bank had exhausted its credit, Sir C. Spring-Rice proposed "to authorize Imperial Bank of Persia to advance to M. Naus a sum of 30,000l. . . . in the form of a joint advance by the two banks on current account under the Shah's signature. . . ."]

that the matter was of some urgency, and it was possible that Sir C. Spring-Rice had considered it necessary to act with promptitude, but I could not say positively what steps had actually been taken. It seemed to me that, as affairs seemed to be in a somewhat critical condition, great latitude should be accorded to the Representatives on the spot, but it was essential that they should keep in constant touch with each other. I added that I felt sure that he would impress on M. de Hartwig to act in perfect concert with Sir C. Spring-Rice, who had on more than one occasion expressed to me his pleasure at the cordial and intimate relations which he maintained with his Russian colleague. M. Isvolsky said that it was of great importance that the two Governments should be in complete harmony, and he had no fear of the future in Persia if both Governments acted in unison.

I subsequently received your telegram No. 12 of the 9th instant, informing me that His Majesty's Government were prepared to authorize the joint advance provided the Russian Government concurred.⁽²⁾ I at once communicated this to M. Isvolsky, and I received early this morning a letter from His Excellency of which I beg leave to enclose a copy, and of which I telegraphed the substance in my telegram No. 18 of to-day's date.⁽³⁾

Since the dispatch of the above telegram, I have received Sir C. Spring-Rice's telegram of yesterday's date, recommending that he and his Russian colleague should be authorized to use their own discretion in regard to the advance.⁽³⁾ I have little doubt that M. Isvolsky will be willing, on the part of the Russian Government to leave the matter in the hands of M. de Hartwig, and as I am to see His Excellency this evening in regard to some other questions I will enquire of him what further information he has received from Teheran.

I may add that I mentioned at the conclusion of my conversation of the 9th instant with M. Isvolsky, that in view of the constantly shifting, and to an outsider somewhat obscure, situation in Persia, great caution appeared to be desirable, as any false step might prejudice our joint interests in that country, and might facilitate the possible aims of other countries. M. Isvolsky said that so long as we went hand in hand he regarded Persia as a "champ clos" to others and on my remarking that fortunately the new German Minister in Teheran seemed to be a calm, peaceable man, he laughingly observed that he always felt some anxiety in regard to quiet reserved men, if they had a settled policy to pursue, and he did not know if he did not prefer the indiscreet exuberance of the former youthful Chargé d'Affaires of Germany, as he left no doubt as to the aims which he was pursuing.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 386.

M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

*Ministère Impérial des Affaires Etrangères,
le 28 Janvier (10 Février), 1907.*

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

D'après les nouvelles que j'ai de Téhéran, notre Ministre a déjà donné à Sir Cecil Spring-Rice son adhésion à l'avance à faire en commun au Shah, et le Gouvernement Impérial confirme entièrement cette décision.

Votre sincèrement dévoué,

ISVOLSKY.

⁽²⁾ [Not reproduced.]

⁽³⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 426, No. 385, note.]

No. 387.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.⁽¹⁾*St. Petersburg, February 12, 1907.*

F.O. 371/369.

D. 8-22 P.M.

Tel. (No. 22.) Confidential.

R. 9-30 P.M.

Persian situation.

Minister for Foreign Affairs told me to-day that he had consulted with Minister of War and Chief of General Staff on Persian affairs. Policy of Russian Government is as follows: To abstain from all interference in internal affairs of Persia; not to adopt any military measures unless they are rendered absolutely necessary, and in case they have to be employed, to keep them within narrowest possible limits; to do nothing without previous consultation with His Majesty's Government, and to act generally in close harmony with His Majesty's Government. He expressed hope that such an attitude would be reciprocally observed by His Majesty's Government. I assured him that he need have no doubts on that point.

(Sent to Tehran.)

⁽¹⁾ [Despatch No. 85 of February 12, 1907, gives this at somewhat greater length, and Tel. No. 19 to Sir A. Nicolson of February 13, 1907, expresses entire concurrence in this policy.]

No. 388.

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

F.O. 371/320.

(No. 98.)

Sir,

*St. Petersburg, D. February 19, 1907.**R. February 26, 1907.*

After the conversation between M. Isvolsky and myself in regard to the Thibetan Convention had terminated, His Excellency said that he wished to speak to me with respect to our arrangement as to Persia. He might tell me that after considerable difficulty he had succeeded in inducing the General Staff to accept in principle the mode in which we proposed to come to an understanding, and that they had also admitted in principle the British zone of interest which had been defined by the line sketched in the *Pro memoria* which I had communicated to him. The paper which he had in his hands was a summary of the views of the Russian Government on the subject, and he would communicate it to me in writing as soon as he had carefully reviewed its terms and its form. He could tell me that the Russian line would run from Kuchan through Yezd and Isfahan to Kasr el Sherin; and that the Russian Government considered that it would be better to specify the concessions in our respective zones for which we should reciprocally abstain from requesting. They would be railways, roads and others. At the same time those concessions at present existing should be maintained. I interrupted M. Isvolsky at this point and asked if by the maintenance of existing concessions he referred to the Meshed Seistan telegraph line, as I thought it necessary to inform him that my Government attributed importance to that question being settled in accordance with our views. M. Isvolsky said that he was of opinion that the question of the two telegraph lines Meshed-Nasratabad and Teheran-Meshed could best be settled by a separate arrangement. I said that this might be so, but in my opinion the only solution was a transfer of the two lines to Russian and British control respectively. I enquired of His Excellency what were the other existing concessions to which he referred. He replied that the Russian Bank had several agencies in Seistan, and the customs of that province also formed a portion of the securities guaranteed for the service of Russian loans. The

⁽¹⁾ [A telegram giving a shorter account of the conversation reported here is printed, *supra*, p. 275, No. 253.]

British advances were secured, he said, on the customs revenues of Farsistan and the Persian Gulf; while the Russian loans were guaranteed on the northern and the Seistan customs.

M. Isvolsky then said that he was anxious to be made acquainted with the proposals which we were prepared to make for an arrangement as to Afghanistan, as the Persian question was so closely related with that of Afghanistan, and the one could not be settled without the other. I told His Excellency that I was not yet in a position to communicate our proposals, but that I hoped shortly to be able to do so. His Excellency pressed me to give him a general idea of them, but I said that it would be impossible for me to do so until I could communicate them in detail; but I would be glad if he could tell me the views of the Russian Government as to the close relationship between the two questions.

M. Isvolsky said that he would recapitulate to me in general terms the views of the Russian Government. We had requested Russia to practically give us a free hand in Seistan, and it was probable at some future date we should carry a railway into that district. Now, the military party was of opinion that by abandoning Seistan to us an important strategical position was being ceded, and that it was necessary to examine carefully the position of Russia. It would be a very serious matter to Russia if, in addition to a railway communication say between Nasratabad and India, and possibly down to the Southern coast, railways were also constructed from India into Afghanistan. The whole strategical *status quo* would thereby be materially altered to the great disadvantage of Russia. Afghanistan had, hitherto, been considered a buffer state, but supposing Great Britain was, in conjunction with the Ameer, to alter the existing relations into those of a far more intimate nature, and that the Ameer consented to British officers reorganising his troops and was willing to have railways constructed and roads made? Supposing further that differences hereafter arose between Russia and Japan, and that we, as the ally of Japan, were to take the side of that country? It was undeniable that Russia would in the circumstances alluded to above strategically be in a far weaker position than she was under existing conditions. He was, he said, repeating to me the views of military men, but I would see that the Persian question was closely connected with that of Afghanistan.

I replied that I understood the connection between the two questions, but I thought that there were weak points in the arguments he had placed before me. Our agreement had in view the establishment of a state of peace, and not a possible state of war. I told him candidly that we wished Seistan to be within our zone for purely defensive reasons. M. Isvolsky interposed the remark that there was "défense active" as well as a "défense passive." As to possible railway extension into Seistan or to the coast, I would not discuss the question, and apparently as matters stood for the moment there was an Assembly at Teheran who would have a word to say in the matter. Moreover, admitting even that Russia gave us a free hand in a strategical position, we at the same time were conceding a similar advantage to Russia in other parts of Persia. The one concession balanced the other. I added that I did not quite seize the purport of his observations as to Afghanistan. As to British officers reorganizing the Ameer's troops that did not seem probable at a time when no British officer could set foot across the frontier. I gathered that he, or the military party, was under the apprehension that we intended, or wished, to bring Afghanistan under our protection in the same manner as say Beloochistan. That seemed to me a far-fetched fear. He had mentioned railways, but if the Ameer were inspired with the desire to develop and open up his country, we could not prevent him from realising such a wish.

M. Isvolsky said he understood that; but who would construct the railways and whither would they lead? Evidently they would be built by British assistance and would run to India. Count Benckendorff remarked that we had a treaty with Afghanistan and that the idea was that we should not go farther than the treaty. I asked if it was desired that the political *status quo* should be maintained. I

understood M. Isvolsky to say that this was so; and also that some arrangement should be made for regulating the relations between Russian and Afghan frontier officials and also in regard to trade.

I said that perhaps on these points an understanding could be reached; but that I must await your instructions.

M. Isvolsky then said that there was one other matter which he wished to mention to me. Russia and Great Britain were drawing up an agreement which would preclude either party from seeking for concessions in the zone of the other, but what about third parties? I said that I understood our original idea was that when both Governments had come to an understanding, we should severally apply to the Persian Government to engage not to allow concessions to third parties in our zones. M. Isvolsky remarked that this would be shutting the door in a considerable portion of Persia; and that we should be face to face with a similar situation to that which had arisen over Morocco. Germany would not trouble us in Seistan; but it would be necessary for Russia to come to an arrangement with her in regard to the Russian zone. Such an arrangement could only be made over the Bagdad railway. I remarked that Teutonic activity might as well be developed in Seistan as elsewhere in Persia, and I was under the impression that as regards the Bagdad Railway, the situation was that Russia, France and Great Britain would be ready to participate in it whenever Germany made overtures for foreign assistance. M. Isvolsky replied that Russia had hitherto assumed an obstructive attitude towards the Bagdad Railway. She could withdraw this obstruction on the understanding that Germany engaged to leave her alone in her zone. I understood M. Isvolsky to say that an arrangement in respect to the Bagdad railway should be made "d'un commun accord."

M. Isvolsky said in conclusion that he considered that we had made sensible progress towards a general understanding, and he earnestly trusted that our negotiations before long would reach a satisfactory conclusion. He was happy to tell me that his discussions with the Japanese Minister were progressing amicably and smoothly, and that he was now quite satisfied with the outlook. He proposed to make three conventions with Japan as to commerce, fisheries and railway junctions; and also two *Actes Généraux*; one a Treaty of Arbitration similar to that which we had concluded with France, and one establishing that both Japan and Russia would observe and preserve the *status quo* in the Far East. He then thought that humanly speaking peace could be assured for some time to come. I said that such an arrangement would, I was sure, be most welcome to my Government, and I asked if the Japanese Government showed a favourable disposition towards it. His Excellency replied in the affirmative.

The impression which I gathered from my long interview was that the Russian Government are sincerely desirous of arriving at an arrangement with us; but that they are nervous lest our relations with Afghanistan should develop into such cordial intimacy as would lead to the Ameer coming under our direct influence to an extent which neither he nor his predecessors had hitherto permitted. The Russian Government, therefore, are desirous of obtaining, if possible, some assurance that the general character of our relations with the Ameer should undergo no radical change, and that they should indeed remain as they are at present. It is possible that His Majesty's Government may not feel disposed to bind themselves as to the future; but I am confident that, if no assurances at all can be given, it will be difficult, I should be inclined to say impossible, to come to a satisfactory arrangement as to Persia. I was not able to obtain a precise and clear pronouncement from M. Isvolsky as to what exactly the Russian Government required on the above point. When I communicate to him our proposals as to Afghanistan, I shall, I trust, succeed in obtaining a definite exposition of the Russian views.

I would also respectfully beg leave to recommend strongly that the favourable conditions which now prevail in regard to our negotiations should not be allowed to disappear; and though in dealing with important questions excessive haste is to be

deprecatd, still it would be most unfortunate if on our side any undue delay were to occur, and if the continuous course of our discussions were to be interrupted by intervals of silence. Those who are opposed to an understanding with us, and who with difficulty have been won over, would interpret any delay on our part as a sign of indifference or of suspicion, and this would injuriously affect the prospects of a favourable solution.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 389.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/369.

(No. 101.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. February 20, 1907.

R. February 26, 1907.

M. Isvolsky handed me to-day a Draft Convention in regard to the future mutual relations between Great Britain and Russia which had been drawn up by the Russian Government, of which I have the honour to transmit a copy. I did not peruse it in his presence and accepted it without comment. I regret that I made a confusion in telegraphing yesterday between Kuhsan and Kuchan, but the misunderstanding was due to my not catching accurately the pronunciation of the names of the two places.

The preamble is identical with that of the British Draft Convention except that the word "collision" is used in the last sentence instead of "interference."

As to article II I have, since despatching my telegraphic summary of the Russian Draft Convention, examined the Draft which I communicated to M. Isvolsky, and I find that the definition of the British line is practically identical in both documents. The observation which I made in my telegram⁽¹⁾ in regard to the words "par les frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Béloudjistan," was, therefore, made without due consideration.

The final paragraph will, I presume, require some amplification and amendment. I do not know whether you would consider it necessary to specify in the Convention that the revenues of the Caspian Sea Fisheries and the posts and telegraphs form securities for the British loans, but in any case it would, I submit, be right to state clearly that the Customs revenues of the Fars and of the Persian Gulf are secured for the service of the British advances. As the paragraph stands there is no mention of British loans at all. I do not know whether in the Convention you would consider it desirable to mention that Mohammerah is included in the Persian Gulf ports; or to leave this debatable point alone. We could not be considered as having abandoned our views by preserving the phrase "Fars and the Persian Gulf."

There is no mention, as from my conversation with M. Isvolsky on the 18th instant I had been led to expect, of the maintenance of the existing concessions in our respective zones. The omission to mention them, and as the articles deal with the future, leads me to think that the Russian Government imply that such concessions do continue to exist. M. Isvolsky apparently wishes to arrange the question of the two telegraph lines separately from the Convention. You may consider that there is no objection to such procedure. If, on the other hand, we desired that all Russian Bank agencies in Seistan, for instance, be withdrawn, the Russian Government might request that we should abandon concessions in the Russian zone, and this might raise the question of the Indo-European and Indian Government telegraph lines, Imperial Bank, &c. It might be wiser, perhaps, to leave the question of existing concessions alone, and restrict ourselves to finding outside the Convention a solution of the Meshed-Tehran and Meshed-Nasratabad lines. I submit this view with all diffidence. When both Governments have come to an agreement as to the Convention.

(¹) [*v. supra*, p. 276, No. 254.]

I do not think there would be great difficulty in arranging as to the above-mentioned telegraph lines.

I should be grateful if you would kindly supply me with the final paragraph amended in the sense desired by His Majesty's Government, so that I may communicate it to M. Isvolsky.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 389.

Draft Convention communicated by M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/369.

Les Gouvernements de la Grande Bretagne et de Russie, s'étant mutuellement engagés à respecter l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Perse et animés du sincère désir de maintenir l'ordre et le développement pacifique dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire Persan, aussi bien que d'établir des avantages égaux pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les nations, ont résolu qu'une convention sera conclue entre eux aux termes suivants :

Les Gouvernements de la Grande Bretagne et de Russie reconnaissent mutuellement que chacun d'eux a pour des raisons d'ordre géographique et économique un intérêt spécial à maintenir la paix et l'ordre dans certaines provinces de la Perse contiguës ou voisines à la frontière Russe, d'une part, et aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Béloudjistan, de l'autre; et chacun des deux Gouvernements, constatant l'effet nuisible résultant des cas de friction sur place dans leurs relations avec la Perse et entre eux-mêmes, est désireux d'éviter tout motif de collision avec les intérêts spéciaux de chacun d'eux dans les provinces persanes dont il a été fait mention plus haut.

En conséquence il a été décidé par la présente comme suit :

I. La Grande Bretagne s'engage à ne pas rechercher pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets britanniques, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale—telles que les concessions de chemin de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurance, &c.—, au delà d'une ligne partant de Kasri-Chirin, traversant Iezd et Khakh et aboutissant à la frontière Afghane près du bourg de Kuhsan, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région, soutenues par le Gouvernement Russe.

II. La Russie, de son côté, s'engage à ne pas rechercher, pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets russes, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale—telles que les concessions de chemin de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurances, &c.—, au delà d'une ligne allant de la frontière Afghane par Gazik, Birjand, Kerman et Bender-Abbas et par les frontières de l'Afghanistan et de Béloudjistan, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région, soutenues par le Gouvernement Britannique.

Il est bien entendu que les revenus de toutes les douanes persanes, à l'exception de celles du Farsistan et du Golf Persique, garantissant l'amortissement et les intérêts des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah en Russie, seront affectés au même but que par le passé.

MINUTES.

The proamble seems all right. The difference between "interference" and "collision" is simply that between cause and effect.

In Article I we must ask that the line passing through Yezd and Kakh should terminate at Zulficar, the northernmost extremity of the Perso-Afghan frontier. It can be pointed out that in

the preamble accepted by M. Isvolsky the Russian and British spheres of influence are "contiguous with, or in proximity to, the Russian frontier on the one hand, and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Beluchistan on the other." No mention is made of the Russian sphere being contiguous to the Afghan frontier. Further, since G[rea]t Britain is responsible for the external relations of Afghanistan H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t are responsible for the settlement of all frontier and other questions between Persia and Afghanistan and the introduction of another Power having special interests on the Perso-Afghan frontier could only tend to complicate matters and to defeat the very object of the Convention. On this point there can be no question of yielding.

It is also desirable to demand that the town of Tehran, as the seat of Gov[ernmen]t and as the residence of the foreign Legations should be regarded as a natural "enclave." On this point we could, if necessary, make a graceful concession later.

I think it is desirable, in order to avoid any possible ambiguity in the future that a clause should be inserted by which all existing concessions should be maintained. The transfer of the two telegraph lines may be effected outside the Convention but it must be distinctly understood that the note or notes arranging for the transfer must be signed simultaneously with the Convention. There never was any question of demanding the removal of the Russian bank Agencies in Seistan. We should lose much more by the removal of the Bank of Persia's Agencies from the Russian sphere.

The last paragraph of M. Isvolsky's text is clearly incomplete. I would suggest the following addition:—

Il est également entendu que les revenus des douanes persanes de Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, ainsi que les revenus des pêcheries Caspiennes et des Postes et Telegraphes seront affectés, comme par le passé, au service des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah avec la Banque Impériale de Perse.

There yet remains the question whether any provision should be made for the eventuality of Russians being placed as controllers of Customs in Seistan in the event of the coupon of the Russian loan being unpaid. The concluding paragraph states that the revenues of the Customs will be devoted to the Russian loans, and we might argue that as long as it can be shown that they are devoted to that purpose it does not matter to the Russians who collects them. It is a risk, though not likely to occur just yet, and the question arises whether we should not announce to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t that, in the event of the necessity arising as foreseen by their loan contracts, we will be ready to undertake the collection and remission to them of the due proportion of the customs revenues in our sphere of influence which may be affected to the Russian loans.

I would suggest that a letter be addressed in this sense to the India Office transmitting a copy of Sir A. Nicolson's desp[atch] and its inclosure, and asking for an early reply.

C. H.

Feb. 26, '07.

Write in this sense to the I[ndia] O[ffice].

E. G.

No. 390.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 971/320.

Foreign Office, February 22, 1907.

Tel. (No. 25.)

D. 9.30 P.M.

We must wait for full text of Russian proposals respecting Persia before entering upon discussion of them. It appears to us however from the summary that they are in principle in accord with what we have already put forward and therefore provide a satisfactory basis for discussion, though we shall probably have certain amendments to propose.

Meanwhile we regard the prospect of an eventual agreement to be such as to justify us in communicating our views about Afghanistan.

You may communicate to M. Isvolsky the draft instructions, which you already have, pointing out to him with regard to direct communication between Russian and Afghan frontier officials that it will be necessary for us to obtain the consent of the Amir beforehand and that we must in consequence know what the Russian views are on this point and how they would propose to carry them out before approaching the Amir. We have hitherto regarded this question of direct

communication between frontier officials as a difficult one owing to the sensitiveness of the Amir and it can only be concluded as part of a general settlement with regard to the region of the Indian frontier, which will give such security on both sides as to prevent small incidents on the Afghan frontier from giving rise to political difficulties or apprehension.

MINUTE.

Send this draft to India Office;⁽¹⁾ we ought to telegraph to Sir A. Nicolson to-morrow if possible.

E. G.
22.2.07.

⁽¹⁾ [The India Office concurred in these views, February 22, 1907.]

No. 391.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, March 1, 1907.

F.O. 371/369.
Tel. (No. 37.)
Persia.

D. 3.15 P.M.
R. 4.30 P.M.

Minister for Foreign Affairs expressed to me last night his anxiety as to the situation, and intimated that the Shah was desirous that Russian Government should take some measures on the frontier, as the most disturbed districts were adjoining the Caucasus. Minister for Foreign Affairs said that Russian Government had already taken steps to prevent revolutionaries from crossing the Caucasus into Persian territory. He added that he would consult with military authorities as to what further measures were possible. He repeated his intention of keeping measures within the narrowest possible limits and doing nothing without previous consultation with His Majesty's Government.

He thought that it would be well if the two Governments were to agree beforehand upon measures to be taken respectively in case events necessitated action.

I told him that all we could do would be to protect British subjects in Gulf ports. He said that he would let me know later what Russian Government proposed, and then he would like to be acquainted with views of His Majesty's Government. He said that he had heard that proposed national banks wished to take all customs revenues, and this should not be permitted.

I agreed with him, but said that I had no positive information on the subject.
(Sent to Tehran.)

No. 392.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, March 8, 1907.

F.O. 371/369.
Tel. (No. 41.)
Persia.

D. 4.35 P.M.
R. 6 P.M.

Minister for Foreign Affairs has sent me a Memorandum, stating that Russian and British Ministers have decided to send to their Governments a statement—

1. That in spite of appearance of outward calm, there are signs of a dangerous movement against the Dynasty and Europeans.

2. That the movement against the Shah shows itself in persistent reports that he wishes to dismiss Assembly, which is organizing a militia.
3. That the movement against Europeans is not against individuals or Legations, but is directed to the removal of foreigners from Persian service, and to preventing them from obtaining concession in Persia.
4. That in view of the tendencies of the Assembly, Russia and Great Britain would be justified in declaring to Persian Government that, while carefully avoiding any intervention in the internal affairs of Persia, the two Powers nevertheless will not permit their interests to be injured in any respect whatever.

Russian Government consider that there is no doubt that the two Representatives are correct in their conclusions, and that it would be desirable that Russian and British Ministers should make simultaneously an identic declaration to the Persian Government in the above sense.

Russian Government will gladly know views of His Majesty's Government and, if latter have no objections, instructions will be sent to Russian Minister to concert with his British colleague as to the proposed step.

(Sent to Tehran.)

No. 398.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/369.

Foreign Office, March 8, 1907.

Tel. (No. 30.)

D. 5.35 P.M.

Your desp[atch] No. 101.⁽¹⁾

Persian Convention.

Preamble of draft proposed by Russian Gov[ernment] is satisfactory and may be accepted.

Art[icle] 1. As to Russian line, we note that preamble speaks of British and Russian spheres of influence as "contiguous with or in proximity to Russian frontier on the one hand and frontiers of Afghanistan and Baluchistan on the other" and that no mention is made of Russian sphere being contiguous with Afghan frontier. Further, as we are responsible for the external relations of Afghanistan and are obliged, not only by treaty with the Amir but also by Art[icle] 6 of the Persian Treaty of March 4, 1857, to undertake the settlement of all frontier and other questions arising between Persia and Afghanistan, the introduction of another Power having special interests on the Perso-Afghan frontier would tend to complicate matters and defeat the very object of this Convention. It is therefore most important that no part of that frontier should lie within the Russian sphere. We would have included the whole frontier within our sphere if we had contemplated the possibility of the Russian Gov[ernment] putting forward their present claim, but we wished to make our sphere as small as possible. You should therefore ask that Russian line should terminate at Zulfikar on northernmost extremity of Afghan frontier. There can be no question of yielding on this point.

We had originally intended to demand that town of Tehran, as the capital and seat of foreign Legations, should form a neutral enclave in the Russian sphere. We are now however, prepared to make a most important concession by waiving this point on the understanding that, in consideration of the greatly increased influence which may accrue to Russia by the inclusion of the town in her sphere, she will undertake not to oppose, without previous agreement with us, the grant to British subjects as to those of third powers, of concessions in the neutral zone. It would

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 431-2, No. 389.]

be manifestly unfair that increased prestige at Tehran should be used on the spot there to our detriment in the neutral zone, which is governed like the rest of Persia from Tehran.

Art[icle] 2. We consider that a clause should be inserted providing for the maintenance of all "existing concessions."

We have no objection to effecting the transfer of the two telegraph lines by an exchange of notes outside the Convention, provided that it is distinctly understood that the notes arranging for the transfer should be signed at the same time as the Convention itself and that this is an indispensable condition of the signature of the Convention.

We have no intention of demanding the removal of the agencies of the Russian bank in Seistan which would entail that of the agencies of the Bank of Persia in the Russian spheres and would cost us more than we should gain by it.

The last paragraph of the Russian text appears to us incomplete and we suggest the following addition:—

"It is equally understood that the revenues of the Persian customs of Farsistan and the Persian Gulf as well as those of the Caspian fisheries and of the Posts and Telegraphs, shall be devoted, as in the past, to the service of the loans concluded by the Gov[ernmen]t of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia."

There remains the question of providing for the eventuality of Russians being placed as controllers of customs in Seistan in consequence of the non-payment of the coupon of the Russian loan. We consider that so long as it can be shown that the revenues of the customs are devoted to the service of those loans (as stated in the last paragraph of the Russian draft) it does not matter to the Russians by whom they are collected. You are therefore authorised to announce to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t that, in the event of the necessity arising, as foreseen by their loan contracts, we are ready to undertake the collection and remission to them of the due proportion of the customs revenues in our sphere of influence which may be affected to the Russian loans if the Russian Gov[ernmen]t will agree to a similar arrangement regarding revenues pledged to British loans within the Russian sphere.

No. 394.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 971/369.

Foreign Office, March 9, 1907.

Tel. (No. 34.)

D. 4.30 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 41.⁽¹⁾

Persia. Proposed identic declaration.

The situation is difficult, as we do not want to offend the Russian Gov[ernmen]t at the present moment by refusing to take action as they suggest. At the same time there can be no doubt that the less we have to do with the Persian Gov[ernmen]t just now, the better for us, as premature or undue interference must tend to arouse popular feeling against us in the country.

You should therefore inform the Russian Gov[ernmen]t that at present we are not apprehensive of danger to foreign subjects, nor have we had any intimation from Sir C. Spring-Rice that a general declaration would be beneficial, but that we realise the hostile attitude towards foreign enterprise assumed by the Persian Assembly, and that, while avoiding any semblance of unprovoked intervention in internal affairs, we are in favour of the cooperation of the two Gov[ernmen]ts in

(¹) [*v. supra*, pp. 434-5, No. 392.]

Persia for the mutual protection of their respective interests whenever they may be menaced.

We do not think that a joint declaration, as suggested, would be politic at the present moment but we consider that, in order to show the community of our action and interests, we might press the Persian Gov[ernmen]t for a reply to the joint enquiry made by the two Legations as to the steps to be taken for the payment of the coupons of the loans (see my tel[egram] No. 17 repeating my tel[egram] No. 17 to Sir C. Spring-Rice^(*)).

Sent to Tehran.

(*) [Not reproduced.]

No. 895.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/869.

(No. 125.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. March 10, 1907.

