CHAPTER XXVIII.

AFGHANISTAN.

No. 465.

Memorandum respecting Russia and Afghanistan.(1)

F.O. Russia 1728.
Confidential. (8029.) *Foreign Office, October* 14, 1903.

On the 6th February, 1900, a Memorandum was received from the Russian Embassy, stating that, in view of the development of intercourse between the Russian dominions and Afghanistan, it had, in the opinion of the Russian Government, become essential that direct relations should be established between Afghanistan and Russia with regard to frontier matters. These relations would have no political character, as the Russian Government maintained their former engagements to Great Britain, and continued to consider Afghanistan as being outside the Russian sphere of influence.

To Sir C. Scott, No. 47, February 14, 1900.

Lord Salisbury transmitted a copy of this Memorandum to Sir C. Scott, and instructed him to call Count Mouravieff's attention to the reports received from various quarters of the concentration of large bodies of Russian troops close to the Afghan frontier, which seemed at variance with the very friendly tone of the Memorandum, and to ask him for some definite information as to the nature and object of these military movements.

Sir C. Scott, No. 51, February 21, 1900.

Count Mouravieff gave Sir C. Scott distinct assurances that the only recent reinforcement of the troops in the vicinity of the Afghan frontier had been the dispatch of one rifle brigade of four battalions from Tiflis. He said that the rumours of great movements of troops emanated from quarters interested in creating an alarming impression.

India Office, February 23, 1900.

The Viceroy of India, who was consulted by telegraph, gave his opinion that if the Russian proposal meant the establishment of a Russian Agent at Cabul, Her Majesty's Government had no alternative but to refuse. A Russian Commercial Agent would soon become a political Envoy. The control of the foreign relations of Afghanistan, the sole *quid pro quo* for the British subsidy and sacrifices, would disappear. The Ameer would attribute the concession to our weakness, even if he did not welcome it as placing him on an equality with European Powers, and as providing him with arguments for the establishment of Afghan Agents at St. Petersburgh and London. A condominium at Cabul would produce the worst possible effect in India. The reasons given for the Russian proposal would not bear examination. There had been no growth of trade. The Ameer stifled it on the Russian side even more than on the Indian frontier.

India Office, June 28, 1900.

In a later letter the India Office communicated despatches from the Government of India, in which they explained at some length their insuperable objections to direct representation of Russia by Agents in Afghanistan.

Lord George Hamilton was of opinion, however, that the wording of the Russian Memorandum left sufficient ground for assuming, in any reply that might be sent, that no more was meant than an invitation to Her Majesty's Government to concur in an arrangement for correspondence on frontier affairs of a local and commercial character between the Russian and Afghan authorities, on the understanding that political matters would be strictly excluded.

On this assumption Lord George Hamilton thought that Her Majesty's Government might entertain the consideration of the proposals, since the difficulties of referring to the Indian Government all local questions connected with the Russo-Afghan frontier could hardly be controverted.

(1) [*cp.* "Précis by Mr. Parker on the subject of Russo-Afghan Relations," *Gooch & Temperley*, Vol. I, pp. 309–14, No. 377, *encl.*]

At the same time, the India Office inclosed copy of a letter written on the 21st February, by the Russian Political Agent in Bokhara, M. Ignatieff, to the Afghan Commercial Agent, and communicated by the Ameer to the Government of India. In this document M. Ignatieff expressed a sincere desire that his letter might be the first step towards the establishment of direct friendly relations between Russia and Afghanistan, and gave an assurance that the Russian Government had not, and never had had, hostile feelings towards Afghanistan. Reference was further made in it to the movements of Russian troops in Trans-Caspia, which had attracted attention principally owing to their coinciding with the reverses suffered by England in South Africa.

On the 4th July, Lord Salisbury wrote to Sir C. Scott that the moment did not appear to him an advantageous one for entering upon a discussion of the Russian proposal regarding direct relations with Afghanistan, and that it would be better for the present that he should abstain from mentioning it to the Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs unless it should be first alluded to by his Excellency. To Sir C. Scott, No. 147, July 4, 1900.

In November of 1900, Sir C. Scott received instructions to mention verbally to Count Lamsdorff the reports which had reached the Government of India regarding M. Ignatieff's communications with the Ameer's Commercial Agent, and especially the letter of the 21st February, copy of which he was authorized to leave with his Excellency; and to add that His Majesty's Government trusted that inquiry would be made into this proceeding, regarding which a complaint had been received from the Ameer, and instructions given to prevent the recurrence of such communications. In the event of these representations leading to any attempt on the part of Count Lamsdorff to reopen the discussion on the proposal regarding direct relations, instructions were given to Sir C. Scott as to the language he should use. This should not exclude altogether the consideration of some arrangement for the interchange of correspondence between the Afghan and Russian frontier authorities on matters of local detail, but should go no further than to say that, before endeavouring to sound the Ameer on the subject, Her Majesty's Government felt it would be desirable to have some more precise and definite explanation in regard to the method and channel of such communications as were contemplated by the Russian Government. To Sir C. Scott, No 286, November 30, 1900.