R. March 18, 1907.

I called on M. Isvolsky this morning, and said that I had brought with me a paper embodying certain amendments which His Majesty's Government desired to see introduced into the Draft Convention in regard to Persia, which the Russian Government had lately communicated to me.⁽¹⁾ I have the honour to enclose the copy of an *Aide Mémoire* which I left with His Excellency after our conversation had concluded.

I informed M. Isvolsky that His Majesty's Government accepted the preamble of the Draft Convention. In regard to the tracing of the Russian line as laid down in the Draft Convention, I wished to amplify somewhat the observations which I had made to him recently on that point. He would see that in the preamble of the Russian Draft Convention it was stated that the districts in which Russia and Great Britain had special interests were those respectively bordering on or contiguous with the Russian frontier, and the frontier of Afghanistan and Belouchistan. His Majesty's Government held the same views and had naturally considered that the Russian zone would not include any portion of the Afghan frontier, but if the Russian line were to terminate at a point on the Afghan frontier near to Kushan [Kushan], a portion of that frontier would come within the Russian zone. As I had explained to him at my last interview on the 7th instant, such an arrangement would necessarily lead to complications. We were bound by treaty both with Afghanistan and with Persia to undertake the settlement of all frontier and other questions arising between those two Countries, and it was needless for me to dwell upon the difficulties which would arise if a third Power were to have special interests on the Perso-Afghan frontier. Our Convention had in view the removal of all possible causes of friction, but if the Russian line were left as was suggested in the Russian Draft Convention there would be a continual danger of difficulties arising. I said that I would repeat what I had said on the 7th instant, and that was that the Russian line should run from Kakhk to Zulficar, and thus obviate any of those serious risks to which I had alluded. I must tell him that my Government attached extreme importance to this matter, and, as I had said on the 7th instant, it was of small importance to Russia but of serious import to us, and that very possibly the Russian Government had overlooked the considerations which I urged upon him.

M. Isvolsky said that he recollected my observations on the 7th instant, and could repeat the remark that he had not himself drawn the line, and that he would examine carefully, in the light of my remarks, the modifications which I proposed. I said that I must impress on him that the rectification which I had requested was an essential one.

(1) [v. *supra*, pp. 482-3, No. 889, *encl.*]

I think that M. Isvolsky clearly saw the force of my observations, and, though he would not commit himself, I think that he will urge upon his advisers to accept the rectification which is desired.

I told M. Isvolsky that there was another question connected with the Russian zone on which I wished to speak to him. The Russian zone included Tehran, the capital of Persia, and I must tell him frankly that if my Government were to agree that the capital of the Kingdom were to be within the districts in which Russia was recognised as having special interests, a great increase of influence would accrue to the Russian Government. Indeed my Government had originally intended to propose that Tehran should form a neutral enclave in the Russian zone, but as they were sincerely desirous of arriving at a friendly settlement, they were prepared to make a most important concession and abandon their intention, but it must be on the understanding that Russia engaged not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, any grant of concessions in the neutral zones of Persia to British subjects or to those of third Powers.

M. Isvolsky enquired whether the understanding which I suggested was to be unilateral on the part of Russia, or whether Great Britain would be disposed to give a similar engagement. I told him that I had no instructions on that point, but I would mention his observation to you. His Excellency then said that he did not quite grasp the reason for demanding the engagement from Russia, nor did he see if Tehran were within the Russian zone the political situation would be greatly altered from that which existed. Our respective zones were, he observed, demarcated with a view of preventing either party from interfering within the zones of the other, a species of self-denying ordinance; but why should anything be specially said as to other portions of Persia outside the zones? The neutral zones would, he understood, be left open to all parties, and in his view both Russia and Great Britain should preserve entire liberty of action in respect to them. I told M. Isvolsky that the concession which we were prepared to make in including Tehran within the Russian zone practically amounted to a recognition that Russia had a special interest, and consequently a special position in the capital, and this concession was a very great one. If Russia had a special position she would eventually have special influence, perhaps I might say a predominant influence which was not the case at present. Such an influence might, and we must look into the future, hereafter be employed, I did not say that it would be, but it might be employed, in opposing British concessions in the neutral zones. Russia would be placed in an admirable position for exercising such opposition, and we were bound to take securities, in view of any future interests we might wish to acquire in the neutral zones, that her influence and her special position should not be utilized to the detriment of those interests. Tehran governed Persia, and it was this fact that we must bear in mind for the future. M. Isvolsky seemed to understand this point of view, as he remarked that he still did not comprehend why Russia should be asked to debar herself from opposing any concessions to third Powers, which if granted might prove injurious to Russian commercial interests. His Excellency took up a map and pointed out to me how it might be possible for Germany for instance, to endeavour to secure branch lines from the Bagdad railway into the neutral zones. Was Russia to be prevented, if she thought such concessions detrimental to her interests, from raising objections to them? I observed that we did not ask that Russia should be excluded from absolutely raising objections or opposition. We had carefully inserted the clause "without previous arrangement with Great Britain."

His Excellency said that he quite understood that, but suppose that Russia wished to oppose the grant of a concession to a third Power, while Great Britain was in favour of such a grant; a conflict of opinion would immediately arise, not only between Russia and Great Britain, but also with the third Power, which would cause a troublesome and perplexing situation. As regards third Powers, he was not in favour of their being specially mentioned. I said that I was then to understand

that he desired a reciprocal arrangement between Great Britain and Russia not to oppose the grant in the neutral zones of concessions either to Great Britain or Russia as the case might be, and that we should omit all reference to third Powers. M. Isvolsky said that at first sight this was his personal view, but he begged me not to take it as a settled opinion. He must ask for a little time to study the question before pronouncing on it. I said that of course I had no wish to bind him in any way, and I then proceeded to Article II.

I said that we should like a clause inserted that existing concessions in the respective zones of Great Britain and Russia should be maintained. This, I observed, did not affect the transfer to Russian and British control respectively of the Tehran-Meshed and Meshed-Nasratabad telegraph lines. This transfer should be effected by an exchange of Notes which must be signed simultaneously with the signature of the Convention. M. Isvolsky made no remarks on this proposal; and I then let him read the two concluding paragraphs of the *Aide-mémoire* to which I said presumably no objection would be raised.

His Excellency thanked me for the communication, and said that he would study it carefully, and that he would examine it with the sincerest desire of arriving at an agreement. He hoped to give me a reply to the points which I had raised at no distant date.

Before leaving M. Isvolsky I said that I hoped that he would shortly let me have the views of the Russian Government in regard to Afghanistan, as it would be necessary after we had received them that we should consult with the Ameer, and this would take a little time. His Excellency said that he was occupying himself with this question, which was one of importance, and he promised to let me have a reply without undue delay, but it was not a matter which could be settled in a few days. I remarked that I hoped that we should be able to arrange matters before I took my summer holiday about the end of June. M. Isvolsky said he had every hope that there would be no difficulty in our reaching a conclusion before that date.

I telegraphed a short summary of my conversation and of my impressions in my telegram No. 42 of to-day's date.⁽²⁾

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 895.

Aide-mémoire.

Draft Convention in regard to Persia communicated by the Imperial Russian Government.

St. Petersburg, March 10, 1907.

Preamble.

His Britannic Majesty's Government accept the Preamble.

ARTICLE I.

The Draft Convention proposes that the Russian line should run from "Kasri Chirin traversant Isfahan, Yezd et Kakh et aboutissant à la frontière Afghane près du bourg de Kuhsan." His Majesty's Embassy begs to point out that in the preamble it is stated that "les Gouvernements de Grande Bretagne et Russie reconnaissent mutuellement que chacun d'eux . . . a un intérêt spécial de maintenir la paix et l'ordre dans certaines provinces de la Perse contiguës ou voisines à la frontière Russe d'une part, et aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et de Beloudjistan de l'autre . . ." It was therefore not understood that Russia desired that a portion of her zone should be contiguous with Afghan territory, as

⁽²⁾ [Not reproduced.]

would be the case if her line terminated at the point mentioned in the Draft Convention. Moreover Great Britain is responsible for the external relations of Afghanistan and is obliged not only by treaty with the Ameer but also by Article VI of the Persian Treaty of 1857 to undertake the settlement of all frontier and other questions arising between Persia and Afghanistan. It is, therefore, clear that the introduction of another Power having special interests on the Perso-Afghan frontier would tend to complicate matters and defeat the only object of the Convention.

His Majesty's Embassy is therefore instructed to request that the Russian line should terminate at Zulficar on the northernmost extremity of Afghanistan and not at a point on the Afghan frontier near Kuhsan. His Majesty's Embassy desires to say that His Majesty's Government attach great importance to this matter.

His Majesty's Embassy wishes to inform the Imperial Russian Government that His Majesty's Government originally intended to request that the town of Teheran, as the capital and seat of the Legations, should form a neutral enclave in the Russian zone. His Majesty's Government are however prepared to make a most important concession by waiving this point; but on the understanding that Russia undertakes not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, any grant of concessions in the neutral zones of Persia to British subjects or to those of third Powers. His Majesty's Embassy does not doubt that the Imperial Russian Government will have no difficulty in giving the undertaking above mentioned.

ARTICLE II.

His Majesty's Embassy would wish that a clause be inserted stating that all existing concessions are maintained. At the same time His Majesty's Embassy requests that the control of the Telegraph line from Meshed to Nasratabad be transferred to Great Britain and is ready to agree that the control over the Tehran-Meshed telegraph line be transferred to Russia. The transfer shall be effected by an exchange of notes, to be signed simultaneously with the Convention.

His Majesty's Embassy desires that the last paragraph of Article II be amplified; and suggests the following addition should be made "it is equally understood that the revenues of the Persian customs of Farsistan and the Persian Gulf as well as those of the Caspian Fisheries and of posts and telegraphs shall be devoted as in the past to the service of loans concluded by the Government of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia."

His Majesty's Embassy desires to mention one more point. If there be any question of non-payment of coupons and of the possibility of controllers being established over customs or other pledged revenues in the respective zones, Great Britain would be prepared to undertake the collection and remission to Russia of the due proportion of customs revenues which may be affected to Russian loans in the British zone, if the Imperial Government would agree to a similar arrangement as regards the revenues in the Russian zone which may be pledged to British loans.

St. Petersburg, February 25/March 10, 1907.

MINUTE.

The mem[orandum] is all right with the exception of the sentence relating to the concessions of third parties in the neutral zone which has since been corrected by telegraph.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 896.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 871/869.

Foreign Office, March 11, 1907.

Tel. (No. 85.)

D. 3.53 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 42.⁽¹⁾ Persian Convention.

We are only interested that British Concessions should not be opposed in neutral zone without previous agreement with us and would be ready to give a reciprocal engagement. We would be therefore satisfied with the first sentence of the paragraph number 3 of the impressions derived from your conversation with M. Isvolsky.

(¹) [Not reproduced. It gives Sir A. Nicolson's impressions, derived from conversation with M. Isvolski, on the probable attitude of the Russian Government to the Persian Convention. The first part of the telegram considers agreement likely. Paragraph 3 however runs as follows: "That they will agree to not opposing Concessions in neutral zones, if engagement is reciprocal and limited to British and Russian Concessions. He does not like to tie his hands as to not opposing Concessions to third Parties, though I pointed out that he was not debarred from opposing such Concessions if he came to a previous arrangement with us."]

No. 897.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/869.

St. Petersburg, D. March 13, 1907.

(No. 182.)

R. March 18, 1907.

Sir,

I informed M. Isvolsky to-day that with reference to the grant of concessions to third Powers in the neutral zones of Persia, my Government would be satisfied if an undertaking were given by the Russian Government that they would not, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, oppose British concessions in the above-mentioned localities. We, on the other hand, would if the Russian Government so desired it, be willing to give a similar engagement as regards Russian concessions. M. Isvolsky seemed to be quite in accord with such an arrangement, and said that he hoped to be very shortly in a position to communicate a reply to the observations which I had handed to him on the Russian Draft Convention. He added that the military authorities were examining the question as to the Russian line terminating at Zulficar, but he did not appear to consider that there would be any difficulty in arranging that point in accordance with the desires of His Majesty's Government.

I venture to submit for your consideration a rough draft of an annexe [*sic*] to the Convention with respect to the transfer of the control over the two telegraph lines between Meshed and Tehran and Meshed and Nasratabad. I think that it would be well if the Draft Annexe were to be communicated to Mr. Isvolsky instead of awaiting a proposal from the Russian Government.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 897.

Draft Annex to the Convention as to Persia in regard to the transfer of the control over the telegraph lines between Tehran and Meshed and between Meshed and Nasratabad.

The Governments of Great Britain and Russia having signed this day a Convention in respect to their interests in Persia, hereby agree that the supervision (control) of the telegraph line between Teheran and Meshed as at present exercised by the British telegraph service shall be transferred to the Russian telegraph service

and that the supervision (control) of the telegraph line between Meshed and Nasratabad as at present exercised by the Russian telegraph service shall be transferred to the British telegraph service. All arrangements whatsoever which may have been made with the Persian telegraph Administration as to the upkeep and general working of the two telegraph lines in question shall be taken over by the Russian and British telegraph services respectively. The British signallers, guards and other British employés on the telegraph line between Teheran and Meshed and the Russian signallers, guards and other Russian employés on the telegraph line between Meshed and Nasratabad shall be respectively withdrawn on the transfer of the supervision (control) of the two lines being effected.

No. 398.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/369.

(No. 141.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. March 16, 1907.

R. April 2, 1907.

I notice that in the Russian Draft Convention regarding Persia, besides specifying the nature of the concessions which each Power should abstain from seeking in the zone of the other, the Russian Government have stated that "Great Britain

Russia — on her part engages not to seek for her own account, or on behalf of British subjects, or in favour of subjects of third Powers any concessions, etc."

The words underlined are an interpolation which, perhaps, you may have wished to see retained.

Although M. Isvolsky objected to the mention of third Powers when dealing with the attitude which the two Governments should respectively assume towards concessions and in the neutral zones of Persia, I venture to submit that it might be desirable to maintain the reference to third Powers in treating of the British and Russian zones, as it would exclude the possibility of the Russian Government hereafter favouring the introduction of foreign enterprize into the British zone. I trust you will forgive me for bringing this point to your notice, and doubtless it had already been remarked by you, but I desire to be quite sure that you admit the addendum.

With respect to the "neutral zones," I would propose to submit to M. Isvolsky the following Draft, or words to the same effect, of an Article III.

"Russia, on her part, further engages not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, any grant of concessions to British subjects in the regions of Persia outside of the lines mentioned in Articles I and II. Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as regards the grant of concessions to Russian subjects in the afore-mentioned regions of Persia.

"All the existing concessions within the lines mentioned in Articles I and II are maintained."

It might, perhaps, be well to avoid any mention in the Convention of "zones" or "spheres," and I have therefore ventured to suggest the above wording.

Article IV would refer to the customs and other pledged revenues, and I submit the following as a Draft for Article V.

"If there should be any question of the non-payment of coupons, and of the possibility of controllers being established over customs or other pledged revenues in the regions within the lines mentioned in Article II, Great Britain would be prepared to undertake the collection and remission to Russia of the

due proportion of such revenues as may be affected to the service of loans contracted by the Government of the Shah in Russia.

"In similar circumstances, as regards customs and other pledged revenues in the regions within the line mentioned in Article I, Russia would be prepared to undertake the collection and remission of the due proportion of such revenues as may be affected to the service of loans contracted by the Government of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia."

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 399.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir F. Bertie.

F.O. 371/369.

(No. 158.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, March 16, 1907.

I lately expressed to the French Amb[assado]r the desire that, in view of the agreement concluded between Great Britain and Russia relative to advances to the Persian Gov[ernmen]t, the French Gov[ernmen]t should discourage French banks from lending money to Persia at least without the previous concurrence of H[is] M[ajesty's] and the Russian Gov[ernmen]ts.

On the 8th inst[ant] M. Cambon called at this Office and left a memorandum⁽¹⁾ to the effect that the French Gov[ernmen]t had received this request with favour and that the Minister of Finance would take such steps as might be possible in French financial circles to give effect to my desire.

[I am, &c.

E. GREY.]

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced.]

No. 400.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, March 17, 1907.

F.O. 371/369.

Tel. (No. 46.)

D. 8 P.M.

R. 10:30 P.M.

Persia Convention.

In Articles I and II I notice that in Russian text Great Britain and Russia are respectively to engage not to support concessions in favour of subjects of third Powers in the zone of the other. Perhaps you would wish this reference to the third parties maintained as regards our special zones, as it would preclude Russia from favouring foreign enterprise in our zone. As we did not mention it in our text, I venture to inquire.

No. 401.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/369.

Tel. (No. 89.)

Foreign Office, March 18, 1907.

Y[ou]r tel[egram] No. 46. Persia Convention.

We wish reference to third parties maintained as regards concession in our respective special zones, as stated in Art[icle]s 1 and 2 of Russian text.

No. 402.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.*F.O. 371/369.
Tel. (No. 30.)Foreign Office, March 20, 1907.
D. 1.40 P.M.Your tel[egram] No. 58. Secret.⁽¹⁾

Russian Gov[ernmen]t would be unlikely to consent to insertion in Agreement of clause such as you suggest.

I have requested Sir A. Nicolson to ascertain from Russian Gov[ernmen]t what steps they would be prepared to take on behalf of the Zil in case of necessity and whether they would be willing to give either to H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] or to the Zil himself any assurances on the subject.

It would be better to say nothing to the Zil till we learn the result of these enquiries.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. This telegram asked for a pledge from the Russian Government that the Zill-es-Sultan, who had worked for British interests, should not suffer if Ispahan came under Russian influence.]

No. 403.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.*F.O. 371/369.
(No. 156.)
Sir,St. Petersburg, D. March 25, 1907.
R. April 2, 1907.

M. Isvolsky told me this morning that he was now in a position to communicate to me the measures which the Russian Government propose to adopt, should the situation in Persia become acute, for the protection of Russian interests in that country. The main points, to his mind, were to safeguard that the customs revenues pledged to the service of the Russian loans were not diverted from their purpose; and also to show by a practical demonstration that Russia would not permit her interests to be endangered. The Russian Government were fully determined to abstain from all intervention in the internal affairs, and would take no steps unless the circumstances imperatively called for some action. At the same time, it was well to be prepared for contingences, and he wished to hand me a *Pro Memoria*, of which I have the honour to enclose herewith a copy, detailing the measures which were contemplated. He wished to act in complete accord with His Majesty's Government in all matters concerning Persia, and he would, therefore, be glad to know what steps they proposed to take on their side. I would observe that the measures proposed by the Russian Government were limited, in case of necessity, to the occupation of certain customs in the north of Persia. He asked me to tell him my opinion as to the steps which the Russian Government proposed to take, and whether I thought that they would create a salutary impression on the Persian population.

I told His Excellency that I was a little puzzled to give an opinion, and that I would prefer to await your views. Personally it seemed to me that the measures would be practical for the purposes for which they were intended and I hoped that they would, if employed, impress the population. Sir C. Spring-Rice, who was on the spot, was, I knew, of opinion that abstention should be observed to the last possible moment, and that half-measures, if any measures were required, would do more harm than good.

M. Isvolsky said he could assure me, as he had done on previous occasions, that nothing but urgent necessity would induce the Russian Government to take any measures at all. What, he enquired, did I think that my Government would

do? I said that I believed that we were disposed to do no more than afford protection to the southern ports. Would we, he asked, also occupy customs-houses? I said I could give him no reply to that point, but that doubtless I would receive your views when you had studied the memorandum which he had given me.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 403.

Pro-memoria.

La situation dans les provinces septentrionales de la Perse devenant de plus en plus inquiétante, le Gouvernement Impérial a dû envisager la possibilité d'un état de choses tel qu'il constituerait une menace directe aux intérêts de la Russie et nécessiterait la mise à exécution de mesures effectives pour la sauvegarde de ces intérêts.

Après mûre réflexion il a été reconnu que dans le cas de besoin urgent il y aurait lieu à l'occupation *manu militari* de quelques douanes persanes sur notre frontière de terre, ainsi que sur le littoral de la mer Caspienne, afin de garantir le service régulier de l'amortissement des obligations pécuniaires du Gouvernement Persan envers la Russie. Les points que nous nous proposons d'occuper éventuellement seraient Djoulfa, Astara, Enzeli, Mechedesser et Bender Ghiaz; à cet effet des contingents de troupes se tiendront prêts pour être dirigés sur les points indiqués, dès que la nécessité se présentera.

Le Gouvernement Impérial se fait un devoir d'en informer au préalable le Cabinet de Londres en le priant de vouloir bien lui communiquer les décisions que l'Angleterre croira nécessaire de prendre de son côté, en vue d'établir un accord complet dans l'action des deux puissances.

No. 404.

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

F.O. 971/869.

(No. 178.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. April 2, 1907.

R. April 15, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith, a private letter which I received this afternoon from M. Isvolsky enclosing a *Pro Memoria* embodying the reply of the Russian Government to the Memorandum which I communicated to His Excellency on the 10th of March,⁽²⁾ and of which I forwarded a copy in my despatch No. 125 of the same date, in regard to the Convention which it is proposed to conclude with reference to the respective interests of Great Britain and Russia in Persia.

The chief point, as M. Isvolsky observes, is that the Russian Government would be prepared to meet the wishes of His Majesty's Government that the Russian line should terminate at Zulficar, when they have received certain explanations on one or two points. It is true that the Russian reply is a little more guarded than I have stated, but I think that it can be taken for granted that in principle they have acceded to our request on that important point.

I understand that the remarks made in point 2 of the *Pro Memoria* in regard to concessions in the neutral zones, are merely mentioned in order to have consigned to writing the verbal assurances which I gave to M. Isvolsky on March 13, and which I reported in my despatch No. 132 of that date.⁽³⁾ I presume that there will

⁽¹⁾ [Tel. No. 57 from Sir A. Nicolson of April 2, 1907, D. 9 P.M., R. 10:15 P.M., gave a summary of this despatch.]

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 439-40, No. 895, *encl.*]

⁽³⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 441, No. 897.]

be no objection to adopting this course when a reply is given to the *Pro Memorîâ* which I am transmitting.

No mention is made of the transfer of the telegraph lines, or of the maintenance of the existing concessions, or as to the addendum requested to Article II of the Russian Draft Convention as to the revenues which are pledged to the services of British loans to Persia. I do not anticipate any difficulty on those points.

I telegraphed the substance of the *Pro Memorîâ* in my telegram No. 57 of to-day's date.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure 1 in No. 404.

M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

April 2, 1907.

Je m'empresse de vous faire tenir ci-joint notre *pro-memorîâ* en réponse à votre dernière communication au sujet de la Perse. Ce n'est pas encore une réponse définitive mais, comme vous verrez, sur le point principal nous sommes prêts à aller au devant de vos désirs.

Votre sincèrement dévoué,

ISVOLSKY.

Enclosure 2 in No. 404.

Pro-Memorîâ communicated by Russian Government.

St. Petersburg, April 2, 1907.

Vu l'importance majeure que le Gouv[ernemen]t Anglais attache à ce que la ligne frontière de la sphère d'influence présumée de la Russie en Perse aboutisse non pas à Kuhsan, mais à Zulficar, et afin de donner au Cabinet de St. James une preuve indiscutable de sa ferme décision d'arriver à une entente solide entre les deux Etats, le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial pourrait se déclarer prêt à aller au devant de ce désir. Néanmoins, avant de donner une réponse définitive tant sur ce sujet que sur les autres questions touchées dans l'aide-mémoire anglais du 25 février/10 mars, le Ministère Impérial désirerait éclaircir les points suivants des propositions contenues dans cet aide-mémoire :—

1. L'Ambassade Britannique y exprime le désir que dans le cas de non-paiement des coupons des emprunts persans et de l'institution d'un contrôle sur les douanes ou sur d'autres sources de revenus, engagées dans les zones respectives, la Grande Bretagne se charge de percevoir et de verser à la Russie les sommes qui lui seraient dues sur les revenus dans la sphère anglaise affectés à l'amortissement des emprunts conclus en Russie, et que la Russie, de son côté, prenne un engagement analogue en ce qui regarde les revenus dans la sphère russe affectés aux paiements à faire à l'Angleterre. A ce propos il est à prendre en considération que le droit de contrôle sur les douanes persanes en cas d'irrégularités dans l'amortissement des emprunts conclus en Russie appartient à cet état en vertu d'un contrat passé avec le Gouv[ernemen]t Persan. Il est indispensable, en conséquence, de résoudre au préalable la question de savoir si ce droit peut être cédé à d'autres, ou bien si le Gouv[ernemen]t Persan peut se croire fondé à protester contre une pareille transaction. En outre, le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial ne saurait se prononcer définitivement dans cette question avant d'être renseigné d'une façon exacte sur les droits acquis en Perse sous ce rapport par le Gouv[ernemen]t Anglais, afin de pouvoir se former une idée nette des obligations qu'il assumerait en acceptant la dite transaction.

2. L'Ambassade suggère que le Gouv[ernemen]t Russe s'engage à ne pas s'opposer, sans s'être préalablement entendu avec le Gouv[ernemen]t Anglais, à ce que des concessions quelconques soient données dans la zone neutre à des sujets britanniques ou à ceux de Puissances tierces. La rédaction de cette clause étant de nature à donner lieu à des interprétations différentes, il serait peut-être désirable d'omettre complètement dans ce passage les mots qui se rapportent aux sujets de Puissances tierces, ainsi que l'a proposé verbalement Sir Arthur Nicolson. Il va de soi, du reste, que la Russie ne pourrait prendre un pareil engagement qu'à titre de réciprocité de la part de l'Angleterre.

MINUTE.

Nothing more will be done till we get the Russian views as to Afghanistan. We may then have to consider each question in the light of the other.

E. G.

No. 405.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/969.

(No. 177.)

Sir,

*St. Petersburg, D. April 4, 1907.**R. April 15, 1907.*

I told M. Isvolsky yesterday that I had telegraphed to you the substance of the *Pro Memorîa* which he had communicated to me in regard to Persia, and of which I had forwarded a copy in my despatch No. 173 of the 2nd instant,⁽¹⁾ and that I was glad to see that in principle the Russian Government were prepared to accept the modification which His Majesty's Government desired in respect to the tracing of the Russian line. His Excellency observed that as the chief point was practically arranged, he trusted that there would be no difficulty as to the other points raised in the Russian *Pro Memorîa* and which were of a technical nature. I would doubtless understand that he had not been able to give a definite reply as to the terminus of the Russian line until all other points were cleared up. He added that he was examining the best method for arranging the question of the telegraph lines, and he appeared to have understood that a transfer was the sole solution. I do not anticipate that any difficulty will arise on that point.

I have &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 406.

Foreign Office to India Office.

F.O. 971/969.

Sir,

Foreign Office, April 6, 1907.

With ref[erence] to previous correspondence relative to the proposed Anglo-Russian Agreement with regard to Persia now in course of negotiation, I am directed by Secretary Sir Edward Grey to tr[ansmit] to you herewith copy of a despatch from H[is] M[ajesty's] Ambassador at St. Petersburg containing certain observations and suggestions which H[is] E[xcellency] desires to offer in connexion with the draft Convention submitted by the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, copy of which formed the enclosure in my letter of Feb[ruary] 28.⁽¹⁾

With regard to the first paragraph of Sir A. Nicolson's despatch, I am to inform you that Sir E. Grey has already informed H[is] E[xcellency] that H[is] M[ajesty's]

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 432-3, No. 389, *encl.* and *min.*]

G[overnment] desire the reference to third parties as regards concessions in the British and Russian special zones to be maintained. This information, which was conveyed to Sir A. Nicolson in Sir E. Grey's tel[egram] No. 39 of the 18th ult[imo], had not reached H[is] E[xcellency] at the time when his despatch was written. A copy of the telegram in question is enclosed.⁽²⁾

On the 11th ult[imo] Sir E. Grey addressed a tel[egram] to Sir A. Nicolson (No. 35),⁽³⁾ copy of which was forwarded to you the same day, stating that H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] were only interested that British concessions should not be opposed in the neutral zone without previous agreement with them, and that they were willing to give a reciprocal engagement on this point.