On the 31st January, 1901, Sir C. Scott had an opportunity of calling Count Lamsdorff's attention to M. Ignatieff's proceedings, and of communicating a copy of the letter of the 21st February. His Excellency appeared quite unprepared for this information. He characterized M. Ignatieff's letter as highly improper, and so inconsistent with his well-known character that it seemed almost incredible that he could have either written or inspired it. His Excellency promised, however, to lose no time in setting inquiries on foot, to enable him to furnish the necessary explanations. Sir C. Scott, No. 38, Confidential, January 31, 1901.

After a period of eight months had elapsed without any further communication having been received on this subject, the India Office suggested, in September, that the time had now arrived for approaching the Russian Government with a request to be informed of the result of their inquiries, and His Majesty's Embassy at St. Petersburgh received instructions in this sense. India Office, September 4, 1901. To Sir C. Scott, No. 244, Sept. 11, 1901.

Upon Count Lamsdorff's return to St. Petersburgh in October, Mr. Hardinge called upon his Excellency, who stated that he had for the moment forgotten the question, at the same time promising to furnish the desired information as soon as possible. On the 9th October a Memorandum was received by the Embassy. In this Memorandum, Count Lamsdorff sought to justify M. Ignatieff's action as having been based upon the Memorandum communicated by the Russian Embassy in London on the 6th February, 1900, and as having been provoked by the request of the Ameer's Agent for explanations respecting the movement of Russian troops towards the Afghan frontier. It further stated that, although M. Ignatieff's letter did not appear to furnish ground for complaint on the Ameer's part, he had been Mr Hardinge, No. 289, October 9, 1901.

instructed to take the first opportunity of explaining to the Afghan Agent the exact purport of his proceeding.

Count Lamsdorff had not in his conversations reopened the general question of direct communication between Russian and Afghan officials, and it was not, therefore, touched upon by either Sir C. Scott or Mr. Hardinge. But, in October, M. de Staal, in conversation with Lord Lansdowne, raised the whole question, urging the necessity for such direct communication upon purely local and commercial matters; and in December the India Office represented the serious objections of allowing the matter to rest where it was, since the Russian Government might contend that their explanation of M. Ignatieff's conduct had been accepted as satisfactory by His Majesty's Government, and possibly further communications, of a kind not as yet clearly defined, might become a recognized practice.

Lord Lansdowne No. 286, October 24, 1901. India Office, December 4, 1901.

In January 1902 Lord Lansdowne furnished Sir C. Scott, for verbal communication to Count Lamsdorff, with a brief review of the circumstances of the case and a statement of the views of His Majesty's Government on the general question at issue. They did not desire to contend that there was no force in the arguments in favour of direct communications between the frontier authorities on matters of local detail—a category under which M. Ignatieff's letter could hardly be said to come—but they held that, in view of their position as having charge of the foreign relations of Afghanistan, arrangements for this purpose could only be made with their consent, and proposals upon the subject would only be entertained by the Ameer if brought forward and recommended by them. Before attempts were made to frame any such proposals, it seemed essential to have more precise explanations in regard to the method which the Russian Government would desire to see adopted for the exchange of such communications, the limitations to be placed on them, and the means of insuring that those limitations would be observed. They would be happy to consider and discuss any communication from the Russian Government on this point.

Sir C. Scott, No. 31, January 29, 1902.

Sir C. Scott took an early opportunity of conveying these views of His Majesty's Government to Count Lamsdorff. His Excellency having let drop a remark to the effect that he had never quite understood why the external relations of Afghanistan were in the exclusive charge of His Majesty's Government—an arrangement to which Russia's acquiescence could only be deduced from a solitary admission by Baron Jomini—Sir C. Scott supplied him with a copy of "Russian Assurances with regard to Afghanistan, 1869–1885."

Sir C. Scott, No. 29, February 3, 1902.

But in this and in subsequent conversations with the Ambassador, Count Lamsdorff showed a marked disposition to confine himself to an explanation of the tone of M. Ignatieff's letter, especially as regarded its reference to the South African war, and to avoid the larger and more important general question of direct communications. Sir C. Scott was, accordingly, instructed not to lose sight of this, and to inform his Excellency that His Majesty's Government could not, until they received more precise explanation as to the methods which the Russian Government would suggest for the exchange of communications, take into consideration any change in the existing arrangements.

Sir C. Scott, Nos. 36, 47, and 55, February 5, 11, and 17, 1902.

To Sir C. Scott, No 97, March 24, 1902.

To this Count Lamsdorff made no reply.

To Mr. Hardinge, No. 278, October 31; Mr. Hardinge, No. 347, November 4, 1902.

Five months later, Lord Lansdowne, in a despatch which was to be forwarded to Count Lamsdorff in the Crimea, informed Mr. Hardinge that it was desirable that it should be clearly understood by the Russian Government that His Majesty's Government, while willing to consider the question in the most friendly spirit, would object to any change being made in the system hitherto observed without their previous consent, and would regard any attempt at such a change as a departure from the understanding between the two Governments, and a contravention of the repeated assurances of the Russian Government that they considered Afghanistan to be entirely outside the sphere of their influence.