The draft of an Art[icle] III proposed by Sir A. Nicolson is intended to give effect to the view of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] on this question. Sir E. Grey considers it satisfactory in principle, but would prefer to substitute the words "same regions" for the words "afore-mentioned regions of Persia" at the end of the first paragraph, which would, in his opinion, improve the language of the Article without altering its sense.

He would accordingly propose, subject to the concurrence of Mr. Secretary Morley, to authorise Sir A. Nicolson to submit this draft to the Russian Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] with the slight verbal alteration above indicated.

Sir E. Grey concurs in Sir A. Nicolson's view that it would be well to omit from the text of the proposed Agreement any specific reference to "zones" or "spheres."

Sir E. Grey is of opinion that Sir A. Nicolson's proposed draft of an Article V represents, in principle, the views of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] on the point with which it deals. He would prefer, however, to omit from it any mention of the possible establishment of controllers of the one nationality over customs or pledged revenues in the sphere of the other Power, a contingency for which specific provision is made in the loan agreements concluded by the Imperial Bank of Persia with the Persian Gov[ernmen]t. He would further suggest that the idea embodied in the article would be more precisely expressed if the following wording were substituted for that submitted by Sir A. Nicolson:—

"In case of the non-payment of the interest on loans contracted by the Gov[ernmen]t of the Shah in Russia, Great Britain would be prepared to undertake the collection and remission to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t of the due proportion of the customs receipts or other revenues pledged to the service of such loans in the regions within the lines mentioned in Art[icle] II.

"In similar circumstances, Russia would be prepared to undertake the collection and remission to His Britannic Majesty's Gov[ernmen]t of the due proportion of the customs receipts or other revenues pledged to the service of the loans, contracted by the Gov[ernmen]t of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia, in the region within the lines mentioned in Art[icle] I."

Sir E. Grey proposes, if Mr. Morley should see no objection, to authorise Sir A. Nicolson to submit to M. Isvolski the draft of an article in these terms.

[I am, &c.]

E. G[ORST]

⁽²⁾ [v. supra, p. 443, No. 401.]

⁽³⁾ [v. supra, p. 441, No. 396.]

No. 407.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/869.

(No. 182.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. April 7, 1907.

R. April 15, 1907.

I had the honour to receive your despatch No. 186 of the 2nd instant, transmitting copy of a letter from the Admiralty in regard to the measures which might be taken for the protection of British interests in the Persian Gulf.⁽¹⁾ As M. Isvolsky will doubtless expect a reply in writing to the *Aide Mémoire* which he communicated to me, and a copy of which I transmitted in my despatch No. 156 of March 25,⁽²⁾ I venture to enclose the Draft of an *Aide Mémoire* which I might hand to His Excellency should its terms meet with your approval. I think that it would be unnecessary to enumerate the ports to which ships of war might be despatched, and I have therefore given a very general statement on that head. I have also not specified the character of the protective measures, but should M. Isvolsky again ask me if His Majesty's Government would, in case of necessity, be prepared to seize Customs Houses, I would propose to reply that the naval commanders would be allowed latitude as to the nature of protection which the circumstances might require and would be authorized to adopt that which seemed to them to be the most practicable and feasible.

I should be grateful if you would kindly inform me by telegraph of your views as to my draft *Aide Mémoire*, and of any modifications which you would desire me to introduce.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 407.

Aide-mémoire for communication to the Russian Government.

His Majesty's Embassy had the honour to receive the *Aide Mémoire* which the Imperial Russian Government were good enough to communicate on the 12/25 March 1907 in regard to the measures which in case of urgent necessity would be taken for the protection of Russian interests in Persia. The Imperial Russian Government requested to be informed of the measures which His Majesty's Government might be disposed, in similar circumstances, to adopt.

His Majesty's Embassy begs leave to state that in case of serious emergency and in the event of the lives and interests of British subjects being gravely endangered, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to despatch ships of war to the southern ports of Persia, and in the Persian Gulf to afford such measures of protection as the circumstances might demand. His Majesty's Embassy understands that the Imperial Russian Government are in accord with His Majesty's Government that active measures should, if possible, be avoided and only adopted in circumstances of serious urgency and after previous communication between the two Governments.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced.]⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 444-5, No. 403, and *encl.*]

No. 408.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/869.

(No. 190.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. April 10, 1907.

R. April 15, 1907.

I enquired of M. Isvolsky to-day whether he could tell me if the Russian Government would be disposed to give some assurances with the object of

tranquillising the mind of the Zil-es-Sultan as to his future. His Excellency said that the Russian Government were quite prepared to convey to His Highness assurances similar to those which I had mentioned to him in my private letter of the 12/25 March, and a copy of which I had the honour to enclose in my despatch No. 155 of the same date.⁽¹⁾ M. Isvolsky added that the assurances would be conveyed direct to the Zil-es-Sultan. I asked him if I could take his communication as a settled matter, and His Excellency replied in the affirmative.

I telegraphed the above to you in my telegram No. 62 of to-day's date.⁽²⁾

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. *cp. supra*, p. 444, No. 402 and *note*. Despatch No. 155 of March 25 reported an interview between Sir A. Nicolson and M. Isvolski, with reference to the position of the Zil-es-Sultan. At M. Isvolski's request Sir A. Nicolson addressed to him the following private letter :

Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

Mon cher Ministre,

St. Petersburg, March 25, 1907.

Me référant à notre conversation de ce matin, voici en deux mots, et à titre tout à fait privé, un court résumé de mes observations. Je serais heureux de savoir si le Gouvernement Impérial dans le cas où la vie ou les biens du Zil es Sultan ou de sa famille seront en danger, serait disposé à faire quelques démarches en sa faveur, et à donner des assurances à cet effet à mon Gouvernement ou au Zil-es-Sultan lui-même, à condition bien entendu, que ce personnage reste toujours fidèle au Schah et aux institutions de son pays. Je me suis permis de vous expliquer ce matin les motifs de mes observations, qui ont été suggérées par l'éventualité d'un accord sur la Perse.

Veuillez, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

⁽²⁾ [Not reproduced.]

No. 409.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/370.

(No. 69.)

Sir,

Tehran, D. April 11, 1907.

R. May 13, 1907.

I have the honour to acknowledge the receipt on April 7th of copy of a draft convention relative to Persia communicated by M. Isvolsky on February 20.⁽¹⁾

It is clear from the date and manner of the communication that my opinion on this proposed arrangement is neither invited nor desired. At the same time it appears to be my duty as laid down in the King's general instructions to advise you as to the probable effects of such an agreement upon British interests in the country in which I reside, and where the Agreement is operative.

I assume that the amendments desired by you are carried into effect and that Russia is debarred from eventually exercising control over the coast-line outside the Gulf and the frontier adjacent to Afghanistan and Baluchistan, and also that British concessions lying within the Russian sphere are maintained. Some of these concessions, as the D'Arcy Oil concession, the Khanikin telegraph-line, and the Sultanabad-Dizful road are not yet exploited, either wholly or in part. I presume that British interests in this respect will be fully safeguarded and that it will be clearly laid down that not only are existing concessions to be maintained, and to be held entitled to the fullest diplomatic support, but that they can be renewed if so desired. This point is of importance in view of the fact that while the concession of the Telegraph Company has been renewed to 1945 the Indo-European Telegraph Department's concession expires in 1925 and should be renewed like that of the Company for another 20 years. It would also be of importance to receive some

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 432, No. 389, *encl.*]

security that the telegraph lines now being worked by British enterprize are not redeemed by purchase by the Persian Government in order to be transferred to other hands. Another point which vitally interests British enterprise is that the Russian Bank should be precluded from acquiring the monopoly of the import of silver for coinage purposes which they demanded some years ago and which would render nugatory the note monopoly enjoyed by the Imperial Bank.

The right at present held by Great Britain of administering the quarantine service in South Persia is of great importance as if allowed to fall into other hands it would probably be exercised to the detriment of British trade. In view of the hostile attitude of Russia and her Belgian agents, towards the British quarantine service it would be a wise precaution to secure her formal adhesion to a continuance of the present arrangement.

With regard to the effect on popular opinion here of the publication of such an agreement as the present convention there cannot I think be any reasonable doubt. It will simply be regarded as a treaty for the partition of Persia. It will be observed that there is no formal and definite pledge as to the integrity and independence of Persia but merely a reference in the preamble to the existing engagements which are, as is known, of an informal nature. It was hoped that any agreement between Russia and England would contain a formal engagement to maintain these principles, and the resulting disappointment will be considerable. It will also be observed that the two Governments are animated by the desire "to maintain order throughout Persia and to establish equal advantages for trade;" that they recognize "their mutual interests in maintaining peace and order in certain provinces;" and that each pledges itself not to seek concessions within a certain zone which is reserved for the other. It will be concluded from these expressions that the two Governments arrogate to themselves the right of maintaining order in the Shah's dominions and also of acquiring exclusive concessions in certain provinces, which become a sort of special preserve.

In view of the strong current of public opinion which now prevails and which is hostile to any foreign concession, or any species of foreign control, the publication of an agreement of such a nature as this, and couched in such terms cannot fail to produce a very strong impression. Any foreign country, not directly concerned in the Anglo-Russian agreement would undoubtedly be able to reap considerable advantage from the odium which would certainly accrue to the contracting parties; and they should be prepared for such an eventuality. It will be urged by those hostile to the influence of Russia and England here—of whom there are many—that the two Empires have agreed together to connive at the acquisition of the widest possible rights,—“concessions of whatever nature political or commercial,”—by England or Russia in by far the largest and richest part of the Persian Empire, mutually abandoning to one another the exclusive privilege of exploiting the assigned provinces. I consider it my duty to point out to you—what indeed is evident and has already been repeatedly brought to your notice—that public opinion in Persia will be deeply stirred by what will be regarded as a partition of the Empire and a claim to exercise control over the sovereign rights of the State, and that a great impetus will at once be given to the already existing anti-foreign sentiment, which has hitherto been kept in control, though with constantly increasing difficulty. And I also beg to add that there is reason to fear that this feeling will be all the more bitter against England in proportion to the hopes which have been centred in her, and the belief in her friendly sentiments and sympathy, which have so long prevailed, especially among the popular classes, who have looked to the Liberal Government of England to protect them against the encroachments of Russian autocracy.

With regard to the practical value and effect of the agreement if concluded, I do not believe it will either accelerate or retard the advance of Russia in this country. It is interesting, however, as giving an indication to what are Russia's designs, namely to construct a line towards Herat by the route surveyed by

M. Lessar on the left bank of the Heri Rud to Kuhsan, to commence the line along the easy alignment towards the Gulf of Oman already surveyed via Kashan and Yezd, and to construct the connecting line between the Caucasian system and the Bagdad railway via Tabriz, Hamadan and Khanikin which is no doubt already agreed on with Germany. By the time these lines are finished the position of Russia will be so strong that even if the convention has still some time to run, it will be a case for the application of Count Lamsdorff's doctrine that "when circumstances are no longer the same, former agreements cannot be considered as binding." It will, however, be a matter of some difficulty for Russia to carry out this programme under her own authority. To judge by present appearances the Persian Government will resolutely refuse to grant any concessions whatever to foreigners. The Assembly will attempt to develop the resources of the country by assigning concessions to native companies which no doubt will seek foreign help, but will naturally be averse to applying directly either to Russia or Great Britain. But the alignment to be followed by railways or roads will probably be decided by the power which possesses the control over the seat of the Government. There is no doubt which power it is. Russia has given us a seat on the saddle, but she sits in front and holds the bridle. You emphasize this point of view when you express the desire to neutralize the seat of Government. But I venture to point out that this can only be attempted by a series of provisions forbidding Russia to advance money to the Government, or increase her guards, or organize the army under Russian officers, or resort to the innumerable means of influence, direct and indirect, of which she at present disposes. And I venture to add that even if Russia consented to the insertion of such provisions in the convention, they would be useless. Nothing could be more abundant and precise than the series of self-denying provisions of this nature contained in the Korean agreements between Japan and Russia of 1896 and 1898. But these did not prevent the Russian officials on the spot from resorting to naval demonstrations, acquiring control of the Korean Government by flattery and menace, from attacking the Japanese Bank Note monopoly or from attempting to obtain possession of strategical positions and of the control of the coinage, mining rights, and general financial administration of the country.

I venture to express the opinion that no pledge of this character would be of much value and that nothing will prevent Russia from obtaining complete control over the Persian Government except the resistance of Persia herself and her own reluctance to overcome that resistance by force. It appears evident that the Persian people will resist, nor will their resistance be diminished by the fact that England will be held to have abandoned their cause. But we cannot expect that their resistance will be in the interests of Great Britain: and we cannot hope to obtain a very favourable hearing to our own demands. I cannot but regard the situation of British interests in North Persia, and indeed over the whole Empire, as likely to be precarious after the conclusion of the agreement; and I trust that their owners will be warned to look for protection not to Tehran but to St. Petersburg.

Although in a sense the convention only recognizes what already exists, and what we cannot prevent, namely the immense preponderance of Russia in northern Persia and in the capital, its publication will I think produce a considerable effect on the general situation. It will imply the definite withdrawal of England from the diplomatic struggle at Tehran on which the Persians have so long relied as the safeguard of their independence. And it will no doubt cause a feeling of fear and indignation, which will very probably take the form of an appeal to other countries for assistance. It is not probable that assistance will be granted in any practical form. The only hope for Persian independence lies not in foreign help, or treaties or conventions, but in the Persian people themselves and in their newly acquired sense of dignity and patriotism, and perhaps in the solidarity of all mussulmans. His Majesty's Government can hardly desire to place themselves in public opposition to such a sentiment. But from what I hear I have good reason to believe that the

agreement between England and Russia will be classed with that between England and France as an anti-mussulman combine, and that an appeal will be made to Mohammedan feeling all over the world.

I venture therefore to suggest that simultaneously with the publication of the agreement such explanations will be publicly made as will show clearly what is the real object of the agreement and that it was never intended in any way to lead to the partition of the Persian Empire or the spoliation and enslavement of the Persian people.⁽²⁾

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

(²) [Two long minutes by Sir C. Hardinge and Sir E. Grey attached to this despatch, apparently written on May 14, 1907, sketched the lines of the reply finally sent on June 12. *v. infra*, pp. 470-1, No. 421. The interval was caused by consultation of the India Office.]

No. 410.

Sir N. O'Connor to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/369.

(No. 231.) * Confidential.

Constantinople, D. April 17, 1907.

Sir,

R. April 22, 1907.

During last summer, when the Russian Ambassador and myself were supporting the representations of the Persian Ambassador with a view to the settlement of the Turco-Persian frontier, we were suddenly informed by Prince Riza Khan that the German Ambassador had offered him his support, and that while gratefully acknowledging His Excellency's friendly offer, His Highness had pointed out that in case he failed to come to an understanding with the Porte, he would, in accordance with the Anglo-Russian agreement of March 1865, have to refer the points in dispute to the decision of the Governments of England and Russia.

In the course of a recent conversation with the Russian Ambassador, the conversation turned on the curious development given to the Turco-Persian negotiations by the introduction of Germany on the scene, as I had left here in September and had heard nothing more on the subject, I asked His Excellency if he knew why the German Ambassador had suddenly taken such interest in the question and offered the Persian Ambassador his good offices.

Monsieur Zinoview, speaking confidentially, then proceeded to tell me that the Persian Ambassador had one day received a telegram from his Government, instructing him to ask for the assistance of the German Ambassador, that he had replied it was difficult to do so as the British and Russian Ambassadors were the natural arbitrators, and that he had thereupon been told to appeal all the same for the good offices of the German, and keep his Government informed of the course of the negotiations.

Monsieur Zinoview, who is on intimate terms with his Persian Colleague, went on to say that he had subsequently learnt that the telegrams, giving these instructions to Prince Riza Khan, though signed by the Minister for Foreign Affairs, were in Monsieur Naus' private cypher and that there was no doubt it was one of this gentleman's many intrigues to gain the support of Germany. Monsieur Naus had, as I knew, been a constant visitor at the German Embassy, during his stay here and as he was not only a born intriguer, but also a man of considerable resource, it was possible he had concocted some scheme with the new German Minister in Persia, Monsieur Stenrich [*sic*], quite regardless of the interest of Persia.

Indeed he had gathered from a secret source that he had undertaken to settle the frontier question in such a favourable manner for Turkey as to justify the German Embassy, to whom the credit of the Settlement would be given, in demanding a recompense from the Sultan, which could take the shape of a coaling Station or Island on the Persian Gulf.

His Excellency said he had reminded the Persian Ambassador of the declaration made by Lord Lansdowne in the House of Lords in 1903 and that he had strongly censured the Persian Government for giving such liberty of action in political affairs to an official of Monsieur Naus' stamp.

His Excellency said he was not aware of any special activity by Germany at the present moment to obtain a Port or Coaling Station on the Persian Gulf, but he thought it not unlikely that some sort of promise may have been made by the Sultan to give them an Island or Coaling Station in the Gulf in connection with the Bagdad Railway.

He said that if he got any further information on the subject he would not fail to let me know.

I have, &c.

N. R. O'CONNOR.

MINUTES.

Prince Riza Khan's official and confidential statements are in direct conflict. In the first he says the German Ambas[sado]r offered his services which he declined and in the second that in spite of his advice to the contrary he was instructed to appeal to the German Ambas[sado]r for his assistance. This does not lead one to think that he is more trustworthy than most of his countrymen or that the story he tells is based on anything more than pure conjecture. M. Naus must have been well aware of the Anglo-Russian Agreement of March 1865 and is very unlikely to have tried such an ineffectual and roundabout way to help Germany to get a footing on the Gulf. It is however quite likely that the Persian Gov[ernmen]t appealed to Germany in the hope that even if it did not lead to direct result it might at least stimulate the anxiety of the British and Russian Gov[ernmen]ts to obtain a settlement satisfactory to them.

The Russian Ambas[sado]r thinks it not unlikely that the Germans have got the promise of coaling station in the Gulf from the Sultan.

W. E.

Ap. 23.

We have been already warned that Germany might claim, under Art[icle] XVIII of her Treaty with Persia of June 6, 1873, to tender her good offices. The words are "Pour le cas ou la Perse serait impliquée dans un différend avec une autre Puissance, le Gouv[ernemen]t d'Allemagne se déclare prêt à employer, sur la demande du Gouv[ernemen]t de S[a] M[ajesté] I[mpériale] le Shah, ses bons offices pour contribuer à applanir le différend."

It is curious to find the Russian Ambas[sado]r quoting to the Persian Lord Lansdowne's declaration of 1903.

R. P. M.

The Russians cannot wish to see Germany obtain a footing in the Persian Gulf.*
The whole story of this alleged intrigue on the part of M. Naus is very doubtful.

F. A. C.

24 Apl.

* Less now than ever.

C. H.

E. G.

No. 411.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/370.

(No. 220.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. April 22, 1907.

R. April 29, 1907.

With reference to your despatches Nos. 154 and 155 of the 17th instant,⁽¹⁾ I have the honour to transmit herewith, copy of an *Aide Mémoire* which I communicated to M. Isvolsky this afternoon in reply to the *Pro Memoria* of the Russian Government of the 2nd instant,⁽²⁾ respecting certain points in the Draft Convention concerning Persia.

(1) [These despatches enclosed the correspondence between the Foreign Office and the India Office upon Nos. 398, 401 and 403 (*supra*, pp. 442-3, 443, and 444-5), and desire Sir A. Nicolson to communicate with M. Isvolski in the sense of No. 406 (*supra*, pp. 447-8).]

(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 446-7, No. 404, *encl.* 2.]

I explained to His Excellency that I had drawn up Articles 3, 4, and 5 for the sake of convenience, and that it seemed to me that we were now practically very near the termination of the Convention respecting Persia. His Excellency agreed with me, and said that he must study the paper which I had left with him before giving a reply; and there was still the question of the two telegraph lines. I observed that I had submitted a Draft declaration on that subject to him and was awaiting his reply.⁽³⁾ He said that there were one or two points connected with that question which he would probably have to mention to me, but that he did not desire to enter upon it at this moment.

I said that he would observe in the Draft Articles which I now communicated no mention was made of "zones" or "spheres," as it was desirable to avoid employing those terms which might give rise to misapprehension.

His Excellency appeared to agree with this view.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 411.

Aide-mémoire communicated April 9/22, 1907.

H[is] M[ajesty's] Embassy had the honour to receive the *Pro memoriâ* of the Imperial Russian Gov[ernmen]t dated the 20th March/2 april 1907 in reply to the *Aide Mémoire* which was communicated by H[is] M[ajesty's] Embassy on the 25 Feb[ruary]/10 March.⁽⁴⁾ The Imperial Gov[ernmen]t points out in its above-mentioned *Pro memoriâ* that the right of control over the Persian Customs, in case of non-payment of the coupons, has been ceded to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t by virtue of a contract concluded with the Persian Gov[ernmen]t, and that therefore it is necessary to decide whether that right could be ceded to a third Power, and whether the Persian Gov[ernmen]t would be justified in protesting against such a transaction. H[is] M[ajesty's] Embassy would beg leave to point out that the party to whom the collection of the pledged revenues was intrusted would merely be acting as the Agent of the other, and it would therefore not appear that the Persian Gov[ernmen]t would have any right to object to such a proceeding.

The Imperial Gov[ernmen]t also desired to be informed as to what rights H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t possess of taking action in the event of the non payment of the interest on British Loans; and consequently what would be the responsibility incurred by the Russian Gov[ernmen]t should this contingency arise. H[is] M[ajesty's] Embassy beg leave to observe that the loan contracts concluded by the Imperial Bank of Persia with the Persian Gov[ernmen]t do not expressly provide for such a case, but the right of control in the event of non-payment may be held to follow inherently from the hypothecation of the revenues.

The *Pro-memoriâ* of the 20 March/2 April further remarked that it would be desirable to omit all mention of "third parties" in regard to concessions in the neutral zones. H[is] M[ajesty's] Embassy is authorized to agree with this omission and also to reciprocally engage not to oppose, without a previous understanding with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, the grant of concessions to Russian subjects in those neutral zones.

H[is] M[ajesty's] Embassy would, therefore, suggest the following articles connected with the above subjects, and which would be numbered Article 3, 4 and 5 of the proposed Draft Convention. Articles 1 and 2 refer to the respective spheres, and on these an accord has already been reached, provided that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t consent to the rectification of the line of the Russian sphere of influence as

⁽³⁾ [*cp. supra*, pp. 441-2, No. 397, *encl.*]

⁽⁴⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 439-40, No. 395, *encl.*]

requested by H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t, viz., that it should terminate at Zulficar and not at a point near Kuhsan.

ARTICLE 3.

Russia, on her part, further engages not to oppose without previous arrangement with Great Britain, any grant of concessions to British Subjects in the regions of Persia outside of the lines mentioned in Articles I and II. Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as regards the grant of concessions to Russian subjects in the same regions of Persia.

All existing concessions within the lines mentioned in Articles I and II are maintained.

ARTICLE 4.

It is understood that the revenues of all the Persian Customs, with the exception of those of Farsistan and of the Persian Gulf, guaranteeing the repayment and the interests of the loans concluded in Russia by the Government of the Shah shall be devoted to the same purpose as in the past.

It is equally understood that the revenues of the Persian Customs of Farsistan and of the Persian Gulf, as well as those of the Caspian Fisheries and of Posts and Telegraphs shall be devoted as in the past to the service of loans concluded by the Government of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia.

ARTICLE 5.

In the case of the non-payment of the interest on loans contracted by the Government of the Shah in Russia, Great Britain would be prepared to undertake the collection and the remission to the Russian Government of the due proportion of the Customs receipts or other revenues pledged to the service of such loans in the regions within the lines mentioned in Article II.

In similar circumstances, Russia would be prepared to undertake the collection and remission to His Britannic Majesty's Government of the due proportion of the customs receipts or other revenues pledged to the service of the loans contracted by the Government of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia in the regions within the lines mentioned in Article I.

MINUTES.

M. Izvolsky probably intends to raise the question of our control of the telegraph line not extending into the Russian sphere.

R. P. M.

I think that Sir Charles Hardinge is contemplating a deal by which our line would be brought up to Zulficar.

Article III. If this article means that in the event of a Russian subject asking for a concession in the neutral zone to which we might object, we should not be at liberty to do so without first approaching the Russian Gov[ernmen]t with a view to an agreement, but that if no agreement were arrived at, we should be at liberty to oppose, it is easy to defend. If it means that, in the event of a Russian applying for a concession which we don't like, we may go to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t and make an arrangement with them under which we may oppose it but that if we cannot agree about it, must acquiesce, then I think it is perhaps less easy to defend.

We might substitute for the words "without previous arrangement" the words "without a previous exchange of views" which is vaguer. I am aware that this cuts both ways and that at present our position is better than the Russian position in the neutral zone and that it is in some respects more probable that we shall go ahead there than the Russians. But this is a debateable point and it might be argued that the Russians will make a determined attempt to undermine our position on the Gulf—on the whole I do not think that we should suffer by the change of words that I suggest.

L. M.

In my opinion the wording "without previous arrangement" is the most advantageous wording for British interests. British enterprise has undoubtedly much greater facilities in the

neutral zone, which is practically Southern Persia, than Russian enterprise. The geographical situation is greatly to the advantage of British enterprise so long as there is no Russian railway to the South. As regards the latter contingency there is no cause for alarm. The country between the west of our sphere and the Turkish frontier is of such a barren and mountainous character, chain after chain of mountains rising diagonally across any railway route from the North, that there need be no fear of any Company or Gov[ernmen]t attempting such a gigantic task as a railway to the S[outh] of Persia, since it would be extremely costly and could not possibly pay. The only possibility for a railway was long ago foreseen by the Russians and it would have run diagonally from west to south east along the valleys, between the ranges of mountains, and would have terminated at Charbar. This route is now blocked by Charbar being well within our sphere. I should like however, in order to make quite sure, to consult the Intelligence Dep[artmen]t and to see if they concur with what I have stated. If they do agree, I think Sir A. Nicolson's wording should be maintained as being more advantageous to us than the Russians.

Consult I. D.

C. H.

E. G.

No. 412.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

Tehran, April 26, 1907.

I was glad to receive your definite instructions as to my attitude towards the various attempts made to induce me to take sides against the popular party. You say that the Russian Government has shown no signs of wishing to depart from an attitude of neutrality. That may be true of St. Petersburg. It is not true of Tehran. You will see that there are abundant signs that the Russian agents are anxious to help the Shah to put down the reform party by force. Our determination not to take part in such a policy has altered the situation. If we do not join them Russia will have the sole responsibility and will have to encounter the undivided odium. And this would be very dangerous. As the financial agent said the other day; "you might take Persia with a thousand men and at the expense of a million roubles but it would take whole army corps and millions of money to hold it." If the Persian people could count on the sympathy of any large section of European public opinion as well as of the whole Mahomedan world the task of the conquerer would be a hard one. So I think that for the present the policy of Russia will be to encourage the Shah to undermine the assembly by peaceful means and not to attack it by force and to avoid armed intervention as long as possible.

You must count however, as I suppose you have counted, on the effect on popular opinion here and in other Mahomedan countries of your close agreement with Russia. You will be judged by your friends and associates; and if Russia, as is the case, is notoriously hostile to the patriotic movement in Persia, and if you make an agreement with Russia, the simple people here will take for granted that in your heart you think as Russia does. No doubt there are many things gained by the agreement and by common action. But you must be prepared to pay the cost and as far as I can judge part of the price is a great loss of popularity here which may react unfavourably on your position in other Mahomedan countries. It will also increase the power and prestige of Germany. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 81.]

⁽²⁾ [The rest of this letter gives further details of possible German influences, and the Persian attitude to Anglo-Russian negotiations.]