Lord Lansdowne, No. 14A, January 21, 1903.

In one of his earliest interviews with Lord Lansdowne, Count Benckendorff referred to the question, and inquired whether a solution might not be found by

means of a "negative" understanding, under which certain matters should be specifically excluded from local treatment. Lord Lansdowne considered that a proposal of the sort was worthy of attentive examination.

In conversations with Sir C. Scott, Count Lamsdorff, after his return from the Crimea, promised an early reply to the considerations advanced by His Majesty's Government, and, on the 5th February, furnished a Memorandum to the British Embassy. In this it was stated that the views of the Russian Government upon the question were set forth in detail in the Memorandum of February 1900, and that, although it was not considered necessary to again enter into explanations on the subject, it must be laid down that the relations between Russia and Afghanistan must be given a straightforward, open character, which, naturally, did not exclude the possibility of sending Agents into Afghanistan in the future. Lord Salisbury had admitted the necessity of finding an issue from a position which was abnormal for two neighbouring States. After expressing the conviction that the establishment of the new order of things would have a beneficent effect on Russia's relations, not only with Afghanistan, but also with Great Britain, the Memorandum concluded by declaring that it was by no means intended to give a political character to the present question, and that the dispatch of Russian Agents to Afghanistan was not as yet contemplated.

Sir C. Scott, Nos. 17 and 29, January 17 and Feb. 9, 1903. In Sir C. Scott's No. 31, February 6, 1903.

This document was characterized by the Government of India as a repudiation of Russia's existing engagements regarding Afghanistan. They considered, however, that it was probably a piece of bravado, by which the Russians were endeavouring to cover the failure of their attempt to establish the relations they desired with the Ameer.

India Office, March 23, 1903.

On the 24th March, Count Benckendorff called at the Foreign Office, and the question formed the subject of further discussion.

To Sir C. Scott, No. 66 A, March 24, 1903.

Lord Lansdowne, after quoting the salient points of the Russian Memorandum, said that he understood that the Russian Government, while adhering to their engagement to regard Afghanistan as beyond the sphere of their political influence, contemplated the possibility of sending, at some future date, Russian Agents to Afghanistan, not for the purpose of establishing political relations, but in order to provide for an interchange of communications on matters of purely local detail.

He reminded his Excellency of the terms of the communication made by Sir C. Scott to the Russian Government on the 3rd February, 1902, but did not deny that a definite explanation as to the method and channel of the communications they contemplated might present considerable difficulties. His Excellency would recollect the incident of M. Ignatieff's letter, which could not be described as non-political, or as dealing with mere local detail. He was most anxious to guard against similar occurrences in the future, and suggested to his Excellency that His Majesty's Government might possibly be content to leave matters where they had been left by the Memorandum of the 5th February, provided they were given an assurance that, before any departure of the kind contemplated by the Russian Government was made, the question should be again fully discussed in all its bearings between the two Governments. His Majesty's Government were fully prepared to deal with the subject in a reasonable and conciliatory spirit, but they objected to a disturbance of the existing order of things, to the maintenance of which Russia was deeply committed, without previous consultation with them.

Count Benckendorff inquired whether this statement as to a new departure referred only to the sending of Russian Agents to Afghanistan, or to direct correspondence between Russian and Afghan Agents also. This, he believed, already went on and could not be prevented.

Lord Lansdowne replied that, of the two steps his Excellency had mentioned, the dispatch of Russian Agents seemed the more questionable. Before, however, giving a decided answer, he desired to obtain the views of the India Office on the whole question.

Inclosure in to Sir C. Scott, No. 74, April 1, 1903.

A Memorandum of the above conversation was communicated by Lord Lansdowne to Count Benckendorff.

His Excellency, in a private letter, pointed out that he had received no instructions authorizing him to enter into fresh negotiations on this subject. He desired, however, to explain himself clearly upon two points. Firstly, to show the difficulty and consequently the danger of any precise definition of the direct relations contemplated. The eventual dispatch of an Agent to Afghanistan, although not actually in view, was but the natural consequence of the resumption of such relations. Secondly, to point out that Russia had abandoned direct relations spontaneously, and not by virtue of the Arrangements of 1872–73. She had done so under totally different conditions to those of the present day. Her abstention at that time was natural, but could not be considered so any longer. That two States should be immediate neighbours, and yet without direct relations, was obviously inconceivable.

In thanking Count Benckendorff for this communication, Lord Lansdowne observed that, although attempts to define the limits of direct relations undoubtedly involved the risk of raising difficult questions, it was more dangerous still to leave those limits undefined, with the possibility that the question at issue might some day present itself as one of fact rather than theory. From this point of view, it would be unfortunate if the two Powers were to start with a different conception as to the nature of those limits.

(Done privately.)

In communicating his conversation with Count Benckendorff to the India Office, Lord Lansdowne suggested that the following might be made the basis of an arrangement with the Russian Government:—

Firstly, That Russia should give an assurance that she will take no steps towards the dispatch of Russian Agents into Afghanistan without previously consulting His Majesty's Government, and affording them an opportunity of discussing the matter fully with the Ameer and the Russian Government.

Secondly, That communications between Russian and Afghan local officials on either side of the frontier should be permitted, on condition that they are confined to correspondence of an unquestionably non-political character, in reference to matters of purely local interest.

Viceroy, Telegraphic, April 1, 1903.

The Viceroy considered that local correspondence, though not without danger, was feasible. Before, however, sanctioning its introduction, the Ameer should be consulted. His Highness would have good grounds of offence if he found that, without consulting him, we had made an Agreement with Russia modifying his obligations to us. Moreover, we had no indication of his wishes with regard even to the limited increase of communications desired by Russia.

The proposal relative to the dispatch of Agents was, in Lord Curzon's opinion, far more serious, and he deprecated any admission on the part of His Majesty's Government that Russia had, with or without previous consultation with them, any right to send Agents into Afghanistan. Should Russia, after consulting His Majesty's Government and being refused, nevertheless persist, the situation would be a very delicate one. He regarded the employment of Russian Agents in Afghanistan, whether commercial or not, as fraught with serious mischief, and tantamount to the rescission of Russia's engagements. Their dispatch could scarcely fail to compel the British Government to send, in retaliation, British Agents or Missions to the same localities.

Lord Curzon advised, therefore, that, firstly, the Russian Government should be asked to state more precisely the nature of the local frontier matters on which they desire communications; secondly, that they should be informed that, when this statement has been received, we will consult the Ameer; and, thirdly, that the proposal to send Russian Agents to Afghanistan should be challenged as inconsistent with repeated pledges, and as uncalled for by any change in the situation.

The position of the Ameer should, at the same time, be emphasized, and the Russian Government informed that we could not undertake to press him against his inclinations; also that he has never, though in constant communication with us, expressed the slightest desire for either of the proposed changes.

Lord Lansdowne agreed that, before any new departure was made in regard to local correspondence, it would be desirable to consult the Ameer. If the Ameer energetically disclaimed a desire to facilitate such correspondence, the position of His Majesty's Government would be considerably strengthened. His Highness might, moreover, have practical suggestions to offer as to the manner in which such correspondence, if permitted at all, should be regulated. To India Office, April 4, 1903.

With regard to the question of Agents, Lord Lansdowne concurred in the view that the dispatch of a Russian Agent or Agents would have to be met by sending British Agents into Afghanistan. If this were explained to the Ameer, it was probable that his Highness would express his reluctance to receive either British or Russian Agents.

Lord Lansdowne now proposed, if the Secretary of State for India agreed, to address an official note to Count Benckendorff, explaining that His Majesty's Government have been in communication with the Viceroy in regard to the relations of Russia and Afghanistan; that, as to trans-frontier correspondence, Lord Curzon is prepared to consult the Ameer, whose concurrence in any arrangement that may be made is obviously desirable; but that, in order that His Majesty's Government may take this course, it is necessary that they should be in a position to give the Ameer definite assurances as to the character of the proposed communications and the channel through which they might be made.

The note might go on to say, as proposed by Lord Curzon, that the Ameer has never expressed any desire for either of the proposed changes, that His Majesty's Government believe that His Highness would object not less strongly than they do to the dispatch of Russian Agents to Afghanistan, and that they therefore earnestly trust that the Russian Government, which has apparently abandoned the idea for the present, will not revert to it.

The Viceroy concurred in the terms of the proposed note. But he suggested that it should be made clear that if the Ameer rejects the Russian proposals, we cannot undertake to compel him to accept them. Viceroy, Telegraphic, April 7, 1903.

Information from the frontier, showing that the Ameer had forbidden his frontier officers to discuss official matters, not only with the Russians, but with our frontier officers also, showed that His Highness was unlikely to accept any new arrangement of the nature proposed. Lord Curzon considered that the note might therefore be strengthened, and that it would not be wise to even presuppose consent to frontier communications. Viceroy, Telegraphic, April 8 and 11, 1903.

In a conversation of the 8th April, Lord Lansdowne informed Count Benckendorff that the matter was still under discussion with the India Office. He reminded his Excellency that the question concerned not only the Government of India, but also that of Afghanistan. It would be impossible for us to make an arrangement with regard to trans-frontier relations without the concurrence of the Ameer, and this was the reason why it was of such importance to arrive at a clear understanding with the Russian Government as to the scope and nature of their proposal. To Sir C. Scott, No. 83, April 8, 1903.

His Excellency entirely agreed, and said that the object of the original overture on the part of the Russian Government had been to secure the co-operation of His Majesty's Government in bringing about a more satisfactory arrangement than that which had hitherto obtained.