MINUTE.

Our agreement with Russia is a mutual self-denying ordinance recognizing Persian independence. It may annoy Persia who has lived on the enmity between us and Russia, but we cannot keep up a quarrel with Russia in order to curry favour with the Persians.

E. G.

[ED. NOTE.—The following minutes are filed in F.O. 871/870 as "separate minutes," not being attached to any specific document :

MINUTES.

There are one or two points which still require our attention in the draft agreement with Russia relating to Persia.

According to the text as it now stands there is nothing to prevent Russia or Germany from making a purely commercial railway with a terminus on the Persian Gulf. I do not see why we should object to a Russian railway terminus of a purely commercial nature on the Gulf, in fact the late Gov[ernmen]t on more than one occasion expressed their readiness to consider this question and that their efforts were not directed towards the exclusion of the legitimate trade of other Powers. But if the Russians enjoy this right, the Germans can equally claim it, and by securing a terminus for the Bagdad Railway on the Persian side of the Gulf they would be able to prevent us obstructing them, as we have done in the past, from building the railway without our participation or consent. It seems fairly certain that we shall at a not very remote date come to terms with the Germans and participate in the Bagdad Railway, but it is always possible that we may not. To meet this contingency it might be as well to make the following addition to the preamble:—

" les Gouvernements de la Grande Bretagne et de la Russie, s'étant mutuellement engagés à respecter l'antiquité et l'indépendance ainsi que le maintien du statu quo sur les frontières et le littoral de la Perse et "

It is possible that the Russians might object to this insertion as precluding the possibility of their running a railway to the Gulf, although my impression is that they have, at any rate for the time being, given up any such idea, but I believe that they fully realise the danger of letting the Germans come in and for that reason it is not improbable that they may accept it.

As regards the change of our line from Birjand-Gazik to Birjand-Zulficar which Sir E. Grey proposes to make a matter of bargain with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t in accepting Turbat-i-Haidari instead of Meshed as the terminal of the Scistan Telegraph line, it has been pointed out to me that although from the point of view of the British public it would look better if our line goes to Zulficar it can make no possible difference to the Russians from a strategic point of view, since if they wished to attack Afghanistan the Russian forces could easily invade the country in traversing our zone long before we could do anything to prevent them, even if any other steps were possible.

I have further consulted the Intelligence Department as to the possibility of the construction of railways from the north to the South and west of Bunder Abbas and I am told that from the opinions of many officers who have visited Southern Persia and studied that country, their conclusion is that no railways could be built except at a gigantic and entirely unremunerative cost, with the exception possibly of a line from Mohammerah following the bed of the Karun and its branches, and of this latter point the Intelligence Dep[artmen]t were not quite sure.

It would however be possible to build a railway running east and west and following the contour of the coast of the Persian Gulf. Such a railway could hardly have a strategic value.

C. H.

May 8, 1907.

The reference to the littoral is desirable if possible.

E. G.

I do not wish to raise small points; but we should perhaps bear in mind in the final edition that Zulficar itself is on Afghan territory. It was a point round which a long controversy raged in 1885-6.

F.]

No. 418.

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

F.O. 871/870.

(No. 277.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. May 23, 1907.

R. May 27, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a private letter and its enclosure, which I have received from M. Izvolski, regarding the collection and the remission of the pledged revenues in the respective British and Russian zones in the event of the Persian Government defaulting in the regular payment of the coupons of the British and Russian loans.

In my despatch No. 261 of the 15th instant,⁽²⁾ I explained the doubts which M. Izvolski felt as to accepting the draft article 5 of the Persian convention which I had communicated to him.⁽³⁾ The memorandum which I now beg to transmit, would, if His Majesty's Government agreed to its terms, be substituted for the above-mentioned article.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure 1 in No. 418.

*M. Izvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.**Ministère Impérial des Affaires Etrangères,**le 10/23 mai, 1907.*

Mon cher Ambassadeur,

En me référant à notre conversation sur votre aide mémoire du 11/24 avril⁽⁴⁾ dernier, je m'empresse de vous transmettre notre contre-projet de l'article ayant trait au mode de perception des sommes dues à l'une des parties contractantes sur des revenus situés dans la sphère de l'autre. Vous ayant déjà fait part verbalement des considérations sur lesquelles est basé notre contre-projet je m'abstiens, pour éviter tout retard, de les développer dans un mémorandum spécial qui pourrait ne pas être prêt aujourd'hui même.

Votre sincèrement dévoué,

(Sd.) ISVOLSKY.

Enclosure 2 in No. 418.

Counter-Draft.

R. 10/23 May, 1907.

En cas d'irrégularités dans l'amortissement ou le paiement des intérêts des emprunts persans conclus jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement en Russie ou en Angleterre, et si la nécessité se présente pour une des parties contractantes d'instituer un contrôle sur les sources de revenus, garantissant le service régulier des emprunts conclus chez elle par la Perse et situées dans la sphère d'influence de l'autre partie, les Gouvernements Russe et Anglais s'engagent à entrer préalablement dans un échange d'idées amical en vue de déterminer d'un commun accord les moyens d'effectuer les mesures de contrôle en question.

(1) [The substance of some minutes attached to this despatch was embodied in Sir E. Grey's reply, *v. infra*, pp. 465-6, No. 417.]

(2) [Not reproduced.]

(3) [*v. supra*, p. 456, No. 411, *encl.*]

(4) [The *aide-mémoire* was communicated on April 9/22, *v. supra*, pp. 455-6, No. 411, *encl.*]

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, May 27, 1907.

F.O. 371/370.

D. 8 P.M.

Tel. (No. 78.)

R. 9 P.M.

Persian Convention.

I have received an *aide-mémoire*⁽¹⁾ stating that Russian Government agree with general sense of Article I, Article II, Article III, and Article IV of draft Convention as proposed in my *aide-mémoire* of 22nd April,⁽²⁾ including condition that Russian line should end at Zulficar.

Russian Government consider that there are one or two details of secondary importance to be settled, and that they will be prepared to finally draw up Convention when they receive reply to draft Article V, which I sent home in my despatch No. 277 of 23rd May.⁽³⁾

They promise to give me very shortly reply as to the transfer of the two telegraph lines.

(¹) [Sir A. Nicolson's despatch No. 285 of May 28, R. May 31, enclosed the text of the *aide-mémoire* which was as follows:

Le Gouvernement Impérial se trouve d'accord avec le sens général des articles 1, 2, 3 et 4 du projet de convention sur la question de la Perse tel qu'il a été proposé dans l'aide mémoire de l'Ambassade d'Angleterre du 9/22 avril dernier, y inclus la condition que la ligne qui démarque la sphère d'influence russe aboutisse à Zulfagar; il ne considère nécessaire que de régler quelques détails d'importance secondaire, tel, par exemple, le tracé définitif de cette ligne, d'écarter ou de changer quelques expressions insuffisamment claires et déterminées qui seraient de nature à provoquer des contestations, et de mettre la dernière main à la rédaction de la convention, aussitôt qu'il sera en possession de la réponse de l'Ambassade au sujet d'une nouvelle rédaction de l'article 5, communiquée à Sir Arthur Nicolson le 10/23 mai courant.

Quant à la question de l'échange des lignes télégraphiques, le Ministère Impérial se réserve de faire parvenir incessamment à l'Ambassade Britannique un projet d'accord y relatif.

St. Petersburg, le 14/27 mai 1907.]

(²) [*v. supra*, pp. 455-6, No. 411, *encl.*]

(³) [*v. immediately preceding document.*]

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, May 29, 1907.

F.O. 371/309.

D. 8.1 P.M.

Tel. (No. 79.)

R. 10 P.M.

Persian Telegraphs: Prolongation of Concessions.

Your despatch No. 184.⁽¹⁾

Minister for Foreign Affairs handed to me to-day a Memorandum in reply to my communication of 19th May. The Memorandum points out that proposed steps of His Majesty's Government would introduce considerable changes in existing state of things in Persia as regards rights acquired by England and Russia respectively.

(¹) [Not reproduced. This despatch (dated May 15) relates to the proposal to renew the contract of the Indo-European Telegraph Department with the Persian Government for a period of twenty years after its existing date of termination (1925). Sir A. Nicolson was requested to inform the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs of this proposal. On May 22, Sir A. Nicolson sent a despatch to Sir E. Grey (No. 274) stating that he had written a private letter to M. Isvolaki on the subject. This private letter appears to be the communication of May 19 referred to above.]

Two of the lines would pass through provinces situated in the proposed Russian sphere. Memorandum considers, therefore, that it would be just, in order not to depart from understanding established at commencement of negotiations, not to introduce during discussions any change in the rights of the two parties when, as in present case, these rights are evidently in close relationship with the present negotiations.

Minister for Foreign Affairs clearly wished to avoid my discussing the Memorandum at our interview, as he merely handed it to me saying that it contained some observations on the letter which I had written to him.

I shall have an opportunity to go into the matter with him very shortly when we discuss small amendments (merely drafting amendments he assured me) which he wishes introduced into Article I, Article II, Article III, Article IV of draft Convention, as in Article III there is a clause as to maintenance of existing Concessions.

I should be grateful for your views as to the language I should hold, and as to whether I should insist on our right to propose the prolongation at the present moment. I should like also to know if the moment is opportune for proposing the prolongation to the Persian Government, and whether Persian Assembly would raise no difficulties. It is possible that Minister for Foreign Affairs might allude to these considerations.

(Repeated to Tehran.)

No. 416.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/370.

(No. 306.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. June 6, 1907.

R. June 10, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith an *aide-mémoire* which I have received from M. Isvolsky enclosing some amendments which the Russian Government desire to introduce into the Preamble and into Article I to IV of the Draft Convention concerning Persia.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure 1 in No. 416.

Aide-mémoire.

St. Pétersbourg, le 5 juin, 1907.

Dans son Aide Mémoire du 14/27 mai c[ouran]t, le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial, tout en constatant l'accord établi entre la Grande Bretagne et la Russie quant au contenu du préambule et des quatre premiers articles de la Convention à conclure sur les affaires de Perse, se proposait de revenir sur quelques détails de l'arrangement qui, de son avis, exigeaient des éclaircissements supplémentaires.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Impérial a cru donc utile de mettre en regard le texte du préambule et des 4 premiers articles, tel qu'il a été accepté en principe par les deux Gouv[ernemen]ts, et les changements qu'il proposerait, pour sa part, d'y introduire, conformément à la pièce ci-jointe.

Sans s'arrêter sur quelques modifications de rédaction d'importance secondaire, qui y sont désignées en marge, le Ministère Imp[érial] croit devoir attirer tout spécialement l'attention de l'Amb[assadeur] Britannique sur les points suivants qui tout en ne touchant en rien aux bases de l'entente établies, ont tout de même une certaine portée.

1. Il est à noter tout d'abord que l'expression "animés du sincère désir de maintenir l'ordre et le développement pacifique dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire

l'ersan"—implique l'idée d'un engagement direct de garantir le maintien de l'ordre en Perse, ce qui n'entre évidemment pas dans les intentions des parties contractantes. Il serait donc préférable de rédiger ce passage comme suit: "animés du sincère désir de voir l'ordre et le développement pacifique maintenus dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire Persan."

2. La convention ayant exclusivement trait aux intérêts de la Grande Bretagne et de la Russie en Perse, il serait peut-être désirable d'omettre le passage relatif "aux avantages égaux pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les nations," d'autant plus que ce passage n'est pas en tous points conforme avec les dispositions du projet de la Convention.

3. De l'avis du Ministère Imp[érial] il semblerait préférable d'atténuer en tant que possible toute expression faisant allusion à des cas de mésintelligence entre les deux Puissances, et par conséquent d'omettre les mots "constatant l'effet nuisible résultant des cas de friction sur place dans leurs relations avec la Perse, et entre eux-mêmes." Le sens général du paragraphe n'en serait pas, semble-t-il, moins clair.

4. Comme la Russie a consenti en principe à faire aboutir la ligne de démarcation de sa sphère d'influence à Zulfagar, il reste à définir d'une manière précise les points principaux que la ligne en question devra traverser à partir de Khakh; le Ministère Imp[érial] désirerait la voir passer par les localités Khaf et Kiariz et la montagne Kuh-Benitak. Cette direction aurait l'avantage de comprendre dans la sphère d'influence Russe le poste sanitaire de Kiariz très important au point de vue de la garantie des possessions Russes de l'invasion d'épidémies.

5. Les limites de la zone russe n'étant indiquées dans l'article I que du côté méridional y aurait-il nécessité de mentionner dans l'article II "les frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Béloudjistan" comme limitant la zone anglaise?

6. Enfin le Gouv[ernemen]t Russe proposerait, pour plus de précision, de compléter l'article IV par une indication qu'il ne s'agit des emprunts conclus, aussi bien à la Banque Impériale de Perse, qu'à la Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts, "jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement."

Saint-Pétersbourg, le 23 Mai/5 Juin, 1907.

Enclosure 2 in No. 416.

Modifications proposées par le Gouvernement de Russie.

Le Texte de Convention, relative aux affaires de Perse, adopté en principe par les Gouvernements de Grande Bretagne et de Russie.

voir l'ordre et le développement pacifique maintenus

à exclure

Les Gouvernements de Grande Bretagne et de Russie, s'étant mutuellement engagés à respecter l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Perse et animés du sincère désir de maintenir l'ordre et le développement pacifique dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire Persan, aussi bien que d'établir des avantages égaux pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les nations, ont résolu qu'une convention sera conclue entre eux aux termes suivants:

Les Gouvernements de Grande Bretagne et de Russie reconnaissent mutuellement que chacun d'eux a pour des raisons d'ordre géographique et économique un intérêt

voir la paix et l'ordre maintenus

à exclure

de l'autre

spécial à maintenir la paix et l'ordre dans certaines provinces de la Perse contiguës ou voisines à la frontière russe d'une part, et aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Béloudjistan, de l'autre; et chacun des deux Gouvernements, constatant l'effet nuisible résultant des cas de friction sur place dans leurs relations avec la Perse et entre eux-mêmes, est désireux d'éviter tout motif de collision avec les intérêts spéciaux de chacun d'eux dans les provinces persanes dont il a été fait mention plus haut.

En conséquence, il a été décidé par la présente comme suit :

I.

La Grande Bretagne s'engage à ne pas rechercher pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer, en faveur de sujets britanniques, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de Puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale,—telles que les concessions de chemins de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurance, etc.—au delà d'une ligne partant de Kasri - Chirin, traversant Isphahan, Iezd et Khakh et aboutissant à la frontière afghane près de Zulficar, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région, soutenues par le Gouvernement Russe.

Iezd, Khakh, Khaf, Kiariz et la montagne Kuli-Benitak

II.

La Russie, de son côté, s'engage à ne pas rechercher pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets russes, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de Puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale, telles que les concessions de chemins de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurance etc.—au delà d'une ligne allant de la frontière afghane par Gazik, Birdjand, Kerman et Bender-Abbas et par les frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Béloudistan, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région soutenues par le Gouvernement Britannique.

et aboutissant à Bender-Abbas

III.

entre les

identique

La Russie s'engage pour sa part à ne pas s'opposer, sans s'être préalablement entendue avec l'Angleterre, à ce que des concessions quelconques soient données à des sujets britanniques dans les régions de la Perse situées en dehors des lignes mentionnées dans les articles I et II.

La Grande Bretagne prend un engagement analogue en ce qui concerne des concessions à donner à des sujets russes dans les mêmes régions de la Perse.

Toutes les concessions existant actuellement en deçà des lignes désignées dans les articles I et II sont maintenues.

IV.

revenus garantissant

à la Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement

sur le littoral Persan de la Mer Caspienne et ceux

Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement.

Il est entendu que les revenus de toutes les douanes persanes, à l'exception de celles du Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, garantissant l'amortissement et les intérêts des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah en Russie, seront affectés au même but que par le passé.

Il est également entendu que les revenus de douanes persanes du Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, aussi bien que ceux des pêcheries de la mer Caspienne et des Postes et Télégraphes seront affectés comme par le passé au service des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah à la Banque Impériale de Perse.

[ED. NOTE.—There is some difficulty as to the document following. Sir Edward Grey sent it on the 6th, and it therefore crossed Sir A. Nicolson's despatch No. 306 (v. immediately preceding document), which did not reach him until the 10th. Sir A. Nicolson telegraphed on the 6th that his despatch was coming, but gave no indication as to what the changes were which M. Isvolski had proposed (Tel. No. 86 of June 6, D. 2 p.m., R. 5.15 p.m.). The following minutes appear on this telegram :

Our revised draft will arrive in St. Petersburg about the same time. Sir A. Nicolson had better be told not to put it forward until we have considered the Russian draft.

L. M.
C. H.

Yes; it is very opportune for us that M. Isvolsky should have suggested amendments in the preamble and so opened the question of amending it, and we should wait to see what they are, in case we should be able to base something of what we want upon them or put forward our amendments as a condition of accepting the Russian ones.

E. G.

A telegram was accordingly sent to Sir A. Nicolson on the 7th (No. 72) instructing him not to communicate the amendments described in the despatch sent him on the 6th until M. Isvolski's proposals had been received.

An *Ed. note* on p. 468, *infra*, refers to the difficulty caused by the absence of an authoritative text of Sir Edward Grey's revised draft. A further difficulty is presented by the fact that Sir Edward Grey refers in this despatch to "the Russian draft" of Articles 2, 3 and 4. No drafts of Articles 3 and 4 appear to have been exchanged at this date except the British draft of April 22.]

No. 417.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/370.

(No. 225.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 6, 1907.

I have received Y[our] E[xc]cellency's desp[atch] No. 277 of the 23rd ult[imo]⁽¹⁾ forwarding copy of a private letter from the Russian Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] in which was enclosed an article which his Gov[ernmen]t desire to substitute for Article V of the draft Anglo-Russian Convention respecting Persia proposed by H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnmen]t.

I now tr[ansmit] to Y[our] E[xc]cellency herewith a revised draft Convention, embodying certain modifications which, after further consideration, H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnmen]t would desire to see introduced into that Agreement.

Y[our] E[xc]cellency will observe that most of the modifications made affect the preamble of the instrument.

For the expression "to maintain order and peaceful development throughout the whole extent of the Persian Empire" has been substituted the phrase "for the preservation, &c." This alteration has been made in consequence of the opinion expressed by H[is] M[ajesty's] Minister at Tehran in his desp[atch] No. 69 of April 11,⁽²⁾ that the original wording might be held to imply an intention on the part of the two Gov[ernmen]ts to arrogate to themselves the right of maintaining order in the dominions of the Shah, and that such an expression cannot fail to produce an unfortunate effect on the minds of the Persian Gov[ernmen]t and people.

Although, as Y[our] E[xc]cellency is well aware, the two Gov[ernmen]ts have in fact no such intention, it seems nevertheless desirable to remove the possibility of any such misunderstanding and it is hoped that the phrase which it is now proposed to employ will effect this object.

In the second paragraph of the preamble it has been thought well to insert a reference to the special interest of Great Britain in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf. This clause has been added in view of the strong and explicit declarations of my predecessor on this subject, which is evidently one of paramount importance to Great Britain.⁽³⁾ It is felt that the omission from the present Agreement of any mention of this point would make a bad impression on public opinion in this country, and seriously affect the popularity of the Agreement when concluded. H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t therefore press for the insertion of these words in the preamble in order to secure that the Agreement when announced in this country should be accepted from the first by both parties with goodwill.

In Article 1 the words "at a point on the Persian frontier adjoining the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers" have been substituted for the words "on the Afghan frontier near Zulfikar." This change has been introduced at the suggestion of the India Office who have pointed out that Zulfikar is well within the territory of Afghanistan. The substituted wording has the further advantage of emphasising the fact that the end of the line defining the Russian sphere lies in Persia and not in Afghanistan.

Articles 2, 3, and 4 of the Russian draft are retained unaltered.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 459, No. 418.]

⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 450-3, No. 409.]

⁽³⁾ [*Parl. Deb.*, 4th Ser., Vol. 121, p. 1948, and *cp.* references, *supra*, p. 371, No. 321, and *infra*, p. 462, No. 480, p. 488, No. 439, and p. 493, No. 444, *min.*]

The draft article put forward by the Russian Gov[ernmen]t in place of the British Article 5 is accepted with the addition at the end of the following clause:—

“and to avoid all interference in the respective spheres which would not be in conformity with the principles governing the present Convention.”

These words have been inserted in order specifically to exclude all possibility of the exercise by Russia of her right of control over such of the sources of revenue affected to the service of the Russian loans in Persia as lie within the British sphere, in the event of irregularity occurring in the service of those loans as foreseen in the article.

The article has also been subjected to a few verbal alterations which, it is thought, will render its sense more explicit.

In communicating to M. Izvolski these proposals, which it is hoped will prove acceptable to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, Y[our] E[xc]ellency will exercise your discretion as to how far you should discuss with him the considerations which have given rise to them.

I am, &c.
E. GREY.

Enclosure in No. 417.

Revised Draft Convention.

THE Governments of Great Britain and Russia, having mutually engaged to respect the integrity and independence of Persia, and being animated by a sincere desire for the preservation of order throughout the Persian Empire and for the peaceful development of that country as well as for the permanent establishment of equal advantages for the trade and industry of all other nations;

Considering that each of them has, for geographical and economic reasons, a special interest in the maintenance of peace and order in certain provinces of Persia adjoining, or in the neighbourhood of, the Russian frontier on the one hand, and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Baluchistan on the other hand, and that Great Britain has a special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, and being desirous of avoiding all cause of conflict between their respective interests in the above-mentioned regions;

Have agreed upon the following Convention:—

ARTICLE I.

Great Britain engages not to seek for herself, and not to support in favour of British subjects or in favour of the subjects of third Powers, any concessions of a political or commercial nature—such as concessions for railways, banks, telegraphs,

LES Gouvernements de la Grande-Bretagne et de la Russie, s'étant mutuellement engagés à respecter l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Perse, et animés d'un sincère désir pour la préservation de l'ordre dans toute l'étendue de l'Empire Persan et pour le développement pacifique de ce pays, aussi bien que pour l'établissement permanent des avantages égaux pour commerce et l'industrie de toutes les autres nations;

Considérant que chacun d'eux a, pour des raisons d'ordre géographique et économique, un intérêt spécial au maintien de la paix et de l'ordre dans certaines provinces de la Perse contiguës ou voisines à la frontière Russe, d'une part, et aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Béloudjistan, de l'autre; et que la Grande-Bretagne a un intérêt spécial au maintien du *statu quo* au Golfe Persique, et étant désireux d'éviter tout motif de conflit entre leurs intérêts respectifs dans les régions susmentionnées;

Se sont mis d'accord sur la Convention suivante:

ARTICLE I.

La Grande-Bretagne s'engage à ne pas rechercher pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets Britanniques, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de Puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale

roads, transport, insurance, &c.—beyond a line starting from Kasr-i-Shirin, crossing Isfahan, Yezd and Kakhk and ending at a point on the Persian frontier at the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers, and not to oppose, directly or indirectly, demands for similar concessions in this region which are supported by the Russian Government.

ARTICLE II.

Russia, on her part, engages not to seek for herself and not to support, in favour of Russian subjects, or in favour of the subjects of third Powers, any concessions of a political or commercial nature—such as concessions for railways, banks, telegraphs, roads, transport, insurance, &c.—beyond a line going from the Afghan frontier by way of Gazik, Birjand, Kerman, and ending at Bunder Abbas, and not to oppose, directly or indirectly, demands for similar concessions in this region which are supported by the British Government.

ARTICLE III.

Russia, on her part, further engages not to oppose, without previous arrangement with Great Britain, any grant of concessions to British subjects in the regions of Persia within the lines mentioned in Articles I and II. Great Britain undertakes a similar engagement as regards the grant of concessions to Russian subjects in the same regions of Persia.

All existing concessions within the lines mentioned in Articles I and II are maintained.

ARTICLE IV.

It is understood that the revenues of all the Persian customs, with the exception of those of Farsistan and of the Persian Gulf, guaranteeing the amortization and the interest of the loans concluded by the Government of the Shah with the "Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse" up to the date of the signature of the present Arrangement, shall be devoted to the same purpose as in the past.

[16942]

—telles que les concessions de chemin de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurance, &c.—au delà d'une ligne partant de Kasri-Chirin, traversant Ispahan, Iezd, et Khakh et aboutissant à un point sur la frontière Persane contigu à l'intersection des frontières Russe et Afgane, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région soutenues par le Gouvernement Russe.

ARTICLE II.

La Russie, de son côté, s'engage à ne pas rechercher, pour elle-même, et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets Russes, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de Puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale—telles que les concessions de chemin de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurances, &c.—au delà d'une ligne allant de la frontière Afgane par Gazik, Birjand, Kerman, et aboutissant à Bender-Abbas, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région soutenues par le Gouvernement Britannique

ARTICLE III.

La Russie, de son côté, s'engage, en outre, à ne pas s'opposer, sans entente préalable avec la Grande-Bretagne, à des concessions en faveur de sujets Britanniques dans les régions de la Perse entre les lignes dont il a été fait mention aux Articles I et II. La Grande-Bretagne prend un engagement identique à l'égard des concessions en faveur de sujets Russes dans les mêmes régions de la Perse.

Toute concession actuellement en vigueur dans les limites dont il a été fait mention aux Articles I et II est maintenue.

ARTICLE IV.

Il est entendu que les revenus de toutes les douanes Persanes, à l'exception de celles du Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, revenus garantissant l'amortissement et les intérêts des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah à la Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent Arrangement, seront affectés au même but que par le passé.

It is equally understood that the revenues of the Persian customs of Farsistan and of the Persian Gulf, as well as those of the fisheries on the Persian shore of the Caspian Sea and those of the Posts and Telegraphs, shall be devoted, as in the past, to the service of loans concluded by the Government of the Shah with the Imperial Bank of Persia up to the date of the signature of the present Arrangement.

Il est également entendu que les revenus des douanes Persanes du Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, aussi bien que ceux des pêcheries sur le littoral Persan de la Mer Caspienne et ceux des Postes et Télégraphes, seront affectés, comme par le passé, au service des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah avec la Banque Impériale de Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent Arrangement.

ARTICLE V.

In the event of irregularities occurring in the amortization or the payment of the interest of the Persian loans concluded with the "Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse" and with the Imperial Bank of Persia up to the date of the signature of the present Arrangement, and in the event of the necessity arising, for Russia to establish control over the sources of revenue which are affected to the regular service of the loans concluded with the first-named bank, and which are situated in the regions mentioned in Article II of the present Convention, or for Great Britain to establish control over the sources of revenue which are affected to the regular service of the loans concluded with the second-named bank, and which are situated in the regions mentioned in Article I of the present Convention, the British and Russian Governments undertake to enter beforehand into a friendly exchange of ideas with a view to determine, in agreement with each other, the means of giving effect to the measures of control in question, and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles governing the present Convention.

[*ED. NOTE.*—The text of the above Revised Draft Convention is not bound with the despatch which enclosed it and the original text, which should be in the Embassy Archives, has been destroyed, together with the despatch. The version given above is from the *Confidential Print*, the French of Article V being missing. Another printed version is given, *infra*, pp. 624–5, *Appendix IV.*]

No. 418.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 7, 1907.

D. 3 P.M.

R. 5-30 P.M.

F.O. 370/370.

Tel. (No. 87.)

Persian Convention.

Article V.

I have informed Min[ister] for F[oreign] A[ffairs] that H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernment]t accept Russian text with the proposed addenda, but I would suggest that I might also propose to him the following amendments in drafting of Russian text.

Instead of "Persian loans concluded in Russia—England" to say "Persian loans concluded with Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse and the Imperial Bank of Persia."

In the Russian amendments to Article IV sent to you by messenger yesterday the Discount Bank is mentioned and not Russia.

I would also suggest instead of words: "and situate in the sphere of influence of the other party" to employ some such wording as "and situate as regards revenues assigned to the former Bank in the regions mentioned in Article II and as regards those assigned to latter Bank in the regions mentioned in Article I."

We should thus avoid employing the phrase "sphere of influence" which it would be of advantage to omit.

May I propose these amendments?

MINUTE.

These proposed amendments seem to be improvements. It is only a question of wording.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 419.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/370.

Foreign Office, June 10, 1907.

Tel. (No. 78.)

D. 1 P.M.

Your Tel[egram] No. 87 (Persian Convention).

I concur in proposed amendments.

No. 420.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 10, 1907.

F.O. 371/370.

D. 8.10 P.M.

Tel. (No. 91.)

R. 10 P.M.

Persia Convention.

Article V. My telegram No. 87.

I have received Memorandum from the Minister for Foreign Affairs, accepting our proposed addition. He gives proposed final wording of above Article, and instead of "sphere of influence" he uses the expression "sphere of interests." Latter expression seems preferable to the former, but I will await your reply to suggestion made in my above-mentioned telegram. Instead of in the final sentence "principles governing the present Convention" he employs the words "principes servant de base à la présente Convention." This, I presume, we can accept. Remainder of Article is identical with that which I forwarded originally.

MINUTE.

These are quite harmless and may, I think, be accepted without reference to the I[ndia] O[ffice].

C. H.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.

F.O. 871/870.

(No. 106.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 12, 1907.

I have received your desp[atch] No. 69 of Ap[ri]l 11⁽¹⁾ in which you express your views on the draft Convention relative to Persia comm[unicat]ed by M. Isvolsky on Feb[ruary] 20.⁽²⁾

You will have observed from the con[fidencia]l print which has doubtless reached you by now that considerable alterations have already been agreed upon by the British and Russian Gov[ernmen]ts in its text and I transmit herewith a counterdraft which has been prepared by H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t, and which with some possible minor modifications, chiefly of a verbal character, still under consideration will shortly be comm[unica]ted to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t.

In order to avoid any misunderstanding as to the interpretation which might be placed upon the Agreement in regard to the position of Gr[ea]t Britain in the Persian Gulf, I have proposed the insertion in the Preamble of a reference to the special interests of this country in the maintenance of the *Status Quo* in those regions.

An article (III) has been agreed upon which will minimize the danger that the preponderating influence of Russia due to the inclusion of Tehran within her sphere of interest will be used to prevent the acquisition of British concessions in the neutral zone, while Art[icle] V which has also been accepted by the Russian Government is designed to obviate the possibility of Russia exercising in the British sphere the right to control the customs which is conferred upon her by her loan contracts in the case of default.

You will also note that an important modification has been made in the definition of the Russian sphere, the Russian Gov[ernmen]t having consented to the line terminating at Zulficar instead of at Kuhsan. It is thus secured that no part of the Russian sphere will be conterminous with the Afghan frontier, a point on the importance of which I need not dwell.

You lay stress on the desirability of fully safeguarding British interests in respect of concessions which have not yet been exploited and suggest that it should be laid down that not only are existing concessions to be maintained but that they may be renewed on their expiry.

It has been agreed that all existing concessions are to be maintained. Should a concession have remained unexploited, it will become a question for consideration whether the circumstances are such as to warrant H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] in approaching the Persian Gov[ernmen]t with a view to its prolongation but I do not consider that any special provision to this end is called for.

It is not easy to meet the objection that the renewal of duly exploited concessions on their termination would be contrary to the spirit of the agreement and in view of the expression of opinion evoked from the Russian Gov[ernmen]t by the proposal to ask for an extension of the concessions of the Indo-European Tel[egraph] dep[artmen]t it does not appear possible to insert a provision to this effect.

With regard to your further suggestion that some security sh[oul]d be obtained that the telegraph lines now being worked by British enterprise are not redeemed by purchase by the Persian Gov[ernmen]t in order to be transferred to other hands I am of opinion that it would not be possible to ask the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to give such security which would be worthless owing to their inability to prevent such a transaction.

The question of the extension of the Indo-European Telegraph Dep[artmen]t's contracts is at the present moment under discussion with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t and it is hoped that a satisfactory solution may be arrived at.

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 450-3, No. 409.]

(2) [*v. supra*, p. 432, No. 389, *encl.*]

You lay stress upon the importance of precluding the Russian Bank from obtaining a monopoly of the importation of silver but this is not a question which can be dealt with in a Convention, since it is dependent on the Charter of the Imperial Bank of Persia. As however the latter has establishments both in the British and neutral zones it would form a legitimate subject of discussion between the two Gov[ernmen]ts after the conclusion of the agreement.

I entirely share your view as to the importance of maintaining in British hands the administration of the quarantine service in S[outhern] Persia, but this is a question which is necessarily outside the scope of the present Convention. You are aware that the improvement of the service is now the subject of correspondence with the Gov[ernmen]t of India and if a diplomatic discussion became necessary, H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would be in a better position to pursue it with success if they were able to point to a thoroughly efficient service.

The clause which I have proposed as to the maintenance of the *Status Quo* in the Gulf will, however, it may be hoped, render such a negotiation unnecessary.

I am unable to share your view that the agreement contains no formal and definite pledge as to the integrity and independence of Persia. The words of the Preamble are sufficiently clear and precise on this point and the existing engagements on the subject, however informal may have been their nature originally, are now formally renewed and fortified by the fact that they are referred to in a Treaty.

You will observe that in deference to your objections the wording of the Preamble has been modified so as to avert the danger which you fear that the Persian Gov[ernmen]t will conclude that the British and Russian Gov[ernmen]ts are arrogating to themselves the right of maintaining order or establishing equal advantages for trade in the Shah's dominions.

There is however no question of the two Gov[ernmen]ts "acquiring exclusive concessions in certain provinces" or of their claiming "the exclusive privilege of exploiting the assigned provinces" but merely of a self-denying ordinance on the part of each Power not to seek concessions in the sphere of interest of the other, third parties being in no way excluded from seeking for concessions throughout Persia.

As regards your obs[ervatio]ns as to Russian Railway designs I would merely point out that M. Lessar's projects date from some time back and that in any case the "easy alignment towards the Gulf of Oman . . . viâ Kushan and Yezd" will be blocked by the interposition of the British zone.

The logical conclusion of your despatch is that H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] should continue to pursue the same policy which they have followed in the past of attempting to support Persia against Russian advances.

It is a matter of opinion how far this policy has been successful but, in any case, it entails the disadvantage of creating for this country responsibilities which might result in an obligation on our part to come, sooner or later, to the assistance of Persia by force.

I will not discuss here the means at the disposal of this country if such an alternative became necessary but I am strongly of opinion that an endeavour should be made to avert such an issue and to arrive at a peaceful solution of this problem.

If, as you assume, Russia is a country with whom it is impossible to secure a lasting agreement, or even an understanding it might no doubt become necessary in any case to consider the possibility of forcible measures but the conclusion of the present agreement will place H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] in a position to know definitely when the moment for such action arrives and H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would be on far stronger moral ground for resisting any attack which might be made upon their interests, if they are able to appeal to the Treaty engagements of the R[ussian] G[overnment].

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

No. 422.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/370.

St. Petersburg, D. June 14, 1907, 11.15 P.M.

Tel. (No. 96.)

R. June 15, 1907, 7 A.M.

Persian Convention.

I propose Article V should run as follows:—

“In the event of irregularities occurring in amortization, or in the payment of interest of the Persian loans concluded with the Banque d'Escompte et des Prêts de Perse and with Imperial Bank of Persia up to date of signature of present Arrangement, and, in event of the necessity arising for Russia to establish control over sources of revenue affected to the regular service of loans concluded with first-named Bank, and which are situated in the regions mentioned in Article II of the present Convention, or for Great Britain to establish control over sources of revenue affected to the regular service of the loans concluded with second-named Bank, and which are situated in the regions mentioned in Article I of present Convention, the British and Russian Governments undertake to enter beforehand into a friendly exchange of ideas with a view to determine in agreement with each other the means of giving effect to the measures of control in question, and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles governing the present Convention.”

No. 423.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/370.

Foreign Office, June 17, 1907.

Tel. (No. 82.)

D. 4.50 P.M.

Your Tel[egram] No. 94 (of June 14 Transfer of Meshed-Tehran and Meshed-Seistan Tel[egraph] lines).

You should inform Russian Gov[ernmen]t that as H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t now have control over entire Meshed-Tehran line they consider transfer must be complete and give them control of whole Meshed-Seistan line.

No. 424.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/370.

Foreign Office, June 17, 1907.

Tel. (No. 83.)

D. 5 P.M.

Your Tel[egram] No. 96 (of June 14 Persian Convention).⁽¹⁾

I approve proposed wording of Art[icle] V with addition of words “which are” between “revenue” and “affected” in both places.

⁽¹⁾ [u. supra, p. 472, No. 422.]

No. 425.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.*F.O. 871/870.
Tel. (No. 89.)Foreign Office, June 21, 1907.
D. 6.30 P.M.Your desp[atch] No. 806 (of June 6 Persian Convention).⁽¹⁾
Preamble.

We desire retention of words "aussi bien que . . . nations." Omission would expose Convention to criticism in Persia and in all countries having commercial relations with her, especially Germany, as reserving portions of Persia for exclusive exploitation by G[reat] Britain and Russia. But to make it consistent with Art[icles] I and II which specifically exclude G[reat] Britain and Russia from seeking concessions etc in the sphere of the other we propose substitution of "toutes les autres nations" for "toutes les nations."

We agree to omission of words "constatant . . . entre eux-mêmes."

Remaining objections have been met in our draft, enclosed in my desp[atch] No. 225 of June 6⁽²⁾ but we are willing to adopt Russian text if M. Isvolsky is insistent.

Art[icle] I.

We cannot accept proposed change in Russian line which would be brought too close to Afghan frontier and is open to same objections as original proposal that line sh[ould] terminate at Kuhsan. See my tel[egram] 30 of March 8.⁽³⁾ The compromise now proposed by the Russian Gov[ernment] could not fail to excite hostile criticism in this country and create an atmosphere unfavourable to the agreement which it is to the general interest to avoid.

You may however inform Russian Gov[ernment] that if they consider maintenance of sanitary station at Karez indispensable we will not object provided they agree not to interfere with existing arrangement whereby quarantine on Persian Gulf is under British control.

Art[icles] II, III and IV.

No objection to proposed amendments.

When informing Russian Gov[ernment] of our views on these amendments you should also communicate to them the amendments which are suggested in my desp[atch] No. 225 to which we attach considerable importance, especially the allusion to the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf and the definition of the line from Kakh to the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers.

We have received your text of Art[icle] V with which we agree.⁽⁴⁾ We consider "governing" a correct translation of "servant de base à."

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 461-4, No. 416.]⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 465-8, No. 417.]⁽³⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 435-6, No. 393.]⁽⁴⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 472, No. 422.]

No. 426.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.*F.O. 871/809.
Tel. (No. 90.)Foreign Office, June 21, 1907.
D. 7 P.M.

Renewal of Telegraph Concessions.

Your Desp[atch] No. 287.⁽¹⁾

We have always held the view that the maintenance of existing concessions

⁽¹⁾ [This despatch enclosed the Memorandum summarised in Tel. No. 79, v. *supra*, pp. 460-1, No. 415.]

provided for in Art[icle] III of the Persian draft Convention implies their renewal if the Persian Gov[ernmen]t agree and we still maintain this in principle.

You should explain this clearly to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t but you can propose as a solution of the present difficulty that they should not object to the renewal of our telegraph Concessions in return for a surrender to them of our rights over the Tehran-Khanikin line. You should explain that on the expiry of our Telegraph Concessions the German Gov[ernmen]t would probably endeavour to obtain control of the telegraph line from Khanikin to Tehran and eventually to the Indian frontier.

In order to avoid complications which might arise from introducing questions relating to tel[egraph] lines into the discussions on the draft Convention you should further propose to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t that if they have no objection to such a course the seat of the negotiations respecting Telegraph questions might be conveniently transferred to London and Count Benckendorff authorised to conduct them. These negotiations would be carried on concurrently with those at St. Petersburg resp[ecting] the draft Convention in order that the conclusions on both may be arrived at simultaneously.

No. 427.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.

F.O. 371/370.

(No. 111.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, June 21, 1907.

The Mushir-ul-Mulk came to see me to-day.

On my saying that affairs in Persia seemed to be in an interesting condition, and that it was to be hoped an accord would be reached between the Shah and the Madjliss and all parties, the Mushir-ul-Mulk said this was very desirable, but impressed upon me with great emphasis that time would be necessary for it.

He told me that he had had a very interesting conversation with M. Isvolsky at St. Petersburg. The conversation had been very satisfactory, for it had brought out two points: that Russia did not intend to intervene in Persian affairs unless the interests of her subjects were attacked, and that the negotiations between England and Russia were not directed against the integrity and independence of Persia. The Mushir-ul-Mulk said that public opinion in Persia had been anxious on this point, and it was very desirable that it should be reassured.

I said I agreed entirely with what M. Isvolsky had said. Hitherto there had been a struggle between Russia and England, each trying to prevent the preponderance of the other in Persia. Had that struggle continued during the present uncertainty in Persia, there would have been a great temptation for one of us to intervene in Persian affairs, in order to prevent the other from taking advantage of the situation, or to gain an advantage at the other's expense. The object of the present negotiations between Russia and England was to prevent difficulties arising between ourselves, and the negotiations were not in any way directed against Persia.

The Mushir-ul-Mulk said that there was an idea that England and Russia were dividing Persia into spheres of influence.

I told him this was not a correct impression. It would be more correct to say that the Agreement at which we desired to arrive was one by which we should not push our influence in those parts of Persia which bordered on the frontiers of each other.

The Mushir-ul-Mulk asked whether an *entente* had been concluded.

I said none had been concluded. But we acted from day to day in agreement with Russia as circumstances arose, and were still exchanging views as to what might be a permanent Agreement.

He told me that Persia had a special arrangement with Russia on the question of Railways. It was said that we had addressed a note to Russia specially on the subject of Railways, and had received no reply.

I said there had been no special negotiations between us, and no special Note, with regard to Railways. There was no doubt, however, that if an arrangement was come to between us on general lines we should not ask for Railway concessions which would be to the disadvantage of each other.

The Mushir-ul-Mulk said that the two things which must be arranged in Persia were Finance and Education. Finance was very important.

I said I realised the importance of this, but it would be necessary for the Persian Gov[ernmen]t to have an understanding with the Madjliss in order to arrange Finance.

The Mushir-ul-Mulk said this was so, and again impressed upon me that time would be necessary to bring about such an understanding.

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

MINUTES.

In conversation this morning with the Persian Ambassador on the subject of our negotiations with Russia, he told me that there was one point upon which his Gov[ernmen]t felt considerable anxiety. They had heard that Persia was to be divided into spheres of influence, which might mean the partition of Persia and the reply which he had received from M. Isvolsky on this score was not satisfactory.

I told the Mushir-ul-Mulk that considering that the integrity and independence of Persia were specifically mentioned in the text of the agreement there could be no question of our agreeing to anything that could imply the partition of Persia. It was true that certain frontier districts were mentioned as those in which British and Russian interests were respectively predominant, but that the agreement, if concluded, would be in the nature of a self-denying ordinance prohibiting British concessions near the Russian frontier and *vice versa*. This stipulation would not however interfere with the enterprise of other foreign nationalities in Persia who could compete for concessions over the whole of Persia, while Great Britain and Russia were debarred from competing in the regions where Russian and British interests predominate.

He seemed very pleased with this explanation which he said that he would tel[egraph] at once to his Gov[ernmen]t.

C. H.
June 21,
1907.

It agrees very well with what I said, but was more explicit and full which was right.
E. G.

No. 428.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 24, 1907.

F.O. 971/870.

Tel. (No. 106.) Confidential.

Persian draft Convention.

D. 8.25 P.M.
R. 10 P.M.

I communicated to Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day amendments proposed in your despatch No. 225⁽¹⁾ and telegram No. 89.⁽²⁾ His Excellency had the greatest possible doubt as to Russian Government being able to accept insertion in preamble of a passage relative to special interest of Great Britain in maintenance of *status quo* in Persian Gulf. His Excellency (? observed) that this was introducing at a very late hour a matter which did not concern Great Britain and Russia alone, but also several other Powers, and that it was enlarging the scope of the Agreement beyond

(¹) [v. *supra*, pp. 465-8, No. 417, and *encl.*]

(²) [v. *supra*, p. 473, No. 425.]

limit which we had both originally laid down, and had up to now scrupulously respected. The Convention, as drawn up, had dealt with matters concerning Russia and Great Britain alone, and had raised no points to which other Powers could take exception or which gave them any justification for considering their interests affected. His Excellency himself did not contest our special interests in the Gulf, but that was not the point. We desired to introduce into a Convention which had for its main object removal of all causes of friction between the two Powers a clause which raised a question in which other Powers might consider they were interested, and he feared that an embarrassing situation might hereafter arise.

Proposal had come as a surprise to him, and he hinted if it were of such importance to us we should not have suggested it at the last moment, but have put it forward before. In short, I could see that he was greatly disturbed at our proposal, which he fears will create difficulties with third Powers. I, of course, argued with him, but did not shake his opinion, and I think that it is probable that the more he reflects upon it the greater will be his objections to it. He objected on somewhat similar grounds to mentioning the question of our control over quarantine in the Persian Gulf, and he is anxious to keep Persian Gulf entirely out of the discussions.

He told me he was most anxious to sign the Conventions with as little delay as possible, and that he wished to do so by 15th July (N.S.) He impressed seriously on me that delay was dangerous, and I imagine pressure is being brought to bear against the conclusion of our Agreements. He was very positive as to the risk of delay and distressed at questions now being raised, which would prolong discussions and perhaps imperil the whole arrangement. He said he hoped to be able to give His Majesty's Government replies on both Persian and Afghan questions in a very few days, and on my suggesting that I might expedite matters by taking them home and discussing them with you, returning here in a fortnight, he begged me not to leave but to stay here and hasten the conclusion. I gather Berlin is causing uneasiness, and I understand opposition here is active in certain quarters.

I would submit that due weight should be given to his observations, as they were made very seriously.

I think we could with success insist on Russian line running straight from Kakh to a point near intersection of Russian and Afghan frontiers, but that we might yield as to complete control of whole of Meshed-Seistan telegraph line and leave out the *status quo* clause. We should really have gained all that is essential, and, I confess, more than I anticipated, and it seems to me we have a good defence against all criticisms. If I could receive early reply to this telegram it would help to expedite matters.

MINUTES.

M. Isvolsky objects to the *Status Quo* amendment on the ground that it is new matter imported into the Agreement at the last moment and that other Powers may object. I think that we should not be rushed into signing by July 15 and that we should maintain our proposal and make every endeavour to secure it.

We might inform the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, perhaps through Count Benckendorff that the mere assertion that Great Britain has a special interest in the maintenance of the *Status Quo* in the Persian Gulf does not commit the Russian Gov[ernmen]t *vis-à-vis* a third Power any more than the other statements in the Preamble as to the special interests of each Power in the provinces adjoining their respective frontiers, that so far as H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnmen]t is concerned it is not new matter or an attempt to enlarge the scope of the Agreement for they regarded it as understood that nothing in the Agreement should be taken as affecting their special position in the gulf and have inserted the words in the d[ra]ft Preamble more with a view to making this clear and to rendering the Agreement acceptable to all Parties in Gr[ea]t Britain than anything else.

With regard to Quarantine, this need not be mentioned if we get the line from Khak to the frontier.

L. M.

It was unfortunate that the insertion of the clause in the preamble relating to the maintenance of the "status quo" in the Persian Gulf was an afterthought on our part, but there is no doubt that, whatever the necessity for it may have been a few weeks ago, it is still more important now

than heretofore that something should be done to disarm hostile criticism in this country provoked by recent incidents in St. Petersburg.

M. Isvolsky is evidently very much frightened of Germany, but I do not think that he has realised that the clause in the preamble does not bind Russia in any way as to the action of other Powers in the Persian Gulf, but merely seems for us the neutrality of Russia in those regions. This neutrality is what we want, and although it would be the natural consequence of the conclusion of this agreement, still we want some reference or admission in the text for shop-window purposes, and to disarm hostile criticism on the part of the extremists and conservatives in the H[ouse] of Commons.

I read yesterday to C[oun]t Benckendorff extracts from this telegram, and he told me that although he had already given fully our views to M. Isvolsky by letter, he would at once send a further explanatory telegram enlarging upon the importance, from the point of view of public and parliamentary opinion, of a reference to the situation in the Persian Gulf, with a view to the avoidance of hostile criticism.

I think we should reply to Sir A. Nicolson pointing out that public opinion in this country would attach considerable importance to the mention of the maintenance of the "status quo" in the Gulf and that while the reference made to it in the preamble cannot possibly bind other Powers it would give satisfaction here as insuring the neutrality of Russia in any question involving other Powers in the Persian Gulf. It would be best to maintain the preamble as it stands if it is possible, and if so, we would be ready to give to the Russian Gov[ernment] a declaration that the recognition of our special interests applied to Russia alone, and does not imply that she denies any interests to any other Powers in the Gulf. Or we might ask M. Isvolsky to suggest any form of words which might in his opinion meet our views as to Russian neutrality without engaging Russia further than towards ourselves. The last alternative would be to omit all mention of the Persian Gulf in the preamble and for Sir E. Grey to make a declaration in the House of Commons on the lines of that made by Lord Lansdowne.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 429.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/370.

(No. 342.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. June 24, 1907.

Sir,

R. July 2, 1907.

I called by appointment on M. Isvolsky this afternoon, and said that I was prepared to communicate to him the replies of His Majesty's Government to the modifications which he had suggested in the Draft Convention concerning Persia.⁽¹⁾ I told His Excellency that my Government had accepted the amendments proposed in Articles 2, 3 and 4, and that they further agreed to the elimination of the clause in the preamble relative to the injurious effect of local friction. His Majesty's Government however desired to retain the clause concerning equal opportunities for the commerce and industry of all nations; but in view of the observations made in his *aide-mémoire* of June 5, and in order to render the passage consistent with Art[icle]s I and II they would suggest that the words "all other countries" should be substituted for "all countries."⁽²⁾

I said that there was one other point to which His Majesty's Government attached great importance, and which I did not doubt that the Russian Government would make no difficulty in accepting, and that was that a clause should be inserted in the preamble referring to the special interests which Great Britain had in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf. This was a matter in which British public opinion took a great interest, and my Government considered it to be necessary in order to satisfy the feeling in my country and to assist in the general acceptance of the Convention, that some mention should be formally made of the fact.

In Art[icle] I there was also a modification which I must propose, and that was in regard to the tracing of the Russian line from Kakh northwards. We had

(1) [v. *supra*, pp. 461-4, No. 416, and *encls.*]

(2) [*con. supra*, p. 478, No. 425.]

assumed naturally that the line would run direct from Kakh to its terminus at a point near the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers: but in the *aide-mémoire* of June 5 the line as traced made a considerable deviation eastwards and ran close along the Afghan frontier. To this tracing the same objections must be raised as were formulated in regard to the Russian line terminating near Kuhsan, and I repeated to His Excellency the nature of the objections which had been made on that occasion. I told His Excellency that he would find these points set forth in the *Aide mémoire* which I begged leave to hand to him, and of which I have the honour to enclose a copy.

M. Isvolsky said that a very serious question was raised by the proposed insertion of a clause relative to the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf; and that he had the gravest doubts if the Russian Government could consent to its being interpolated. He did not himself wish to contest that Great Britain had special and predominant interests in the Gulf; but he wished to explain at once to me how the question presented itself at first sight to him. During all our discussions regarding the Persian Convention both Governments had strictly limited themselves to treating of matters which concerned themselves alone, and which neither directly nor indirectly affected the interests of other Powers. These wise restrictions would exclude any other Power from having any justification hereafter to complain that the two negotiating countries had dealt with, or touched upon, interests other than their own. At the last moment Great Britain proposed to enlarge the scope of the agreement, and to extend it to a question which it was known was in a sense a controversial one, and which did touch upon the interests of others. It could not be denied that Turkey and Germany did not admit to the full our contentions as to the Persian Gulf, and if the clause were inserted, and Russia subscribed to it, he feared that an embarrassing situation would hereafter arise. The clause had a far-reaching effect and he could not foretell what consequences; and he did not understand why if the matter were of such importance to us, it had not been brought forward earlier. The Convention as drawn up between us, and in regard to which he had hoped only some secondary details had to be settled, was chiefly directed to avoiding all possible causes of friction between the two Powers, and related solely to our respective frontiers; and he regretted that we should now wish to raise a delicate and important question, which was mixed up with other controversial matter. He would only mention for the moment the Bagdad railway and Koweit.

I told M. Isvolsky that I perfectly appreciated the force of his argument that the question had been raised at a late hour: but I would tell him frankly that there was likely to be opposition from some quarters in Great Britain and India to our agreement, and that as it was desirable to modify such opposition and procure as general acceptance as possible of the Convention, my Government after careful consideration had desired to refer to a matter in which the British public took a very keen interest. I did not deny that the proposal came late in the day, but many would consider that a Convention about Persia with no mention of the Persian Gulf was deficient. Moreover I did not see why the Russian Government should hesitate to subscribe to a proposition which was incontrovertible. We did not ask Russia to take any action nor did we attempt to bind her in respect to other countries. We stated an undoubted fact, which was surely universally recognized, which had been affirmed over and over again, and very emphatically by Lord Lansdowne in the House of Lords in 1903.

M. Isvolsky said he doubted that the recognition of the fact was so universal as I had stated, and he was perfectly well aware of our views on the subject, and also of Lord Lansdowne's statement. He strongly demurred however to introducing fresh factors into the agreement, especially at a moment when the negotiations were on the point of being terminated. What should we have said if Russia had suddenly sprung upon us a request to recognize her special interests in Armenia for instance?

I replied that the Persian Gulf was closely connected with Persia, as it washed

the whole of the southern littoral of that country. His Excellency remarked that it washed the coasts of other countries as well. But all this was beside the mark. He adjured me to take into consideration the serious consequences of opening up this question. He was most eager to hasten on the conclusion of our negotiations, and he could assure me that it would be dangerous to delay their termination. Opposition was existent in this country and outside of it. There had been one or two agreements recently concluded which I must know had been displeasing to Berlin. He could with safety conclude our Convention on the lines we had originally drawn, and which hitherto we had both scrupulously observed, but I must remember that Russia had a powerful neighbour, alert and watchful, who had her eyes fixed on that very quarter of which we now desired to make formal mention in our Convention in a form which could not but produce suspicion and dissatisfaction. He was ready to meet any criticisms if we kept within the original scope of the agreement, but the case would be different if fresh factors were introduced, which in any case would prolong the discussions; and this he must repeat to me would be most dangerous.

I said that of course I would report to you all his observations as faithfully as possible, but that I could by no means say if they would induce my Government to abandon their request. M. Isvolsky made a slight gesture of despair and I asked him if he could tell me, leaving the immediate question on one side, when he hoped to sign the Conventions.

His Excellency took an almanac and said that he hoped to be able to give me replies to both Persian and Afghan questions by the 3rd of July new style. I observed that if he did this, and that as my Government was as desirous as himself to hasten the conclusion, I proposed, in order to expedite matters, to take his replies home and discuss them with you, and return in about a fortnight, say on July 25th, and then we could finally settle all conventions. His Excellency begged me not to adopt this plan, but to stay here so that we might sign the Conventions on July 15. I was a little surprised at this promptness, but I told His Excellency that of course I would remain here till the negotiations were finally concluded.