In the meantime, friction had arisen between Russian and Afghan frontier officials owing to the alleged destruction of boundary pillars near Herat, and other minor incidents. To Sir C. Scott, No. 116, May 19, 1903

On the 19th May Sir C. Scott was instructed to propose to the Russian Government that one of the officers attached to the Seistan Mission should be sent

to the frontier to verify the facts and repair the pillars, and that the Russian Government should depute an officer of suitable rank to meet him on the frontier and co-operate with him in arranging a settlement. Sir C. Scott was further to suggest that, as the Ameer and the Governor of Herat recognized that difficulties of this nature could be most suitably dealt with through the medium of His Majesty's Consulate-General at Meshed, the Russian frontier officials should, pending other arrangements, be directed to adopt this channel of communication if such cases occurred again.

Sir C. Scott, No. 150, May 28, 1903.

This proposal was communicated to the Russian Government on the 27th May.

During June and July reports reached the Government of India that letters were being received by the Governor of Herat from the Governors of Trans-Caspia, Askhabad, and other Russian frontier officials. On the 7th June two Russian Turcoman sowars had arrived at Herat bearing such letters. The Governor had deferred his reply pending the receipt of orders from the Ameer.

To Sir C. Scott, No. 105, June 22, 1903.

On the 22nd June Lord Lansdowne called the attention of Count Benckendorff to this occurrence, as indicating a desire on the part of Russia to establish a practice to which we took exception and could not pass by unnoticed. His Excellency returned an evasive answer.

To India Office, June 25, 1903.

At the same time, his Lordship suggested that the Government of India should move the Ameer to protest against the passage of such communications and refuse facilities to the messengers bearing them.

Meanwhile, no answer had been received from the Russian Government to our proposals of the 27th May. Their dilatory tactics encouraged the belief that, while affecting to discuss the matter, they were endeavouring to establish locally the practice of direct communications.

Sir C. Scott, No. 197, July 8, 1903.

On the 2nd July Sir C. Scott inquired of Count Lamsdorff when an answer might be expected. His Excellency replied that the matter had been referred to the Governor of Tashkend.

Sir C. Scott, Nos. 225 and 246, August 5 and 20, 1903.

On the 5th and 24th August Sir C. Scott again pressed Count Lamsdorff for a reply, but was met with evasive answers, the matter having apparently escaped his Excellency's memory.

In a telegram of the 8th August the Viceroy, after stating that the Ameer was complaining of the Russian communications with Herat, and the delay in setting

Viceroy, August 8, 1903.

up the boundary pillars, suggested that an officer should be at once dispatched to the frontier, without waiting for the Russian reply.

Viceroy, August 12, 1903.

A few days later Lord Curzon reported that the Governor of Herat had been informed by the Governor of Trans-Caspia that, if no answer to his letter was received by the 12th September, a Russian officer would be sent to re-erect the pillars.

Sir C. Scott, No. 246, August 20, 1903.

Sir C. Scott was thereupon instructed to inform Count Lamsdorff that His Majesty's Government, acting on the invitation of the Ameer, would at once order a British officer to proceed to the spot, and co-operate with the Russian Representative.

Sir C. Scott, No. 250, August 21, 1903.

On the 21st August Sir C. Scott received a note from the Russian Government declining to accept either of the proposals made in our communication of the 27th May, and adding that they saw no reason to modify the views they had expressed on the 6th February, 1900.

Viceroy, August 28, 1903.

On learning of this refusal the Viceroy suggested that the arrangements for sending a British officer should proceed, and that if the Russians declined to send an officer to meet him, or to make any proposals with regard to frontier correspondence, the Ameer should be invited to co-operate in enabling us to depute officers to suitable points on the frontier, and so prevent trouble. It might also be desirable to publish the whole correspondence that had passed on the matter.

Lord Curzon's proposal to proceed with the arrangements for the dispatch of a British officer was approved by His Majesty's Government.

To Sir C. Scott, No. 156, Telegraphic, September 8, 1903.

Instructions were, at the same time, sent to Sir C. Scott to address a further representation to the Russian Government. His Excellency was to point out that

the Russian Memorandum of the 6th February, 1900, referred to non-political questions, but that questions relating to the maintenance of a frontier demarcated by British and Russian officers could hardly be included in this category. That, while ready to arrange with the Ameer's officials for the restitution of the pillars, the Government of India would prefer that, as they had been set up by British and Russian Representatives, the work of restoration should be done in co-operation with a Russian official rather than by an Indian official alone.

The Russian reply was delivered on the 6th October. It was to the effect that the refusal to consider the proposals of His Majesty's Government was due, not merely to the fact that the Russian views had already been stated in February 1900, but to the considerations then set forth as to the necessity for direct relations between Russia and Afghanistan. The question of the restoration of the boundary pillars did not affect the general position, and the Russian Government must reiterate their decision to follow the procedure indicated in their former communication, and considered the question definitely closed.(1) In Mr. Spring-Rice, No. 320 October 6, 1903.

Shortly before the receipt of this communication a message had been sent by the Governor of Trans-Caspia to the Governor of Herat, informing him that the Afghan officials to be deputed for the restoration of the boundary pillars must meet the Russian officers on the frontier on the 1st (13th) October. India Office, August 7, 1903

In the meantime, not only had the full text of the letters addressed to the Governor of Herat by the Russian frontier officials reached London, but letters from the Ameer to the Viceroy had also been received, containing a sufficiently explicit statement of His Highness' views on the question of direct relations with Russia.