His Excellency then reverted to the question of the tracing of the Russian line, and I told him that on that point it was really essential that their line on leaving Kakh should not deviate to the eastwards: it should run straight to the point in the corner near Zulficar. I said that if the Russian Government laid great stress on having Karez as a sanitary station we would be prepared not to object to that but on condition that they engaged not to interfere with the existing arrangement by which the quarantine in the Persian Gulf was under British control. M. Isvolsky said that again on this question there entered a reference to the Persian Gulf, which he desired to keep out of the Convention. Moreover he thought that the compromise was a little one-sided. We gave to them permission to establish a sanitary station at one place, and then required an acknowledgment on their part of our control over several localities. I observed that all that we requested was the admission of an arrangement already in force, while we were willing to cede a point only in contemplation. His Excellency said that he wished to think over this question.

I was much impressed by two facts in my conversation with M. Isvolsky: (1) his anxiety to exclude from consideration any matters affecting the Persian Gulf, as he evidently anticipates and fears that if we insist upon the inclusion in the Preamble of the Draft Convention of a recognition of our special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in that region Germany will exhibit, in some form or another, her displeasure at Russia having met our wishes in that respect. It is perfectly clear to me that M. Isvolsky will not run the risk of impairing in the slightest degree the good relations between Russia and Germany, especially at a time when Russia has not yet emerged from her internal difficulties or repaired the losses which she has suffered in a disastrous campaign. The second fact is that M. Isvolsky is exceedingly eager to hasten on as rapidly as possible the conclusion

of the negotiations. On this point I have not seen him, during the progress of our discussions, so emphatic or so eager. It was evident to me that either in home circles or outside something had occurred which had impressed on him the urgent necessity of losing no further time.

In these circumstances I venture to submit that we should not insist upon points which may either delay the conclusion of the negotiations or which may even imperil their ultimate success. Laving on one side public opinion either in Russia or in England, which probably will not be a constant factor, and regarding simply the enormous advantage to be acquired by the cessation of the rivalries and disputes which for so many years have strained and endangered the relations between the two countries, and the inestimable benefits to be gained by an amicable understanding between the two Great Powers in Asia, I would suggest that it would be most regrettable if an opportunity which may never recur should be lost, and if, owing to insistence on points which are not of vital importance, the hopes of a durable arrangement were to be disappointed. It seems to me that by the Conventions, even as they at present stand, we have secured all the guarantees which are necessary to the safety of our Indian frontiers; and that we have removed to a reasonable distance the danger of Russian aggression. As regards the Persian Gulf, even admitting that the approach to those waters is not definitely barred, and in present circumstances this could hardly be achieved, we have for the defence of our interests in those regions our naval preponderance with which no Power can compete. In order, therefore, to profit by the present eagerness of M. Isvolsky to put his seal to the arrangements on which we have practically already come to an agreement, I would respectfully urge that we should be conciliatory on minor details, and even on a question of public sentiment, and lose no time in finally concluding negotiations which have lasted for so many months.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 429.

Memorandum communicated by Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

St. Petersburg, June 23, 1907.

His Majesty's Embassy had the honour to receive the *Aide Mémoire*, with its enclosure, which the Imperial Ministry for Foreign Affairs was good enough to communicate on May 23/June 5 regarding the preamble and the four first articles of the Draft Convention concerning Persia.

His Majesty's Embassy has, in the first place, the honour to state that His Majesty's Government accept the amendments proposed by the Imperial Ministry for Foreign Affairs in Articles 2, 3, and 4.

In regard to the preamble, His Majesty's Embassy would beg leave to point out that His Majesty's Government agree to omit the passage from the words "constatant l'effet" to the words "entre eux-mêmes"; but they consider it desirable to retain the passage in regard to equal opportunity for the commerce of other countries, and they fear that the exclusion of the words "aussi bien que d'établir des avantages égaux pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les nations" would expose the Convention to criticism in Persia and in all countries having commercial relations with her. In order however to render the passage consistent with Articles 1 and 2 which especially exclude Great Britain and Russia from seeking concessions in the sphere of the other, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to substitute the words "toutes les autres nations" for "toutes les nations."

His Majesty's Embassy desires also to state that His Majesty's Government consider it to be of great importance that reference should be made in the preamble of [*sic*] the special interest of Great Britain in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf; and a passage has consequently been inserted to that effect. His

Majesty's Embassy does not doubt that the Imperial Russian Government will agree to this insertion.

With respect to Article 1 His Majesty's Embassy would beg leave to point out that the tracing of the Russian line as proposed in the *Aide Mémoire* of May 23/June 5 would bring the line on leaving Kakh extremely close to the Afghan frontier, and would be open to the same objections as His Majesty's Embassy had the honour to formulate in regard to the original proposal that the line should terminate near Kuhsan. His Majesty's Embassy would beg leave to recapitulate these objections which were to the effect that the Russian and British spheres of interest are, as mentioned in the preamble contiguous or in proximity to the Russian frontier on the one hand and the frontiers of Afghanistan and Beloochistan on the other, and that no mention is made of a Russian sphere as contiguous with the Afghan frontier. Moreover Great Britain is responsible by Treaty engagements for the settlement of frontier disputes between Persia and Afghanistan, and the introduction of another Power having special interests on the Perso-Afghan frontier would tend to complicate matters. Moreover Zulficar is well within the territory of Afghanistan, and His Majesty's Embassy would therefore propose to the Imperial Government that the wording of the passage concerning the line should run as follows:—"from Kasri-Chirin by Isfahan Yezd and Kakh and terminating at a point on the Persian frontier adjoining the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers."

It is thereby understood that Khaf, Kiariz and the mountain Kuh-Benitak would lie outside of and to the eastwards of the line. If however the Imperial Russian Government consider that the maintenance of a sanitary station at Kiariz (Karez) is indispensable, His Majesty's Government will not object to that provided that the Russian Government will agree not to interfere with the existing arrangement whereby quarantine on the Persian Gulf is under British control.

His Majesty's Embassy has the honour to enclose the Preamble and Article 1 as amended in accordance with the wishes of His Majesty's Government.

St. Petersburg, June 10 (22) [sic] 1907.

MINUTES.

We informed Sir A. Nicolson on June 27 that if we obtained the line from Kakh to the frontier which we desired, an assurance of non-interference with our control over the Gulf quarantine would suffice, and if we do not get some kind of recognition of our special interests in the gulf I think we might ask for this. If the Russian Gov[ernment]t consent to the inclusion of some phrase recognizing our special interests I think that we should make it clear that we consider that it includes Quarantine.

L. M.

At this stage of the negotiations I do not think it advisable to introduce any new ideas or conditions into the agreement relating to Persia. The declaration to be made about the Persian Gulf must cover all such questions as telegraphs, quarantine, Karun navigation, etc.

Sir A. Nicolson used his arguments in a skilful manner and I would draw special attention to what he says in the last par[agraph] of the desp[atch] as to the inconstancy of public opinion as a factor and the solid advantages to be obtained from an agreement.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 430.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/370.
Tel. (No. 93.)

Foreign Office, June 27, 1907.
D. 10 P.M.

Your telegram No. 106.⁽¹⁾
Persian Convention.

It is certain that when Russian Agreement is known we shall be challenged as to position in Persian Gulf if no mention is made of it. The wording proposed would

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 475-6, No. 428.]

entail the neutrality of Russia in any question raised by other Powers with England in the Gulf, but would not commit Russia to guarantee that position or lay upon her any obligation to take action adverse to interests of other Powers. We should be ready to consider any wording, which would make this clear and so meet Monsieur Isvolsky's objection, that other Powers might take exception to what Russia had done.

If this course is not adopted and mention of the Persian Gulf is omitted in the agreement I must repeat in Parliament Lord Lansdowne's declaration and explain that as Agreement was concerned mainly with regions of Persia touching our respective frontiers and was in the nature of a self-denying instrument it was not thought appropriate to introduce into it a positive declaration respecting special interests in the Persian Gulf which might be regarded as concerning other Powers, but that I had no reason to suppose that the Maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf would give rise to difficulties between the British and Russian Governments. In view however of Article III it would be very desirable to have a statement in the Agreement to which I could point as evidence that the *status quo* in Persian Gulf would not be disturbed by Russian concessions, which we should be bound not to oppose without an arrangement with Russia. You should therefore press for mention of Gulf in the Agreement and unless persistence in this is likely to imperil the whole you should not put forward alternative of our independent statement in Parliament.

I hope Monsieur Isvolsky will recognize that we are not irreconcilable or unreasonable on the point at issue, but that we are sincerely desirous of promoting an early agreement in such a form as to meet with a friendly reception on all sides.

There need be no question of any mention in the agreement of our control over quarantine in the Persian Gulf, if we obtain the line we desire from Kakh to the frontier. As assurance of non-interference will suffice.

We shall not insist on complete control of Meshed-Seistan telegraph line within the Russian sphere but we should like in return for this concession that the Russian Government should adopt a friendly attitude on the subject of the renewal of the telegraph concessions and in particular of the section from Tehran to Ispahan so that the central station should remain at Tehran instead of at Ispahan after the expiration of the present concessions in 1925.

No. 431.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 28, 1907.

F.O. 871/870.

D. 8.58 P.M.

Tel. (No. 109.)

R. 6.30 P.M.

Following is the text of a Memorandum which I have just received from the Minister for Foreign Affairs:—

“In regard to proposal of British Cabinet to mention in the preamble of the Convention the special interest of Great Britain in maintaining the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, that proposal, put forward at a moment when the negotiations seemed about to terminate, affords grounds for serious objections. It is of a nature to completely change the character and the scope of the proposed Agreement, which, in its ‘*partie résolutive*,’ does not at all touch upon the Persian Gulf, in regard to which there has hitherto never been any question during *pourparlers* between Russia and England.”

“A new clause referring to a political question, the importance of which cannot be misunderstood, and which touches very complex interests, would reopen

discussions, and might delay the signature not only of the Convention respecting Persian affairs, but also of all acts connected with all the other questions which have been treated. It should not be lost sight of that, besides Persia, there is also Turkey, to whom belongs more than half littoral⁽¹⁾ of the Gulf, and who must consider herself as directly interested in question. There are, moreover, other Powers who would certainly consider themselves injured if an Agreement were made without their knowledge.

"It is very important to avoid everything which might provoke the objections of third Powers to the Agreement between Russia and England.⁽²⁾ It is incontestable that, in its present form, that Agreement does not touch any collateral interest, and cannot consequently give occasion for any protest of any seriousness; but the clause proposed by the British Cabinet will not fail to create umbrage, and may become cause of an incident similar to that which followed on Anglo-French Agreement respecting Morocco.

"All these reasons move the Ministry for Foreign Affairs to earnestly beg British Cabinet to be good enough to withdraw its proposal to mention in the preamble its special interests in Persian Gulf. It is, moreover, well understood in formulating this request the Imperial Government does not at all mean to deny those interests, nor to exclude possibility of examining later on another occasion with the British question of Persian Gulf."

⁽¹⁾ [In the first decypher "literally" appeared here in error.]

⁽²⁾ [In the first decypher the words in this sentence "everything . . . England," were omitted. The correction was made in Tel. No. 111, of June 28 from Sir A. Nicolson.]

No. 492.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 28, 1907.

F.O. 971/370.
Tel. (No. 110.)

D. 5.15 P.M.
R. 6.30 P.M.

My immediately preceding telegram: Persian Convention.⁽¹⁾

The Memorandum states Russian Government will agree to retention in Preamble of passage relating to equal opportunities for commerce of other countries with our proposed Amendment. I am to see Minister for Foreign Affairs to-morrow, and will endeavour to persuade him to agree to insertion of the *status quo* clause, but I am afraid I shall not succeed. I would then state that you will be obliged to make a public declaration of our views on the subject, and to add that we have reason to believe question will not give rise to difficulties between the two Governments.

In his *aide-mémoire* he admits that the Russian Government do not deny our special interests, and this could be taken note of, but perhaps you would not care to agree with him that the question of the Persian Gulf might form subject of subsequent discussions between the two Governments. If we agree to omit passage, I would propose to inform him in writing that we abandon our proposal in order to facilitate and expedite conclusion of Agreement, and that we take note of his recognition of our special interests, but that I should say nothing as to reopening a discussion later in regard to them.

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 493.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, June 29, 1907.*

F.O. 371/370.

D. 12 noon.

Tel. (No. 112.)

R. 3 P.M.

My tel[egram] No. 110.⁽¹⁾

I have been thinking over best course to pursue at my interview with M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] today and in view of Memorandum communicated by him yesterday and of his language to me the other day I feel sure that it would be of no avail to endeavour to induce him to alter his opinion as to the *status quo* passage. I will therefore make the graceful concession at once and, while explaining that in our opinion he could have agreed safely to our wishes, will say, that, in order to facilitate and expedite arrangement and to show our conciliatory disposition, we will not insist, and I will inform him of public declaration you will have to make.

It seems to me that in circumstances these will be the best (?) and will help on other outstanding points. I hope you will not think that I am giving way too easily. I would have gladly fought matter out if there had been a chance of succeeding and if there had been no risk of imperilling all the arrangement.

I would venture to suggest that I might reply to his *aide-mémoire* by recapitulating the arguments I used verbally at my interview of June 24⁽²⁾ and also those in your tel[egram] No. 98.⁽³⁾

I might perhaps mention that Conventions and Agreements which we have with several Chiefs in Gulf hardly permit us to agree with the extent of Turkish possessions in Gulf as stated in the *aide-mémoire* and add that H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernment] note with pleasure that the Imperial Gov[ernment] does not deny special interests of Great Britain in the Gulf. Then conclude in order to facilitate arrangement we meet wishes so strongly expressed etc.

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 475-6, No. 428.]⁽³⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 481-2, No. 430.]

No. 434.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/370.

Foreign Office, June 29, 1907.

Tel. (No. 94.)

D. 12:30 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 110.⁽¹⁾

If M. Isvolsky absolutely refuses to accept wording of clause relating to Persian Gulf as it stands, you might suggest alternative clause "Great Britain has special interests in the Persian Gulf."

This would cover quarantine etc, and, although not as satisfactory as we would wish, is better than nothing.

We have reason to believe that French Amb[assado]r will be instr[ucte]d to support reference to Persian Gulf in preamble. In these circ[umstance]s it might, if not too late, be better to delay for a day or two letting M. Isvolsky know alternative proposal of declaration in Parliament.

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 483, No. 432.]

No. 485.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, June 29, 1907.*F.O. 371/370.
Tel. (No. 118.)

D. 7.2 P.M.

R. 8 P.M.

Persian Convention.

I thought I would after all make one more attempt to move Minister for Foreign Affairs to accept desired insertion in Preamble, and I used all the arguments in your telegram No. 98, and those I had formerly given him. He said that he was not afraid that Russian Government would be bound, but he did fear that the insertion would raise objections from third Powers, and he repeated what he had said in his *aide-mémoire*.

He wished that as far as other Powers were concerned, no objections whatever could be raised to our Convention. Seeing that great delay, at any rate, would be incurred, and that it was possible that serious obstacles might arise to a successful termination of negotiations, I told him that we did not wish to be irreconcilable, and would meet his wishes, but that if the Convention were opposed in Parliament you would make a statement, of which I gave him the general sense, and I underlined last phrase as to our having no reason to believe that maintenance of *status quo* would cause difficulties between the two Governments.

He expressed his concurrence, but asked if he might have the general sense in writing. I told him I was not prepared to give it to him just now, but possibly I might do so later in a private letter. Would you have any objection to my doing so? I said that I would give him a reply to his *aide-mémoire* very shortly, and I venture to send in another telegram proposed draft reply.

He was immensely relieved at concession we made, and promised to hasten on the termination of our affairs.

No. 486.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, June 29, 1907.*F.O. 371/370.
Tel. (No. 114.)

D. 7.2 P.M.

R. 7.45 P.M.

Meshed-Seistan telegraph line.

I told Minister for Foreign Affairs that we would not insist on complete control in Russian sphere if Russian Government adopted a friendly attitude as to the prolongation of our other telegraph Concessions. I said that I would reply shortly to his last Memorandum on the subject.⁽¹⁾ He appeared not to be unwilling to accept condition I had mentioned.

Is his proposed draft as to the transfer of the two telegraph lines considered acceptable?

MINUTE.

The India Office do not object to the junction of the British portions of the Meshed-Seistan line in the neutral zone. The question is to find a suitable spot. If we obtain the straight line as limit of the Russian Zone from Kakh to the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers we shall not lose by the surrender of the portion of the Meshed-Seistan line which lies within the Russian zone. In the question of the other tel[egraph] concessions we are ready to give up the Tehran-Khanikin section, if we can obtain the renewal of the Tehran-Ispahan section when we ask for the renewal of the other concessions lying in the British and neutral zones.

O. H.

E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [cp. *supra*, pp. 460-1, No. 415, where the substance of this memorandum is indicated.]

No. 497.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/871.

(No. 847.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. June 29, 1907.

R. July 8, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of an *Aide Mémoire* which I received yesterday from M. Isvolsky in reply to the memorandum which I communicated to His Excellency on the 24th instant, a copy of which I forwarded in my despatch No. 842, Confidential, of that date.⁽¹⁾

In my telegram No. 109 of yesterday's date⁽²⁾ I communicated to you the text of that portion of the *Aide Mémoire* which refers to the insertion of a passage in the preamble of the Convention concerning Persia relative to the special interests of Great Britain in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 487.

Memorandum communicated by M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson on June 28.

St. Petersburg, June 27, 1907.

Le Ministère Impérial des A[ffaires] E[trangères], ayant pris connaissance de l'aide-mémoire de l'Ambassade Britannique du 10/23 juin,⁽³⁾ sur les affaires de Perse, a l'honneur d'exposer ce qui suit :—

Le Min[istère] Imp[érial] est tout prêt à adhérer à la proposition de maintenir dans le préambule de la Convention le passage se rapportant au commerce des autres Puissances avec la modification projetée.

Quant à la proposition du Cabinet de Londres de mentionner dans le préambule de la Convention l'intérêt spécial de l'Angleterre au maintien du *statu quo* dans le Golfe Persique, cette proposition, produite à un moment où les négociations semblaient aboutir, donne matière à de sérieuses objections. Elle est de nature à changer complètement le caractère et l'étendue de l'accord projeté, lequel, dans sa partie résultative, ne touche pas du tout au Golfe Persique dont jusqu'ici il n'a jamais été question dans les pourparlers entre la Russie et l'Angleterre. Une clause nouvelle, relative à une question politique dont l'importance ne saurait être méconnue et qui touche à des intérêts si complexes, rouvrirait la discussion et pourrait retarder la signature non seulement de la Convention sur les affaires Persanes, mais aussi celle des actes se rapportant à toutes les autres questions négociées. Il ne faut pas perdre de vue qu'en dehors de la Perse il y a la Turquie, à laquelle appartient plus de la moitié du littoral du Golfe et qui doit se considérer comme directement intéressée dans la question;—il y a également d'autres Puissances qui à coup sûr se croiraient lésées si un accord se faisait à leur insu. Il est très important d'éviter tout ce qui pourrait provoquer contre l'accord entre la Russie et l'Angleterre les objections de tierces Puissances. Il est incontestable que, dans sa forme actuelle, cet accord ne touche à aucun intérêt collatéral et ne saurait, dès lors, donner lieu à aucune protestation tant soit peu fondée; or, la clause proposée par le Cabinet de Londres ne manquera pas de susciter des froissements et peut devenir la cause d'un incident dans le genre de celui qui a suivi l'accord Anglo-Français au sujet du Maroc.

Toutes ces raisons portent le Ministère Impérial des A[ffaires] E[trangères] à prier instamment le Cabinet de Londres de vouloir bien renoncer à sa proposition de mentionner dans le préambule ses intérêts spéciaux dans le Golfe Persique. Il

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 477-81, No. 429, and *encl.*]⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 482-3, No. 431.]⁽³⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 480-1, No. 429, *encl.*]

est bien entendu, d'ailleurs, qu'en formulant cette prière, le Cabinet Impérial n'entend pas du tout nier ces intérêts ni exclure la possibilité d'examiner plus tard et à une autre occasion avec le Cabinet de Londres la question du Golfe Persique.

En ce qui regarde le tracé de la ligne de délimitation de la sphère russe, indiqué dans l'aide-mémoire de l'Ambassade, le Ministère Impérial se propose de revenir sur cette question dans une communication subséquente.

Saint-Pétersbourg, le 14/27 Juin, 1907.

No. 488.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, June 30, 1907.

F.O. 371/370.

Tel. (No. 115.)

D. 11.11 A.M.

R. noon.

Your telegram No. 94⁽¹⁾ was received after I had seen Minister for Foreign Affairs, but I am now writing to him to propose insertion of new clause, and am urging him to accept it, pointing out that it cannot possibly raise objections on the part of third Powers, as it merely states fact as to which there can be no question; that it is not open to objections raised by him to former wording, nor does it expose Convention to the danger which he had indicated, and that it leaves our Convention on unassailable ground, and that it binds Russia to nothing. I also mentioned that many people in England would consider a (? Convention) in regard to Persia which made no mention whatever of the interests of England in the Gulf as defective, and would weaken favourable reception of our Agreement which it is so essential to secure.

I am confident that he would not have agreed to *status quo* clause.

With regard to French intervention I would venture to point out that at this moment it might complicate matters by introducing a third Power into the discussions which hitherto we have conducted exclusively between ourselves. Minister for Foreign Affairs might possibly demur to our having taken a third party into our confidence, and he might consequently feel himself at liberty to consult with Germany, and this might be awkward.

(¹) [*v. supra*, p. 484, No. 434.]

No. 489.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/371.

(No. 352.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. June 30, 1907.

R. July 8, 1907.

I called on M. Isvolsky by appointment yesterday afternoon and told him that I had communicated to you the objections which he had raised on the occasion of my interview with him on the 24th instant in regard to the insertion in the preamble of the Draft Convention regarding Persia of a passage relative to the special interests of Great Britain in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf. I explained to His Excellency that the passage in question in no wise bound Russia to take any action or laid any obligations upon her, nor did it do more at the utmost than ensure her neutrality supposing that Great Britain and any other Power had any discussions or differences in respect to the Persian Gulf. Moreover the passage was but the declaration of an incontrovertible fact, and amounted simply to a statement that Great Britain had especial interest in no disturbance of her present

position occurring in the Gulf. I could not see why there should be a difficulty on the part of the Russian Government to accept our proposal. Moreover I wished to tell him quite frankly that there was a considerable section of public opinion in England who would regard a Draft Convention with Persia which made no mention of British interests in the Persian Gulf as a defective convention, and a general acceptance of the agreement would be diminished—and this would be unfortunate.

M. Isvolsky said that he was well aware that Russia would not bind herself to take any action by subscribing to the preamble if amplified according to our wish: but that was not the point which rendered him averse to introducing the passage in question. I had intimated that the fact that Great Britain had a special interest in maintaining the *status quo* was an undoubted fact, but was it generally recognized? and what was precisely meant by the *status quo*? I repeated to him the substance of Lord Lansdowne's declaration in 1903 and also your views as communicated in your telegram No. 93 of the 27th instant.⁽¹⁾

His Excellency said that all this might be called in question by other Powers, Turkey or Germany for instance. His main objection however was, as he had explained to me on Monday last and as he had repeated in his *Aide Mémoire* of the 27th instant,⁽²⁾ that we proposed at the last moment to insert a clause which removed the Convention from the perfectly unassailable ground on which it had hitherto stood on to debateable territory. The Convention as drawn up gave no justification nor any excuse for any other nation to have a voice in the matter; it was, as I had said, a self-denying instrument between Russia and England, and it touched on no interests other than those of our two countries. The Convention in short was on a "terrain inattaquable," but now we wished to refer to regions where other Powers had interests, some secular others perhaps prospective, and we wished to affirm in a Convention with Russia and to which she should subscribe, that we had a special interest in maintaining the existing state of things. Did Turkey, in regard to Koweit for instance, recognize the existing state of things? Would Germany be pleased to see a formal assertion of British special interests in the Gulf embodied in an instrument which she had been assured dealt only with matters affecting British and Russian interests or their respective frontiers? We should be exposing our agreement to objections and complaints with which he did not know what other consequences, and we should be leaving the safe line we had hitherto followed. He begged us not to insist on the clause or to make any mention of the Persian Gulf in the agreement. If we insisted he would have to reconsider with others the whole of the arrangement, and great delay at least would ensue.

I told His Excellency that we had no wish to be irreconcilable, and I went over again some of our arguments, while he maintained his point of view: and at length I said that in these circumstances my Government would be prepared to waive the request for the insertion of the clause but that, if the agreement were attacked in Parliament, as it was pretty sure to be, on the point that we had been discussing, you would have to make a statement on the subject: and that we would reaffirm the declaration of Lord Lansdowne in 1903, and explain that, as the Convention was chiefly concerned with the regions of Persia adjoining the respective frontiers, and was in the nature of a self-denying act, it was not considered appropriate to introduce into it a declaration respecting special interests in the Persian Gulf, which might be regarded as concerning other Powers, but that there was no reason to suppose that the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf would give rise to difficulties between the two Governments.

His Excellency said that he saw no objection to that and asked if I could give it to him in writing. I said that I was hardly prepared to do so as it was a mere sketch of the general sense of a statement to be made hereafter; but that possibly I might be able to let him have later the substance of it in a private letter.

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 481-2, No. 480.]

(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 486-7, No. 487, *encl.*]

I feel quite confident that I should not have been able to move M. Isvolsky from his standpoint; and I am equally confident that a persistence on our part on the insertion of the clause would have in the first place suspended a continuance of the negotiations for a long period, and in the second place would have very possibly endangered their ultimate success. I had no hope of inducing M. Isvolsky to modify his attitude on this special question; and I had at one time thought that it would really have been preferable if at my interview yesterday I had not made a fresh effort to do so, but had spontaneously waived the point and thereby hastened and facilitated negotiations on other questions. But on further consideration and in view of your instructions and of the great importance which His Majesty's Government attach to the matter, I felt that I was bound to make one more effort which I regret to say was unsuccessful.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 440.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/371.

(No. 354.) *

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. July 1, 1907.

R. July 8, 1907.

I have the honour to state that your telegram No. 94 of the 29th ultimo⁽¹⁾ arrived here subsequent to my interview with M. Isvolsky on that day, and although I had told His Excellency that His Majesty's Government would not, in view of his strong objections, insist on mention being made in the preamble as to the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, it seemed to me that nevertheless I should communicate to him the amendment proposed in your above-mentioned telegram and endeavour to secure his adherence to the views of His Majesty's Government in their modified form. I therefore addressed a private letter to His Excellency of which I beg leave to transmit a copy. I endeavoured in my communication to explain the character of the clause as amended, and to indicate that its acceptance should occasion no difficulties. If I find that His Excellency still maintains his objections, I consider that it would be better to drop the question, as a continued persistent pressure would, I am convinced, serve no useful purpose, and might indeed create serious difficulties.

You were good enough to inform me in your telegram under acknowledgment that it was possible that the French Ambassador here might be instructed to intervene with the Russian Government in support of our request. I would respectfully beg leave to submit that the interposition of a third Power might give cause to complications. At the outset of my deliberations it was agreed that the discussions should be conducted in confidence (see my despatch No. 333 of May 29, 1906),⁽²⁾ and I have no reason for believing that M. Isvolsky has not loyally observed this undertaking. On the British side, beyond some very natural and general indications to the Japanese and French Representatives as to the progress of the negotiations, the details have not been divulged, and the discussions have remained the exclusive property of the two Governments. If at this moment M. Isvolsky were to learn that France had been requested to support a proposal from our side, I am afraid that he might consider that he was consequently at liberty to take counsel with and impart his confidences to other Powers, and there is no doubt that in that case he would communicate with Germany whose interests in regard to the point at issue he considers to be important. It seems to me most undesirable that inter-communication on the subject of the Persian Convention should take place between the Cabinets of St. Petersburg and Berlin, and I would respectfully urge that no

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 484, No. 484.]

⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 237-8, No. 221.]

occasion be afforded for their initiation. M. Bompard has said nothing to me on the subject, and I feel confident that he would first speak to me before taking action. Were he to inform me that he was prepared to move, I would beg him to defer doing so until I had had an opportunity of communicating with you.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 440.

Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

Mon cher Ministre,

Saint-Pétersbourg, le 17/30 Juin, 1907.

J'ai reçu hier soir un télégramme de Sir E. Grey proposant une nouvelle rédaction de la phrase concernant le Golfe Persique que je m'empresse de vous communiquer. Mon Gouv[ernemen]t propose d'insérer dans le préambule simplement les mots "Great Britain has special interests in the Persian Gulf." Je vous ai annoncé hier que par déférence à vos objections nous renoncions à notre désir d'insérer la phrase concernant le maintien du *statu quo*, mais j'espère que les mots que je vous communique par la présente ne souleveront pas d'objections de votre part. Ils constatent seulement un fait incontestable que personne ne peut nier. Ils ne peuvent exposer notre Convention à aucun des dangers que vous avez indiqués au sujet du maintien du *status quo* et ils n'engagent la Russie à absolument rien. La phrase telle que je la propose laisse notre Convention sur un terrain inattaquable et la Puissance la plus susceptible n'y pourrait rien trouver à redire ou qui pourrait la justifier à formuler des plaintes après en avoir pris connaissance. Du reste, comme je me suis déjà permis de vous expliquer il y a beaucoup de monde en Angleterre qui seront d'avis qu'une Convention au sujet de la Perse qui ne fait aucune mention des intérêts Britanniques dans le Golfe Persique serait une Convention défectueuse, et l'accueil favorable de l'accord en Angleterre, qui est tant à désirer, serait sensiblement affaibli parmi certains cercles politiques.

Je vous prie, donc, mon cher Ministre, de vouloir bien accorder un accueil favorable à la proposition que je vous communique et que je vous recommande chaleureusement; et j'espère que sous très peu nous mènerons à bonne et heureuse fin toutes nos négociations.

Veuillez, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 441.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, July 2, 1907.

F.O. 371/370.

D. 2.26 P.M.

Tel. (No. 117.)

R. 8.40 P.M.

Persian Convention. Article I.

Text sent to me I notice in tracing of Russian line Ispahan is omitted. I presume this is a slip as we have raised no objections to Ispahan and the line would have to pass through it.⁽¹⁾

⁽¹⁾ [In Sir E. Grey's reply, telegram No. 95 of July 2, it is stated that the omission of Ispahan was a "printer's error."]

No. 442.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, July 8, 1907.*

F.O. 971/870.

Tel. (No. 118.)

D. 2.20 P.M.

R. 6 P.M.

My telegram No. 115⁽¹⁾: Persian Gulf.

I have received this morning a reply from Minister for Foreign Affairs to my letter.⁽²⁾ He says he has studied the new proposal with the sincerest desire to arrive at an agreement, but he regrets that the doubts expressed in his *aide-mémoire* are not removed. Although new proposal takes into consideration in a larger measure interests of third Powers, it does not remove principal objection which concerns the introduction into the Convention of completely new element, and which is foreign to the original aim. In fact, Persian Gulf, as a whole, cannot be considered as an integral portion, and still less as a dependency of Persia; the questions connected with it are of a complex nature, and touch very diverse interests, and it is therefore difficult to bring them within the scope of the proposed Convention. In formulating this objection, Russian Government do not wish in any way to ignore position acquired by Great Britain in the Gulf, and there is no objection to exchanging views later with His Majesty's Government on the subject. But, being sincerely desirous of arriving as speedily as possible at a definite agreement on the points which are objects of present discussions, he again begs British Government to renounce their proposal to mention in the preamble of Convention their special interests in the Persian Gulf.

I am afraid it would be to no purpose to continue to urge the question. I have done my best to bring him round to our view, but I am confident his objections will not be removed. He was with the Emperor yesterday, and probably consulted with His Majesty, and if we press matter further, we may block whole arrangement.

I should be grateful for early reply to this telegram.

(¹) [*v. supra*, p. 487, No. 438.]

(²) [*v. supra*, p. 490, No. 440, *encl.*]

No. 443.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/871.

(No. 859.)

Sir,

*St. Petersburg, D. July 3, 1907.**R. July 8, 1907.*

With reference to my despatch No. 854⁽¹⁾ of the 1st instant, I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a letter which I received this morning from M. Isvolsky, and the substance of which I telegraphed to you in my telegram No. 118 of to-day's date,⁽²⁾ regarding the question of British interests in the Persian Gulf.

I see no prospects of being able to overcome the objections of M. Isvolsky to any mention being made in the Convention of those special interests: and I must frankly state my conviction that a persistence in our request will have the effect of blocking for some time the progress of our negotiations, and unless we withdraw our proposal, of finally leading to a deadlock.

M. Isvolsky referred to the question this afternoon and reiterated the arguments which he had previously put forward. The only remark which I made was in reply to his statement that the Persian Gulf was not solely in Persian territorial waters, and I said that we might perhaps define the portion of the Gulf which bathed the coasts of Persia and which consequently came within the purview of the Convention. He said

(¹) [*v. supra*, pp. 489-90, No. 440.]

(²) [*v. immediately preceding document.*]

that this would be impossible to effect, and would not remove his objections; and I therefore abstained from continuing the conversation and said that I had referred the matter to my Government and must await their reply.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 443.

M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

Mon cher Ambassadeur, *Saint-Petersbourg, le 19 Juin/2 Juillet, 1907.*

Dans votre lettre du 17/30 juin,⁽²⁾ a[nnée] c[ourante], vous me communiquez une nouvelle rédaction de la phrase sur le Golfe Persique, que Sir E. Grey voudrait voir insérée dans la Convention à conclure. Au lieu de parler du maintien du *statu quo* dans le Golfe Persique, comme il le proposait avant, le Ministre des A[ffaires] E[trangères] de la Grande-Bretagne voudrait qu'il fût fait simplement mention des intérêts spéciaux que l'Angleterre possède dans ce Golfe.

C'est avec le plus sincère désir de parvenir à un accord sur ce point que je me suis mis à l'étude de la nouvelle proposition, mais je dois constater avec regret que les doutes, auxquels, selon mon opinion, donnait lieu la clause relative au Golfe Persique dans la rédaction précédente et qui se trouvent exposés dans l'aide-mémoire russe du 14 juin, ne me semblent pas dissipés.

Bien que la nouvelle rédaction tienne compte dans une plus large mesure des intérêts de tierces Puissances, elle n'écarte pas notre principale objection, celle qui a trait à l'introduction dans notre accord relatif à la Perse d'un élément complètement nouveau et étranger à son but primitif. En effet, le Golfe Persique, dans son entier, ne peut pas être considéré comme une partie intégrante, ni encore moins comme une dépendance de la Perse; les questions s'y rattachant sont d'un ordre complexe et touchent à des intérêts fort divers; il serait donc difficile de les faire entrer dans le cadre de la Convention projetée. Je n'hésite pas à répéter qu'en formulant cette objection, nous n'entendons nullement méconnaître la position acquise par l'Angleterre dans le Golfe Persique et que nous ne verrons aucun inconvénient à entrer plus tard, si l'occasion s'en présente, dans un échange de vues à ce sujet avec le Cabinet de Londres. Mais sincèrement désireux d'arriver aussi vite que possible à une entente définitive sur les points qui font l'objet de nos pourparlers actuels, je ne puis que m'adresser encore une fois au Gouv[ernemen]t Britannique avec la prière de bien vouloir renoncer à sa proposition de mentionner dans le préambule de la susdite Convention ses intérêts spéciaux dans le Golfe Persique.

Votre sincèrement dévoué,

ISWOLSKY.

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 490, No. 440, *encl.*]

No. 444.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 871/370.

Tel. (No. 99.)

Your tel[egram] No. 118.⁽¹⁾

Foreign Office, July 5, 1907.

D. 1:40 P.M.

We appreciate your efforts to obtain insertion in the Persian Convention of mention of our special interests in the Persian Gulf, which M. Isvolsky is unwilling to accept.

You should now inform him in writing that in deference to his views and to expedite the conclusion of Agreement we are willing to abandon the proposal for the

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 491, No. 442.]

insertion of the *status quo* clause in the preamble and that we take note of the statement made in his mem[orandum] that the Russian Gov[ernment] do not deny that Great Britain has a special interest in maintaining the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf.⁽²⁾

You should add that owing to public opinion in this country it will be incumbent on me to make a public declaration of our views on the situation in the Persian Gulf, on the lines of maintaining the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf, and to add that we have reason to believe that the question of the Persian Gulf is not likely to give rise to difficulties between us and the Russian Gov[ernment].

I will communicate to you later the terms of the proposed declaration.

MINUTES.⁽³⁾

In deference to the objections urged to any mention of the Persian Gulf in the agreement with Russia I propose to omit this. But the opposition are sure to challenge us upon the subject; they will probably make their acceptance of the Agreement depend upon our ratification of Lord Lansdowne's declaration; in any case we shall have to make some declaration; and I think therefore that this telegram should be sent, as Sir A. Nicolson presses a reply.

The actual terms of the declaration I will submit later;⁽⁴⁾ this telegram leaves us uncommitted with regard to Lord Lansdowne's words. Those words (which I enclose for reference)⁽⁵⁾ are, as words, very strong; in substance they do not amount to very much. I should prefer something with less menace and more substance. Meanwhile I should be glad to know, if this telegram, agreeing to the omission of the Gulf from the agreement and telling the Russian Gov[ernment] that we shall have to make some declaration and what the drift of it will be, is approved. If the Prime Minister, Lord Ripon and Mr. Morley agree to it, I do not think it need be submitted to the Cabinet, though the actual terms of the Declaration should perhaps be circulated when they are ready.

E. G.
4.7.07.

I quite agree to the telegram which it is proposed to send to Sir A. Nicolson.—With respect to L[ord] Lansdowne's Declaration I thought when I heard it made and I think still that the tone of the passage which I have marked⁽⁶⁾ was unnecessarily menacing and I hope that some phrases more in accordance with usual diplomatic language may be used in any declaration which may be made to Parliament now.

R.

I only wonder whether it is worth while to add the last sentence to the telegram to Nicolson. It will, I should expect, be deprecated by Russia as committing her in the way she fears with Germany—(almost as much as if the words of preamble had been retained). However, I don't press.

The Lansdowne declaration may be considered later, I suppose.

J. M.
4.7.07.

I concur in the telegram.

H. C-B.
4/.

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 483, No. 431. cp. p. 492, No. 443, *encl.*]

⁽³⁾ [These minutes accompanied a preliminary draft of the telegram, which was finally despatched in the form given above.]

⁽⁴⁾ [v. *infra*, p. 497, *Ed. note.*]

⁽⁵⁾ [Not reproduced. v. *Parl. Deb.*, 4th Ser., Vol. 121, p. 1348.]

⁽⁶⁾ [The passage marked by Lord Ripon was the third sentence, relating to the establishment of a naval base or fortified port by any other Power.]

No. 445.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, July 6, 1907.*F.O. 371/370.
Tel. (No. 122.)D. 11.20 A.M.
R. 2 P.M.Your telegram No. 99.⁽¹⁾

I suppose that Parliament will rise about the middle of August and that it is therefore important that Conventions should be concluded by the end of this month at the latest: in order to permit declaration to be made as to Persian Gulf I am urging Minister for Foreign Affairs to give me his reply as to Afghanistan as soon as possible and I will do my utmost to hasten on conclusion of Conventions and have told him we must terminate in three weeks.

I am a little afraid that I may not succeed in signing as soon as is wished and their Afghan proposals may give trouble. But if we are unable to publish Conventions before Parliament rises and opportunity for making declaration is delayed I would respectfully suggest difficulty might be got over by my stating in covering despatch to Conventions that in accordance with your instructions I had made a communication to Minister of Foreign Affairs to the following effect and then giving terms of declaration: and covering despatch would be published with convention.

(1) [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 446.

*Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.*F.O. 871/370.
Tel. (No. 102.)*Foreign Office, July 8, 1907.*
D. 2.50 P.M.

Your telegram No. 122.⁽¹⁾ It is not essential that Conventions should be concluded before Parliament rises and will probably in any case be best that declaration as to Persian Gulf should be contained in a despatch from you to me or from me to you to be published with the Conventions. I am anxious to meet M. Isvolsky's wish to conclude the negotiations soon but there need not be any pressure from our side, which is inconvenient to him, so long as you are satisfied that there is no procrastination on his part.

(1) [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 447.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.*F.O. 371/371.
(No. 369.)
Sir,*St. Petersburg, D. July 9, 1907.*
R. July 22, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of an *Aide Mémoire* which M. Isvolsky communicated to me yesterday and which proposes a new tracing of the Russian line in Persia in order to meet the views of His Majesty's Government.

I telegraphed the substance of the *Aide Mémoire* in my telegram No. 123 of yesterday's date.⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

(1) [Not reproduced.]

Enclosure in No. 447.

Memorandum communicated by M. Isvolski to Sir A. Nicolson.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Britannique ayant exprimé le désir que la section orientale de la ligne qui délimiterait la sphère d'intérêts russes en Perse, mentionnée dans l'art[icle] I du projet de la Convention sur les affaires Persanes, ne passât pas à proximité de la frontière perso-afghane et vint aboutir non à Zulficar, comme cela a été d'abord proposé par l'Angleterre, mais au point d'intersection des frontières russe, persane et afghane, le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] est tout prêt à prendre ce vœu en considération et pense qu'une ligne se dirigeant à partir de Khak sur Khaf, Turbat-Schekh-Djami, et laissant en dehors de la sphère Russe Kuh-Benitak pour aboutir au point d'intersection des trois frontières, satisferait pleinement aux conditions voulues.

Le Ministère des A[ffaires] E[trangères] de Russie espère donc, que le Cabinet de Londres voudra bien apprécier l'esprit de conciliation dont le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[érial] fait preuve en laissant en dehors de la ligne susmentionnée Kiariz et Kuh-Benitak et en renonçant à la voir terminer à Zulficar même, et consentira à accepter la proposition ci-dessus exposée.

Saint-Pétersbourg, le 25 Juin/8 Juillet, 1907.

No. 448.

India Office to Foreign Office.

F.O. 371/371.

India Office, July 20, 1907.

The Under-Secretary of State for India presents his compliments to the Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, and, by direction of Mr. Secretary Morley forwards herewith, for the information of the Secretary of State, copy of telegrams from the Viceroy, dated 14 and 19 July, relative to the Anglo-Russian negotiations as to the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf.

India Office, 20 July 1907.

Enclosure 1 in No. 448.

Government of India to Secretary of State for India.

F.O. 371/371.

July 14, 1907.

Tel. Foreign Secret. Your telegram of 9th July, Persia, and Despatch from Sir E. Grey to Sir A. Nicolson, 6th June,⁽¹⁾ received with Political Secretary's letter of 21st June. Government of India much regret that it should not have been possible to retain any mention in preamble of Convention of British interest in maintenance of *status quo* in Persian Gulf, as this would have removed most of the doubts which they have felt as to advantages of the Convention. As regards revised proposal to take note of the statement by M. Isvolsky in a memorandum, His Majesty's Government have no doubt borne in mind remarks contained in Spring Rice's Despatch No. 355, from St. Petersburg, 26th October, 1903,⁽²⁾ to the effect that an assurance expressed in word or writing is regarded as only of temporary validity and liable to change with changing conditions, and that Russian Government believe Russian assurances are (?) sometimes accepted merely for Parliamentary purposes. The remarks of Sir Charles Scott in his Despatch No. 11, 7th January 1904,⁽²⁾ in reporting

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 465-8, No. 417.]

⁽²⁾ [Not reproduced.]

Count Lamsdorff's conversation, are to the same effect, and indicate that Russian Government makes definite mental reservation as to permanence of any such assurance. We are unaware of reasons why Isvolsky declines to insert this clause in preamble, but his hesitation in the matter may, perhaps, be due to some such causes as those indicated above. We trust that if insertion in preamble is impossible, British interest in maintenance of *status quo* will be asserted in the most definite terms, and that overt measures, as occasion may offer, will be taken in Gulf to show that there is every intention to act up to declaration.

Enclosure 2 in No. 448.

Government of India to Secretary of State for India.

F.O. 371/371.
Tel.

Simla, July 19, 1907.

R. 3:39 P.M.

Foreign Secret. In continuation of my telegram of the 14th inst[ant]. Please see Spring-Rice's telegram of the 12th July⁽³⁾ reporting proposal of Russian doctor effecting quarantine arrangements in Persian Gulf. We now learn for first time, from telegram from Sir E. Grey to Nicolson, No. 89, of June 21st,⁽⁴⁾ copy received with Political Secretary's letter of June 28th, that Russian Gov[ernmen]t were to be informed that British objection to maintenance of sanitary station at Karez would be withdrawn, provided that Russia would agree not to interfere with British control over quarantine in Gulf. We are fully prepared, as already intimated, to provide for improvements in quarantine considered essential by Dr. Thomson, pending consideration of Sanitary Council's scheme, which we have not yet received. We trust that strong protest will be made against proposal of Russian doctor affecting our control at very time when Russia is ostensibly considering possibility of promising not to interfere with that control. In view of present incident, we venture with the greatest respect again to suggest that it is of utmost importance that the question of maintenance of *status quo* in the Persian Gulf including quarantine arrangements should form integral part of Convention with Russia. We have now seen M. Isvolski's objections to mention of Gulf, as reported in Nicolson's telegram of the 24th June,⁽⁵⁾ and we are unable to recognise their special force, for they would apply as strongly to mention of zone assigned to Russia, in which other nations have as large if not larger interests than in the Gulf. British and Indian interests are already paramount in the Gulf, and if construction of lower section of Bagdad railway is to form an object of British policy it is now more important than ever to maintain our existing rights and interests there.

Even at the last moment we would venture to point out that our conciliatory attitude towards Russia as regards Tibet and Afghanistan, and the fact that we have recognised as her sphere of interests most of Persia, while retaining in our sphere a very small area, most of which is incapable of commercial or industrial development, and that we voluntarily renounced the strong political position which we had secured at Tehran and elsewhere owing to the action of popular party, would appear to entitle us to require from her full recognition of our vital interests in the Gulf, especially as we now confine these to the coast only by drawing our line from Bunder Abbas. Russian refusal to recognise our interests in this matter, coupled with rumours from German source here that Persian Majlis is considering concession of Khanikin railway to Germany, and report that a start is being made on Bagdad Khanikin line, would lead us to fear secret understanding with Germany, tending to undermine our position in the Gulf and at Bagdad, and clearing up of situation might be (? far more) to our advantage.

(3) [Not reproduced.]

(4) [*v. supra*, p. 478, No. 425.]

(5) [*v. supra*, pp. 475-6, No. 428.]

[*ED. NOTE.*—On August 8, Sir Edward Grey sent Sir A. Nicolson a despatch No. 295, which is printed *infra*, p. 354, No. 492. It contained as Enclosure 2 "a copy of the Declaration relating to British interests in the Persian Gulf which I propose to make in Parliament or in a published despatch to you, after the conclusion of the agreement." This declaration was as follows:

Proposed British Declaration.

This Convention is limited to the regions of Persia touching the respective frontiers of Great Britain and Russia in Asia, and the Persian Gulf is not part of those regions, and only partly in Persian territory. It has not therefore been considered appropriate to introduce into the Convention a positive declaration respecting special interests possessed by Great Britain in the Gulf, the result of British action in those waters for more than a hundred years.

His Majesty's Government have reason to believe that this question will not give rise to difficulties between the two Governments should developments arise which make further discussion affecting British interests in the Gulf necessary. For the Russian Government have in the course of the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of this Convention explicitly stated that they do not deny that Great Britain has a special interest in the maintenance of the *status quo* in the Persian Gulf—a statement of which His Majesty's Government have formally taken note.

In order to make it quite clear that the present Convention is not intended to affect the position in the Gulf, and does not imply any change of policy respecting it on the part of Great Britain, His Majesty's Government think it desirable to draw attention to previous declarations of British policy, and to reaffirm generally previous statements as to British interests in the Persian Gulf and the importance of maintaining them.

His Majesty's Government will continue to direct all their efforts to the preservation of the *status quo* in the Gulf and the maintenance of British trade; in doing so, they have no desire to exclude the legitimate trade of any other Power.

This declaration, with some slight changes of wording, was sent as a despatch to Sir A. Nicolson on August 29, 1907. It was published in this form with the text of the Convention in *Cd.* 3750 on September 26, 1907. *A. & P.* (1906), CXXV, (*Cd.* 3750), p. 478. It is reprinted *infra*, pp. 501-2, No. 455.]

No. 449.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, August 12, 1907.

F.O. 371/371.

D. 8 P.M.

Tel. (No. 148.)

R. 9 P.M.

Persian draft Convention.

I communicated to the Minister for Foreign Affairs to-day the Memoranda as to the rectification of proposed Russian line and as to the transfer of the telegraph lines.⁽¹⁾ He feared that proposal to leave Khaf out of the Russian sphere might give rise to discussions with General Staff. I employed necessary and obvious arguments, and impressed on him that we must urge very strongly acceptance of our proposal.

I found Minister for Foreign Affairs in an excellent disposition, and I feel confident that he will do his best.

⁽¹⁾ [*cp. supra*, pp. 460-1, No. 415.]

No. 450.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/371.

St. Petersburg, D. August 15, 1907.

(No. 418.)

R. August 19, 1907.

Sir,

I suggested in a private letter to Mr. Isvolsky that we should take steps to avoid any ambiguity occurring in the future as to the localities through which the lines defining our respective spheres of interest in Persia might pass. I pointed out to His Excellency that the Convention mentioned that the English and Russian lines passed

through certain localities, and it should be made clear, perhaps by a *note Verbale* which could be appended to the Convention, that it was understood that such localities were included either within the English or the Russian sphere, as the case might be.

Mr. Isvolsky remarked to me yesterday that he quite saw the point of my suggestion, and he would propose that in the Convention itself it should be stated that the lines passed through *and included* such and such localities. He would prefer stating this in the text of the Convention and not recording it in a separate *Note Verbale*, as in the latter case undue attention might be called to the fact and it would be difficult to avoid employing the phrase "spheres of interest," which it was desirable to suppress. Besides it would be better not to increase the number of annexes and other supplementary documents.

I told His Excellency that I quite agreed with him and I asked him to find a good French word for the equivalent of "included." I trust that you will concur with the insertion in the text of the Convention of the phrase proposed.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 451.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/372.

(No. 425.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. August 20, 1907.

R. September 3, 1907.

I gave M. Isvolsky on my return from London a copy of the proposed declaration which would be published simultaneously with the Arrangement concerning Persia, and which dealt with the question of the special interests of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf. I have the honour to transmit a copy of an *Aide-Mémoire* which I have received from the Ministry for Foreign Affairs saying that that Department sees no objection whatever to the publication of such a declaration and merely rectifying the rendering of the Russian statement in respect to the recognition by the Russian Government of the special interests of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 451.

Aide-Mémoire.

Ayant pris connaissance du projet de la déclaration que le Gouvernement Britannique se propose de faire sur la question du Golfe Persique, le Ministère Impérial des Affaires Etrangères s'empresse de faire savoir à l'Ambassade d'Angleterre qu'il ne voit aucun inconvénient à ce qu'une pareille déclaration soit faite.

Le Ministère croit seulement devoir faire observer à l'Ambassade que la deuxième phrase du deuxième alinéa du projet ne rend pas d'une manière tout à fait exacte le texte du passage de l'aide-mémoire russe, remis à Sir Arthur Nicolson le 14/27 juin 1907,⁽¹⁾ relatif au point de vue du Gouvernement Impérial sur les intérêts de la Grande-Bretagne dans les eaux en question, et qu'afin de rendre cette phrase plus conforme au texte original il serait nécessaire de dire que "le Cabinet Impérial n'étend pas nier les intérêts spéciaux de l'Angleterre dans le Golfe Persique."

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 482-3, No. 431.]

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,⁽¹⁾ 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. 452.

Aide-mémoire.

St. Petersburg, August 19, 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 souverains 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

⁽¹⁾ [r. *supra*, p. 299, No. 281.]

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 [19] août, 1907.

No. 453.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/872.

(No. 428.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. August 26, 1907.

R. September 3, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit, herewith, an *Aide-Mémoire*, which M. Isvolsky handed to me on the 24th instant, regarding the cession to the Russian⁽¹⁾ Government of the British rights over the Tehran-Khanikin telegraph line and stating that the Russian Government have no objection to the prolongation for 20 years of the concessions of the telegraph lines Teheran-Boushir, Jask-Gwaddar, and Kachan-Robat.

I presume that no steps will be taken at Teheran in regard to the latter question until the Agreements between His Britannic Majesty's Government and that of Russia have been signed.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 453.

Aide-mémoire.

St. Petersburg, August 24, 1907.

Le Gouvernement Impérial accepte en principe la cession à la Russie des droits dont le Gouvernement Britannique dispose sur la ligne télégraphique Téhéran-Khanikin, ainsi que cela est projeté dans l'aide-mémoire de l'Ambassade Britannique du 10/23 juin 1907,⁽²⁾ et ne trouve pas d'objections à la prolongation pour une durée de vingt ans des concessions des lignes Téhéran-Boushir, Djask-Gwaddar, et Kachan-Robat.

Quant au côté financier de cette question, le Gouvernement Impérial se réserve d'entrer dans un échange de vues avec le Gouvernement anglais afin de régler cette affaire à l'amiable, aussitôt qu'il sera en possession des données exactes à ce sujet demandées dans l'aide-mémoire ministériel du 29 juillet dernier.

Saint-Petersbourg, ce 10/24 août, 1907.

(1) [In original "Persian," corrected to "Russian" by Sir E. Grey.]

(2) [v. *supra*, pp. 480-1, No. 429, *encl.*]

No. 454.

*Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.**St. Petersburg, August 29, 1907.*

F.O. 371/320.

D. 2 P.M.

Tel. (No. 175.)

R. 4 P.M.

Anglo-Russian Convention.

. . . .⁽¹⁾ Exchange of Telegraph lines in Persia. M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] agrees with your views. We have arranged that arrangement as to the exchange of telegraph lines should be a separate document not to be published with or appended to convention and to be termed Arrangement. It would be clumsy to make a note of it. An additional sentence as to the two representatives later approaching Persian Government will be inserted. Both His Excellency and I will sign arrangement, and it will not be published until consent of Persian government has been obtained. I have given all information as to Tehran-Meshed line and he made no remarks. I did not invite any. Of course arrangement will be signed simultaneously with convention.⁽²⁾

I have given him a memorandum taking note of his memorandum as to the prolongation of British telegraph concessions.⁽³⁾

Negotiations are now concluded. Final texts go to Emperor to-day for His Majesty's approval and we sign on Saturday.

⁽¹⁾ [The first part of this telegram referred to Afghan affairs and is printed, *infra*, p. 573, No. 512.]

⁽²⁾ [Tel. No. 173 to Sir A. Nicolson of August 29, 1907, concurred "in proposed arrangements respecting change of telegraphs."]

⁽³⁾ [*v.* immediately preceding document.]

No. 455.

*(The Persian Gulf Declaration.)**Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.*

F.O. 371/372.

(No. 325.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, August 29, 1907.

I have to-day authorized Y[our] E[xcellency] by telegraph to sign a Convention with the Russian Gov[ernment] containing arrangements on the subject of Persia Afghanistan and Thibet.

The arrangement respecting Persia is limited to the regions of that country touching the respective frontiers of Great Britain and Russia in Asia, and the Persian Gulf is not part of those regions, and is only partly in Persian territory. It has not therefore been considered appropriate to introduce into the Convention a positive declaration respecting special interests possessed by Great Britain in the Gulf, the result of British action in those waters for more than a hundred years.

His Majesty's Government have reason to believe that this question will not give rise to difficulties between the two Governments should developments arise which make further discussion affecting British interests in the Gulf necessary. For the Russian Government have in the course of the negotiations leading up to the conclusion of this arrangement explicitly stated that they do not deny the special interests of Great Britain in the Persian Gulf⁽¹⁾—a statement of which His Majesty's Government have formally taken note.