Lord Lansdowne considered that, as we had informed the Russian Government that it would be impossible to conclude any arrangement on this question without the Ameer's concurrence, our hands would be considerably strengthened if we were to communicate these letters to them, showing as they did the loyal attitude of His Highness towards us and his objections to the establishment of such relations. To India Office, August 14, 1903.

The consent of the Ameer to this step was obtained.

Foreign Office, October 14, 1903.

(1) [This appears to be the communication "peremptory in tone" referred to, *supra*, p. 184, No. 181 (*b*), and *infra*, No. 466. The text is printed *infra*, pp. 621, *Appendix* II. *cp. Gooch & Temperley*, Vol. II, p. 223, No. 258.]

No. 466.

Memorandum on Russo-Afghan Relations.

(In continuation of Foreign Office Memorandum No. 8029 of the 14th October, 1903.)

F.O. Russia 1728.

Confidential. (8546.) *Foreign Office, December* 11, 1905.

On the 5th October, 1903, the Russian Government concluded a lengthy correspondence with His Majesty's Government on the subject of Russo-Afghan relations, by affirming a definite intention to follow the procedure on the Afghan frontier which they had indicated in former communications, and by abruptly stating that they considered the question under discussion finally closed. Mr. Spring-Rice, No. 320. October 6, 1903.

Mr. Spring-Rice summed up this correspondence—which extended over a period of more than three years—in one sentence: "Russia has notified her intention of sending, when she pleases, her Agents into Afghanistan." Mr. Spring-Rice, No. 326, October 13, 1903

The tone of the Russian note was deeply resented by His Majesty's Government, the more so, as Afghanistan had generally been considered to be completely outside the Russian sphere of influence. To Mr. Spring-Rice, No. 334, November 25, 1903.

A despatch, for communication to Count Lamsdorff, was accordingly addressed to His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires at St. Petersburgh, indicating in full detail the To Mr. Spring-Rice, No. 303, November 5, 1903.

attitude of His Majesty's Government in regard to direct relations between Russia and Afghanistan, in order that there should be no possibility of future misapprehension on the subject.

After a brief recapitulation of the various stages of the negotiations between the two Governments, His Majesty's Secretary of State referred to the peremptory terms of the ultimate Russian note, and to the persistent refusal of the Russian Government to co-operate in seeking for a solution at once convenient to both Governments and acceptable to the Ameer.

In such circumstances, His Majesty's Government felt that if any further proposals were to be made, they should proceed from the Russian Government; but His Majesty's Chargé d'Affaires was instructed to inform Count Lamsdorff that, in the event of any frontier incident arising, owing to an attempt on the part of Russian frontier officials to force the Afghan authorities to enter into direct relations with them, the responsibility for any such incident and its consequences must rest entirely with the Russian Government.

To Mr. Spring-Rice, No. 307, November 7, 1903.

The Russian Ambassador returned from St. Petersburgh on the 7th November, 1903, and he gave Lord Lansdowne such very cordial assurances of the desire of his Government to come to an amicable understanding with His Majesty's Government upon this and other questions, that his Lordship was induced to believe that there was no immediate necessity for the intimation contained in the above despatch, and Mr. Spring-Rice was accordingly instructed, by telegram, to abstain for the present from communicating it to Count Lamsdorff.

To Sir C. Scott, No. 370, December 22, 1903.

His Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburgh was afterwards instructed to express the satisfaction of His Majesty's Government at receiving these friendly communications, but he was at the same time to explain to Count Lamsdorff that the correspondence of the last three years had produced an entirely different impression of the attitude of the Russian Government. In order that Count Lamsdorff should be convinced of the justification of such a view on the part of His Majesty's Government, Sir C. Scott was instructed to furnish his Excellency with a copy of the despatch No. 305 to Mr. Spring-Rice. This instruction was carried out on the 4th January, 1904.

To Sir C. Scott, No. 176, April 23, 1904.

At the commencement of the Russo-Japanese war, Count Benckendorff expressed the opinion, in which Lord Lansdowne concurred, that for the moment discussion upon outstanding questions could not with advantage be continued.

In the beginning of February 1905, however, his Lordship had some further conversations with the Russian Ambassador upon the subject of Russo-Afghan relations, the tenour of which is recorded in the following letter (which was sent to his Excellency on the 17th February only in draft form), and in the subjoined despatch to Sir C. Hardinge:—

No. 466 (*a*).

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Count Benckendorff.

F.O. Russia 1728.

Your Excellency, *Foreign Office, February* 17, 1905.

In the course of our recent conversations you enquired of me whether I could authorise you to inform your Government that the policy of His Majesty's Government towards Afghanistan had undergone no change, and that our present negotiations(1) with the Amir did not portend any attempt to annex or occupy Afghan territory.

(1) [In recognising Abdurrahman as Amir of Afghanistan in 1880, Great Britain undertook to aid him in resisting aggression by any foreign Power, and granted him a subsidy of £80,000 a year. The Amir in return agreed to follow British advice in regard to foreign affairs. The arrangement was confirmed in 1893, when the subsidy was increased. On the death of Abdurrahman in 1901, his son Habibullah abstained from drawing the subsidy, and declined invitations to visit India. Accordingly at the end of 1904 a Mission under Mr. (afterwards Sir Louis) Dane, Foreign Secretary to the Government of India, was despatched to Kabul to clear up the situation. By the Treaty signed on March 21, 1905, the agreements with Abdurrahman were renewed without alteration. *v. B.F.S.P.*, vol. 98 (1909), pp. 36–7.]

I replied that I was ready to give you an official assurance in the name of H[is] M[ajesty's] Government that their policy had undergone no alteration whatever, that they wished to maintain the same relations with the Amir as with his predecessor, and had no intention of appropriating Afghan territory or of interfering in the internal affairs of the country, but that they continued to claim that Afghanistan should remain free from the influence or interference of any foreign Power and that the Amir's relations with other countries should remain in their hands.

I asked Your Excellency whether, in return for such an assurance on the part of H[is] M[ajesty's] Government, you would be prepared to give me an assurance on the part of your Government that their policy and intentions in regard to Afghanistan also remained unaltered, and that they continued to regard it as wholly outside the sphere of their influence.

I understood Your Excellency to express your opinion that the Russian Government would find no difficulty in authorising you to give me an assurance that this is the case, and you added that the only change which they desire in the *status quo* is that arrangements should be made for the interchange of communications between the Russian and Afghan frontier officials on non-political questions of a local character.

I have much pleasure in informing Your Excellency that if you are able to give me in writing an assurance to the above effect, I am authorized to confirm, on the part of H[is] M[ajesty's] Government, the provisional assurances which I gave to Your Excellency.

[I have, &c.
LANSDOWNE.]

No. 466 (*b*).[1]

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.

F.O. Russia 1728.
(No. 88.)

Sir, *Foreign Office, March* 8, 1905.

The Russian Ambassador to-day reminded me of the conversations which I had had with him on the 15th and 17th ultimo as to the relations of Great Britain and Russia with Afghanistan. His Excellency informed me that Count Lamsdorff had considered the draft Note which I had handed to His Excellency on the latter date. It seemed to him to raise questions of principle which in present circumstances Count Lamsdorff did not feel disposed to discuss. The moment was one when it was necessary for the Russian Foreign Office to proceed with the utmost circumspection, and any new departure in regard to Afghan affairs would certainly provoke comment. The Russian Government preferred therefore not to reopen the discussion of questions with regard to which each side had already clearly recorded its views. In these circumstances Count Lamsdorff deprecated entering into anything in the nature of a formal Agreement between the two Governments as to the Afghan question, or raising officially questions of principle in regard to Afghanistan; but in reference to my statement that our policy towards Afghanistan had undergone no change and that our negotiations with the Amir did not denote any intention on the part of His Majesty's Government to occupy or annex Afghan territory, His Excellency assured me that the Russian Government also desired that Afghanistan should remain a "buffer State," and would therefore abstain from interference with its independence or integrity.

Count Benckendorff attached importance to the expression "a buffer State," and I said that it seemed to me an appropriate description of the position which both Governments desired to assign to Afghanistan.

I explained to His Excellency however that we continued to maintain the views which I had already expressed to him as to the political relations which exist between the Amir and the British Government. H[is] E[xcellency] said that he quite understood this, and that our conversation left the two Powers exactly where they were in this respect.

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

MINUTE.

I read this draft over to Count Benckendorff to-day.

L.
10.3.05.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

App[rove]d.—E.R.

(1) [*v. infra*, p. 535, *Ed. note*, and Sir Edward Grey's minute.]

A copy of this despatch was sent to the Russian Ambassador on the 11th March, 1905.

On the 2nd November last, the Ameer wrote to the Government of India complaining that a Russian officer had crossed the frontier at Patakisar and had attempted to communicate with the Afghan Governor. Further, that an Afghan sentry had been shot near the frontier, and his rifle taken by Russian soldiers.

The India Office suggested that an immediate representation should be addressed to the Russian Government.

Lord Lansdowne replied that, in present circumstances, it would be useless to address representations to the Russian Government, as they would certainly decline to pursue the discussion.

Foreign Office, December 11, 1905.

[*ED. NOTE.*—As the following despatches show, Anglo-Russian negotiations regarding Afghanistan were not opened until February 1907, although Sir Edward Grey had authorised them on September 7, 1906, at the same time as those relating to Persia, v. *supra*, p. 389, No. 341.]

No. 467.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 58.)
Sir,

St. Petersburgh, D. *January* 30, 1907.
R. *February* 4, 1907.

I asked M. Isvolsky to-day if the Committee which he had informed me was to meet in order to examine the questions in regard to which we were treating had yet assembled. His Excellency said that the Committee had not yet commenced its sittings, but that it would do so very shortly.