⁽¹⁾ [*cp. supra*, p. 498, No. 451, *encl.* (*cp.* p. 497, *Ed. note.*) *v.* also the following references to the Declaration on the Persian Gulf in the debate in the House of Lords in 1908, *Parl. Deb.*, 4th Ser., Vol. 183, Lord Curzon, pp. 1010-3; Lord Fitzmaurice, pp. 1038-9; Lord Sanderson, pp. 1300-11; Lord Lansdowne, pp. 1327-8; Lord Crewe, pp. 1339-40.]

In order to make it quite clear that the present arrangement is not intended to affect the position in the Gulf, and does not imply any change of policy respecting it on the part of Great Britain, His Majesty's Government think it desirable to draw attention to previous declarations of British policy, and to reaffirm generally previous statements as to British interests in the Persian Gulf and the importance of maintaining them.

His Majesty's Government will continue to direct all their efforts to the preservation of the *status quo* in the Gulf and the maintenance of British trade; in doing so, they have no desire to exclude the legitimate trade of any other Power.

I am, &c.

E. GREY.

No. 456.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

(No. 445.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. August 31, 1907.

R. September 3, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit, herewith, the Convention which was signed to-day by M. Isvolsky and myself for the settlement of certain questions affecting the interests of Great Britain and Russia in Asia.

I also beg leave to forward a note which I received from M. Isvolsky, in response to a communication from me, of which a copy is herewith enclosed, on the subject of the entry of scientific missions into Thibet.⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 456.

Convention.

Sa Majesté le Roi du Royaume Uni de la Grande Bretagne et d'Irlande et des Territoires Britanniques au delà des mers, Empereur des Indes, et Sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies, animés du sincère désir de régler d'un consentement mutuel différentes questions touchant aux intérêts de Leurs Etats sur le continent Asiatique, ont résolu de conclure des accords destinés à prévenir toute cause de malentendus entre la Grande Bretagne et la Russie par rapport aux dites questions et ont nommé à cet effet pour Leurs Plénipotentiaires respectifs—savoir :

Sa Majesté le Roi du Royaume Uni de la Grande Bretagne et d'Irlande et des Territoires Britanniques au delà des mers, Empereur des Indes :

le Très Honorable Sir Arthur Nicolson, son Ambassadeur Extraordinaire et Plénipotentiaire près Sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies.

Sa Majesté l'Empereur de toutes les Russies :

le Maître de Sa Cour Alexandre Isvolsky, Ministre des Affaires Etrangères,

lesquels, après s'être communiqué leurs pleins pouvoirs, trouvés en bonne et due forme, sont convenus de ce qui suit :

Arrangement concernant la Perse.

Les Gouvernements de la Grande Bretagne et de Russie, s'étant mutuellement engagés à respecter l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Perse et désirant sincèrement la préservation de l'ordre dans toute l'étendue de ce pays et son développement pacifique, aussi bien que l'établissement permanent d'avantages égaux pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les autres nations;

considérant que chacun d'eux a, pour des raisons d'ordre géographique et économique, un intérêt spécial au maintien de la paix et de l'ordre dans certaines

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 354-5, No. 318 (b).]

provinces de la Perse contiguës ou voisines à la frontière Russe, d'une part, et aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Beloudjistan, de l'autre; et étant désireux d'éviter tout motif de conflit entre leurs intérêts respectifs dans les provinces persanes dont il a été fait mention plus haut;

se sont mis d'accord sur les termes suivants :

I.

La Grande Bretagne s'engage à ne pas rechercher pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets britanniques, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de Puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale—telles que les concessions de chemins de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurance, &c.—au delà d'une ligne allant de Kasri-Chirin par Isfahan, Jезд, Khakh et aboutissant à un point sur la frontière Persane à l'intersection des frontières Russe et Afghane, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région soutenues par le Gouvernement Russe. Il est bien entendu que les localités mentionnées ci-dessus entrent dans la région où la Grande Bretagne s'engage à ne pas rechercher les susdites concessions.

II.

La Russie de son côté s'engage à ne pas rechercher pour elle-même et à ne pas appuyer en faveur de sujets russes, aussi bien qu'en faveur de sujets de Puissances tierces, de concessions quelconques de nature politique ou commerciale, telles que les concessions de chemins de fer, de banques, de télégraphes, de routes, de transport, d'assurance, &c.—au delà d'une ligne allant de la frontière Afghane par Gazik, Birdjand, Kerman et aboutissant à Bender Abbas, et à ne pas s'opposer, directement ou indirectement, à des demandes de pareilles concessions dans cette région soutenues par le Gouvernement Britannique. Il est bien entendu que les localités mentionnées ci-dessus entrent dans la région où la Russie s'engage à ne pas rechercher les susdites concessions.

III.

La Russie s'engage pour sa part à ne pas s'opposer, sans s'être préalablement entendue avec l'Angleterre, à ce que des concessions quelconques soient données à des sujets britanniques dans les régions de la Perse situées entre les lignes mentionnées dans les articles I et II.

La Grande-Bretagne prend un engagement identique en ce qui concerne des concessions à donner à des sujets russes dans les mêmes régions de la Perse.

Toutes les concessions existant actuellement dans les régions désignées dans les articles I et II sont maintenues.

IV.

Il est entendu que les revenus de toutes les douanes persanes, à l'exception de celles du Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, revenus garantissant l'amortissement et les intérêts des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah à la Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts de Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement, seront affectés au même but que par le passé.

Il est également entendu que les revenus des douanes persanes du Farsistan et du Golfe Persique, aussi bien que ceux des pêcheries sur le littoral persan de la mer Caspienne et ceux des Postes et Télégraphes seront affectés comme par le passé au service des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement du Schah à la Banque Impériale de Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement.

V.

En cas d'irrégularités dans l'amortissement ou le paiement des % % des emprunts persans conclus à la Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts de Perse et à la

Banque Impériale de Perse jusqu'à la date de la signature du présent arrangement, et si la nécessité se présente pour la Russie d'instituer un contrôle sur des sources de revenus garantissant le service régulier des emprunts conclus à la première des dites Banques et situées dans la région mentionnée dans l'article II du présent arrangement, ou pour la Grande Bretagne d'instituer un contrôle sur des sources de revenus garantissant le service régulier des emprunts conclus à la seconde des dites Banques et situées dans la région mentionnée dans l'article I du présent arrangement, les Gouvernements Anglais et Russe s'engagent à entrer préalablement dans un échange d'idées amical en vue de déterminer d'un commun accord les mesures de contrôle en question et d'éviter toute ingérence qui ne serait pas conforme aux principes servant de base au présent arrangement.

Conventions concernant l'Afghanistan (v. infra, pp. 541-4, No. 483) et le Thibet (v. supra, pp. 352-4, No. 317).

La présente convention sera ratifiée et les ratifications en seront échangées à St. Pétersbourg aussitôt que faire se pourra.⁽²⁾

En foi de quoi les Plénipotentiaires respectifs ont signé la présente Convention et y ont apposé leurs cachets.

Fait à St. Pétersbourg, en double expédition, le 18/31 Août 1907.

A. NICOLSON.
(L.S.)

ISWOLSKY.
(L.S.)

(²) [Ratifications were exchanged on September 23. A formal communication of the text was made to the Great Powers and Persia on the 24th, to China on the 25th. It was published on the 26th. A substantially accurate summary had appeared in the Russian newspaper the "Retch" on September 19. The full text is printed in *B.F.S.P.*, Vol. 100, (1911), pp. 555-60, and is reproduced *infra*, pp. 618-20, *Appendix I.*]

No. 457.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.⁽¹⁾

F.O. 371/372.

Foreign Office, September 16, 1907.

Tel. (No. 118.)

D. 4.15 P.M.

Your Telegram No. 263.⁽²⁾

We shall communicate the Agreement to the Great Powers confidentially two or three days before publication which will probably take place on 26th inst[ant].

You may communicate it to the Persian Gov[ernmen]t on the 24th if your Russian Colleague receives similar instructions and at the same time inform the M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] that there is no secret clause.

We presume you have com[munica]ted summary telegraphed to you on Sept[ember] 7. (No. 108.)⁽³⁾

(¹) [Repeated to St. Petersburg as No. 198 of September 16, 1907, D. 4.15 P.M. with the following addition "Ask Russian Government to give similar instructions to their Minister at Tehran."]

(²) [In Tel. No. 263 of September 15, 1907, Sir C. Spring-Rice emphasized the suspicion in which the Agreement was held in Persia, and suggested that an early and formal communication would have a pacifying effect, and preclude the possibility of German action.]

(³) [Not reproduced.]

No. 458.

Foreign Office to India Office.

F.O. 371/312.

Sir,

Foreign Office, September 19, 1907.

I am directed by Secretary Sir Edward Grey to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 11th inst[ant] requesting his opinion as to the answer to be returned to an enquiry made by the Gov[ernmen]t of India concerning the effect of the new Anglo-Russian Arrangement respecting Persia on the rights of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] in the matter of railway construction in the southern part of that country under the pledge given by Shah Nasr-ed-Din in 1888 and confirmed by the late Shah in 1900.

I am to inform you in reply that the Arrangement would clearly prevent H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] from constructing a railway line as far as Tehran but that, in Sir E. Grey's opinion, the wording of the pledge given by Nasr-ed-Din Shah in 1888 would justify them in asking to be allowed to construct a line in Southern Persia, should they desire to do so, in the event of the Russian Government obtaining a concession to construct one in the north.

The Gov[ernmen]t of India will doubtless not overlook the fact that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t have undertaken, by the new Arrangement, not to oppose concessions supported by H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] in the British sphere, nor, without previous discussion with H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment], in the neutral zone either, and that the position of Great Britain is therefore stronger in this respect at present than it was before the signature of the Convention.

I am, &c.

LOUIS MALLET.

. No. 459.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/373.

(No. 215.)

Sir,

*Gulahek, D. September 24, 1907.**R. October 28, 1907.*

As I had the honour to report in my Telegram No. 277⁽¹⁾ I this day communicated to the Persian Government the text of the Anglo-Russian Agreement to which I attached a Persian translation—"non garantie"—drawn up in concert with my Russian colleague. I transmit to you herewith copy of the covering letter, which I sent with the text to the Persian Government, with the concurrence of Monsieur de Hartwig.

The latter was of opinion that we should state verbally, rather than in writing, that there were no secret clauses to the Treaty, holding that a written affirmation might create a precedent by which parties other than those signatory to any future Treaties might expect a similar declaration by the Contracting Powers, and declare themselves dissatisfied if it were not forthcoming. In this view, as reported in my above-mentioned Telegram, I concurred.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

Enclosure in No. 459.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sad-ud-Dowleh.

Monsieur le Ministre,

Téhéran, le 24 Septembre, 1907.

Conformément aux instructions que j'ai reçues de mon Gouvernement, j'ai l'honneur de vous transmettre ci-joint, le texte de l'Arrangement du 18/31 Août,

(¹) Not reproduced. It gives the substance of the above despatch in shorter form.]

1907, intervenu entre La Grande-Bretagne et la Russie, en tant que cet Arrangement a trait à des matières pouvant intéresser le Gouvernement Persan.

Pour faciliter la lecture de ce document j'ai annexé au texte français une traduction persane *non garantie* de l'Arrangement.

Afin d'éviter tout malentendu, je crois devoir ajouter qu'il est bien entendu que c'est le texte français qui fait foi.

Le texte de l'Arrangement sera officiellement communiqué aux Grandes Puissances, et la publication en aura lieu dans le plus bref délai.

Veuillez, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

No. 460.

Foreign Office to India Office.

F.O. 971/872.

Sir,

Foreign Office, September 25, 1907.

With reference to I[ndia] O[ffice] letter of Aug[ust] 24 relative to the projected transfer of the respective British and Russian rights over the Tehran-Meshed and Meshed-Seistan telegraph lines, I am directed by Secretary Sir Edward Grey to tr[ansmit] to you herewith copy of a despatch from H[is] M[ajesty's] Ambassador at St. Petersburg forwarding the draft of a telegram which the Russian Gov[ernment] propose to address to their Minister at Tehran giving the reasons which have prompted the transaction, and instructing him to confer with H[is] M[ajesty's] Minister as to the measures to be adopted with a view to obtain the consent of the Persian Gov[ernment] to its accomplishment.

H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] are, as you are aware, still awaiting certain inform[ation] which the Russian Gov[ernment] have promised to supply regarding the nature of their control over the Meshed-Seistan line, which, when received will be at once communicated to you but I am to state that it did not appear to Sir E. Grey to be necessary to delay an expression of his concurrence with the terms of the draft instructions, which the Persian Gov[ernment] were anxious to receive as soon as possible, until he was in possession of these details and he accordingly intimated his agreement in them to Sir A. Nicolson by telegraph on the 22nd inst[ant].

I am further to state that, if Mr. Secretary Morley concurs, Sir E. Grey proposes to furnish Sir C. Spring-Rice at once with instructions similar to those which his Russian colleague has received on the subject.

I am, &c.

LOUIS MALLET.

No. 461.

India Office to Foreign Office.

F.O. 971/872.

Sir,

India Office, September 25, 1907.

In reply to your letter No. 29521, dated the 13th September, 1907,⁽¹⁾ I am directed to say that Mr. Secretary Morley will be glad if Secretary Sir E. Grey will send instructions, as proposed, to H[is] M[ajesty's] Minister at Tehran to approach the Persian Government with a view to the renewal of the concessions granted to the

(1) [Not reproduced as its tenour is indicated.]

Indo-European Telegraph Department for the Tehran-Bushire, Jask-Gwador, and Kashan-Robat lines, it being left to Sir C. Spring-Rice to choose the best moment for acting on them.

I am, &c.

COLIN G. CAMPBELL.

No. 462.

Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/325.

(No. 468.) Confidential.

Paris, D. September 25, 1907.

Sir,

R. September 27, 1907.

With reference to my despatch No. 464 of yesterday⁽¹⁾ I have the honour to inform you that when I communicated to the Political Director at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs the documents concerning the Conventional Agreement between England and Russia he observed "So I see you have made a declaration on the subject of the Persian Gulf, which was not mentioned in the summary of the Convention which you showed to me a short time ago."

I replied "Yes: the publication of the despatch to Sir A. Nicolson⁽²⁾ is a sort of 'avis au lecteur.' Nobody can in future plead ignorance of our attitude in regard to the Persian Gulf."

I have, &c.

FRANCIS BERTIE.

(1) [In his despatch, No. 464 of September 24, 1907, Sir F. Bertie reports that he has communicated to M. Louis the text of the Anglo-Russian Convention and informed him of the position as regards the Persian Gulf, and scientific missions in Thibet.]

(2) [v. *supra*, pp. 501-2, No. 455.]

No. 463.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, December 25, 1907.

F.O. 971/374.

D. 4.30 P.M.

Tel. (No. 267.)

R. 9.20 P.M.

Persia. Mr. Marling's tel[egram] No. 412.⁽¹⁾

Min[iste]r for For[eign] Aff[air]s has received identic telegram. He does not see what action the two Gov[ernmen]ts can take at present juncture. Russian Gov[ernmen]t desire that order and calm sh[ou]ld be restored and they are comparatively indifferent as to what Gov[ernmen]t is established or which Shah reigns, so long as above essential conditions are secured. M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] thinks it best to await events; and he again impressed on me desire of Russian Gov[ernmen]t to abstain from any military intervention.

He spoke today to German Amb[assado]r here as to action of German Chargé d'Aff[aire]s. German Amb[assado]r denied that Chargé d'Aff[aire]s had taken any action beyond attending Assembly for the sake of information; and added that he had heard that British, Russian and French representatives had intervened for purpose of obtaining privileges in return for effecting an arrangement. M[inister

(1) [This referred to the dangerous situation arising from the quarrels between the Shah and the Mejliss.]

for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] categorically denied latter insinuation as being without a vestige of truth; and said that British and Russian representatives had intervened as representing Powers with the most direct and vital interests in Persia and solely with a view to endeavouring to arrange some *modus vivendi* between Shah and Assembly in order to introduce some peace and order. French representative, he said, had not intervened, though he had been very naturally consulted by his two colleagues.

No. 464.

Extract from Annual Report for Russia for the Year 1907.

(Enclosure in Despatch No. 57 from Sir A. Nicolson, D. January 29, 1908,
R. February 3, 1908.)

(I.)—*Persia.*

F.O. 3643/3643/09/88.

17. The condition of Persia and the increasing anarchy in that country caused much uneasiness to M. Isvolsky from the commencement of the year. Both Governments had agreed, if necessary and under certain conditions, to make a joint advance to the Persian Government, and the sums were held ready at the Russian and Imperial Banks. This joint advance was the first practical demonstration of unity of action between the two Governments in regard to Persia, and it may be said generally that throughout the course of the Persian troubles the Russian Government, both previous to and subsequent to the conclusion of the Convention, showed a loyal and sincere desire to act in close co-operation with His Majesty's Government. From the first the Russian Government were opposed to any military intervention, though they feared that the situation in the Caucasus and in Persia would act and react on each other. On the 7th March M. Isvolsky communicated a Memorandum on the situation in Persia, and suggested that the Russian and British Representatives should make an identic communication to the Persian Government warning them as to the necessity of supporting British and Russian interests. The return of the Persian Minister to St. Petersburg in May gave M. Isvolsky an opportunity of impressing on him the desire of the Russian Government to abstain from all intervention so long as the lives and properties of Russian subjects were not in imminent danger, and also to advise him that the negotiations with regard to Persia in no wise affected the integrity and independence of the country. During the whole of the year the news from Persia was occasionally alarming and always disquieting, but the Russian Government maintained their attitude of non-intervention and of close co-operation with His Majesty's Government. In view of urgent appeals from the Consular authorities, the Russian Government, as was the case with His Majesty's Government, felt it expedient to increase in some instances the number of Consular guards. Application was also made to the Russian Government from time to time by the Russian officials in Persia to cause preparations to be made for the dispatch of forces to the frontier, but M. Isvolsky considered that a military demonstration on the frontier might lead to serious consequences and possibly to an outburst of fanaticism which might endanger the lives of Europeans in Persia. In this view he was supported by the Russian military authorities, and it was decided by a special Inter-Departmental Committee that no movement of troops towards the frontier should be authorized. There was a strong disinclination on the part of the War Office and of the General Staff to undertake measures of the above description, and though there were one or two isolated instances of injury caused to Russian subjects and Russian postal couriers, the Russian Government continued to maintain a passive and a watchful attitude.

48. The question of a joint advance to the Persian Government remained dormant for several months, but on the 9th October the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs informed His Majesty's Embassy that the Shah had applied to the Russian Bank for a private advance of £50,000, but that the Russian Government did not wish to meet his wishes without the co-operation of His Majesty's Government. The latter were, however, of opinion that they could not make an advance to the Shah without the consent of the Persian Assembly, and it was considered undesirable to take part in the proposed transaction. Later, on the 4th November, the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the Embassy that the Shah had sent a most urgent appeal to the Russian Legation for an advance, as he was in dire financial straits and had not sufficient means to pay his personal guards, who would consequently desert and leave him defenceless. He had endeavoured to borrow money in the bazaars, but without success, and he was ready to deposit jewellery in the Russian Bank as a security for the advance. In these circumstances, M. Goubastoff stated that the Russian Government felt compelled to come to the assistance of the Shah, and had authorized the Russian Minister to meet the request of His Majesty up to 60,000 tomans, which might be increased to 100,000 tomans. This Embassy is not aware what amount, if any, was eventually given to the Shah, as no further communications passed on the subject. The two Governments came to an agreement to accept the proposal that a French expert should be appointed as Financial Adviser to the Persian Government, who were desirous of obtaining some advisory assistance from abroad in financial matters. The Russian Minister at Tehran had, in the first instance, submitted to his Government that the consent of Russia to this appointment should be subject to certain conditions. M. de Hartwig considered that the Adviser should not be engaged for the purpose of assisting in the establishment of a National Bank, nor should he occupy himself with foreign loans, nor take any action without previous consultation with the British and Russian Legations. These conditions were agreed to by the two Governments, but after some consultation between the Representatives of the three Powers at Tehran it was deemed advisable to modify these conditions in order to assure the assent of the Persian Assembly being accorded to the contract. It was therefore agreed that the question of the establishment of a Persian National Bank should come within the scope of the functions of the Adviser, and that the general letter of instructions which should be furnished by the French Government to the Financial Adviser should deal with the question of his relations with the British and Russian Legations. M. Bizot was selected by the French Government for the post in question, but the appointment has not, at the time of writing, been definitely made, owing to some delay having occurred in the reception by the French Government of the draft contract, and also to the latter desiring some amendments being introduced into it. The Russian Government are desirous of being made acquainted with the terms of the instructions which are to be issued to M. Bizot, but these apparently have not yet been prepared. The Russian and British Governments are anxious that the appointment should be made as speedily as possible, as there are rumours that efforts are being made by the German Legation at Tehran to procure the appointment of a candidate of its own.

49. The activity of the German Legation at Tehran has greatly preoccupied the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, as he fears that Germany may acquire a strong position in the capital and with the Assembly, and contrive to secure a predominant influence. He regards this activity as one expression of the dissatisfaction of the German Government with the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention, and as indicating a desire to cause both Governments as much embarrassment as possible. The result has been to fortify the desire of the Russian Government to act in the closest possible co-operation with His Majesty's Government. A sudden crisis which occurred at Tehran in the middle of December, and which at one time appeared to seriously threaten the personal safety of the Shah, gave occasion to joint action on the part of the British and Russian Representatives with a view to endeavouring to establish some *modus vivendi* between the Shah and the Assembly. The details of the

crisis will doubtless be related in the Report from Tehran, and it may be sufficient to mention that the Russian Government readily approved of the steps taken by the two Representatives, and showed every desire to work cordially with the British Government. The Russian Government considered that circumstances might compel the Shah to seek refuge in one of the Legations, and they suggested that in such a case he should be protected by a combined force of British and Russian guards. To this His Majesty's Government agreed, and proposed that if the Shah did take refuge, and if subsequently adequate guarantees were given for his personal safety, and if he were permitted to leave the country, that on those conditions he might be surrendered to the Persian authorities. The Russian Government were, however, of opinion that no confidence could be placed in any guarantees furnished by the Persian authorities, and proposed that if the Shah were compelled to leave the country he should be accompanied to the frontier by a combined Russian and British escort. This proposal received the assent of His Majesty's Government, provided that the need was urgent and that the Shah had taken refuge in one of the Legations. An incident which arose with this crisis was connected with the extreme activity of the German Chargé d'Affaires, who apparently desired to play a prominent part in the proceedings. The Russian Government had made certain friendly representations to the German Government as to the inconveniences which were being caused by the action of their Legation, and, in reply, were informed that their Chargé d'Affaires had kept strictly within the limits of diplomatic reserve, and intimated that, on the other hand, the British, Russian and French Representatives were taking a very high line, and were endeavouring to utilize the existing crisis for the purpose of acquiring certain privileges and concessions. This insinuation as to the motives of the British and Russian Representatives was strongly resented by M. Isvolsky, who instructed the Russian Ambassador at Berlin to represent to the German Government that the two Governments were merely endeavouring to assist towards a restoration of order and tranquillity in Persia and without any ulterior objects; and he expressed the hope that the German Chargé d'Affaires should receive such instructions as would prevent him from rendering a question already sufficiently complicated and delicate still more embarrassing. It is believed that M. de Schön promised to send instructions to the Chargé d'Affaires to moderate his zeal. The Russian press warmly approved the joint action of the British and Russian Governments and applauded it as a sign that the Convention was already bearing fruit, and remarked that this instrument had been concluded at an opportune moment, as, if the former relations between the two Powers had continued to exist, the Persian crisis might have had effects of more than a local character.

(J.)—*Turco-Persian Frontier.*

50. The aggressive acts of the Turkish troops and their incursions into Persian territory necessitated some discussions between the Russian and British Governments as to the best course to pursue towards the attainment of a joint and peaceable solution of the frontier difficulty. On hearing that the British Consul-General at Tabreez had proceeded to the frontier, the Russian Consular Representative was also instructed to go to the locality, but he was in the first instance requested to confine himself to inquiring into the depredations which had been committed on the property of some Russian subjects, and to be careful not to consider himself as in any way concerned with the frontier dispute. Subsequently these instructions were modified so as to bring them into conformity with those issued to his British colleague, and the tenor of the language which he was to hold to the Turkish Commissioner, if reference were made to him, was explained. The Russian Representative at Tehran, in view of the effervescence in that capital in regard to the Turkish encroachments, was desirous that his Government should move the Sublime Porte to consent to the Consuls assisting at the meetings of the Frontier Commission *à voix consultative*; but, after consultation with the British Government

and with the two Ambassadors at Constantinople, the Russian Government, in accord with His Majesty's Government, considered that the Commission should be afforded an opportunity of endeavouring to settle the question by itself, and, should it fail in so doing, that then the two Governments might consider what steps should be taken for inducing the Ottoman Government to consent to British and Russian Delegates participating in the task of a delimitation of the frontier. The Russian Ambassador at Constantinople had reported on more than one occasion that, in his opinion, the Turkish troops intended to remain in the localities which they had occupied, and that there was no likelihood of persuading the Sultan to recall them. He was also of opinion that the Commission would accomplish nothing, but thought that there would be no harm caused by giving it a fair chance of endeavouring to come to an agreement, and that its failure to do so would strengthen the hands of the two Governments in urging later the Sublime Porte to entertain a proposal that the mediating Powers should be called in to assist. He was strongly of opinion that the suggestion at this moment for the participation of the two Consuls in the work of the Commission, under any conditions, would be inopportune, and would certainly be refused by the Ottoman Government. M. Zinovieff's opinion carries great weight with the Russian Ministry, and as it practically coincided with the views of His Majesty's Government it was decided to leave matters alone, and simply to do what was possible towards expediting the dispatch of the Persian Commissioner, who was tarrying on the road. The encroachment of Turkish troops and their occupation of certain localities had a greater importance to Russia than to Great Britain, for the Russian military authorities were of opinion that some important strategical points had been occupied by the Turks, which might in certain eventualities seriously hamper Russian military tactics and movements. This is too technical a question to be examined by a layman, but a Report (and I am afraid I cannot for the moment recall its source) was lately furnished to the Foreign Office dealing with the above point. Beyond, therefore, the considerations which influence the action of His Majesty's Government, there is, in the case of Russia, a special motive which will render her, when the moment arrives, desirous of taking what steps are possible and reasonable for obtaining a fair and just solution of the frontier difficulty. The Russian Government would be quite prepared to join with His Majesty's Government in exercising strong pressure on the Sublime Porte, by naval demonstrations or otherwise to admit British and Russian mediation. This question is being studied by the Russian Government and the result of their consideration will doubtless be communicated to His Majesty's Government. There is one point which is being carefully weighed and it is the following: The Russian Government fear that when combined pressure is placed on the Ottoman Government by the British and Russian Governments the Balkan States, and particularly Bulgaria, may hail this event as affording them an opportunity of pushing their aims and causing increased embarrassment to the Sublime Porte. I believe that the Russian Ministry is engaged in examining how to provide against this contingency, and to give the Balkan States clearly to understand that the action of the two Governments is limited to one object only. The Russian Government were convinced that Turkey in her recent action was benevolently regarded by Germany and felt that she could count on the latter's support. They had no proof that this was the case, but the persistency with which, in spite of all protests, Turkey continued her encroachments, which had the appearance of being the results of a carefully matured plan, afforded, they considered, clear evidence that it was not an Oriental but a Western mind which had originated and devised the programme. There were not sufficient grounds for this belief which would justify any representations, but the presumption of German inspiration has been noted down among the instances of Germany's desire to cause embarrassments to Russia and Great Britain in the Middle East. . . .