I have not hitherto communicated to M. Isvolsky the proposals which I am instructed to lay before him in regard to Afghanistan(1); but it has occurred to me that perhaps it might be of advantage that the Committee should be placed in possession of them. It seems to me that it would be well to utilize the presence of Count Benckendorff here, in order that he may assist in removing the opposition which in some quarters undoubtedly exists against an understanding between the two Countries, and I think that he should be fully informed of our views, as he will attend the sittings of the Committee. If I retain our Afghan proposals it is possible that the opponents may assert that it is impossible to express any definite opinion or draw up any Draft Convention until they are acquainted with what we propose as to the relations between Russian and Afghan Authorities. If the Committee were placed in possession of the moderate and conciliatory character of our proposals, it would, I think, assist those who are sympathetic with an understanding and strengthen their hands. On the other hand I am perfectly aware that by divulging our Afghan proposals, I should be playing out all our cards before we were in possession of the Russian views in respect to Persia and of their opinions on our suggested solution of that question. Had the negotiations remained a matter between M. Isvolsky and myself, I would not have considered it desirable to communicate the proposals respecting Afghanistan until more progress had been made in the Persian question. But as an interdepartmental Committee is apparently to survey and discuss the whole scope of the negotiations, I think it would be advisable to give it all information, and not run the risk of it formulating proposals of its own with an incomplete knowledge of our views; while M. Isvolsky and Count Benckendorff, the two warmest adherents of an understanding, were left in the dark on one very important question.

The question is one, I know, of procedure, but it is of some importance, and I ventured therefore, in my telegram No. 13 of the 28th instant,(2) to solicit your opinion before taking myself any step in the matter.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

(1) [*cp. infra*, p. 526, No. 472, *encl.*]

(2) [This telegram announced the formation of a small inter-departmental committee which was to examine the questions for Anglo-Russian negotiation. Sir A. Nicolson enquired whether he should lay before it the British proposals as to Afghanistan.]

MINUTE.

"A still bigger gap in the completeness of the negotiations is the omission of the Near Eastern question. It is always open to the Committee to report that they cannot decide without taking Afghanistan or the Near East one or both into consideration, but it is for them to do this on their own initiative, not for us to suggest it to them.

E. G.

No. 468.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320. *Foreign Office, February* 6, 1907.
Tel. (No. 8.) D. 7·30 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 13 and desp[atch] No. 58.(1)

We consider that you should not communicate our proposals regarding Afghanistan at present, as it is desirable that we should first know more of Russian views on our proposals relating to Persia.

Ameer has not so far touched on any political questions during his visit, but no communication should in any case be made to Russian Gov[ernmen]t with regard to Afghanistan until after H[is] M[ajesty] has left India.

(1) [v. immediately preceding document and *note* (2).]

No. 469.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, February 17, 1907.
F.O. 371/320. D. 7·49 P.M.
Tel. (No. 24.) R. 10·30 P.M.

Committee, which is examining the questions forming the subject of our negotiations, has held sitting, and Count Benckendorff informs me that results were satisfactory, and that considerable progress has been made; in fact, he seemed to think that time was approaching when the whole Convention would be concluded. He said that Committee was desirous of knowing our views as to the Afghan Convention, as it is so closely connected with arrangement as to Persia. I said that I was not yet ready to communicate our views on the subject.

I shall see Minister for Foreign Affairs on Wednesday, and endeavour to ascertain from him what the Russian proposals as to Persia are, and will tell him that until we are in possession of these proposals we cannot well open up Afghan question.

In regard to latter, may I tell Minister for Foreign Affairs, when the time comes, that we would recommend Ameer to permit intercourse between Russia and specific selected Afghan frontier officials on local and non-political matters, and not merely that we would raise no objections to such relations? He would, I think, ask whether we should take former course.

I understand that Japanese negotiations are progressing well, and there is evident desire to hasten on ours.(1) Moment is favourable, and it would be advisable not to let it pass by.

(1) [For further reference to the Russo-Japanese negotiations, *v. supra*, pp. 284–6, *Ed. notes.*]

MINUTES.

Considering that we know that communications between Russian and Afghan officials are going on all the time I do not see how the Ameer could reasonably object to their being regularised. To ask the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to formulate their proposals for the interchange of direct communications between Russian and Afghan officials on non-political questions of a local character will be entirely in accordance with the previous policy of this Office as defined in Lord Lansdowne's desp[atch] No. 305 of Nov. 5, 1903.(2)

C. H.

Consult I. O. as proposed.

E. G.

(2) [For a summary of this despatch, *v. supra*, pp. 519–20, No. 466.]

No. 470.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, February 19, 1907.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 26.)

D. 12·58 P.M.
R. 3·30 P.M.

My immediately preceding telegram.(1)

I do not anticipate that there would be difficulty in obtaining consent of Russian Government to our proposals as to Afghanistan with perhaps the exception of suppression of bounties to trade, but I think that they will press for some declaration that we will not go further than our existing treaties with the Amir. I fear that you may feel difficulty in meeting their wishes and the conclusion of an arrangement as to Persia would be consequently hampered. Their point of view is that when we have a free hand in Seistan we would before long extend our railway into that district, and if hereafter the Amir with our assistance constructed railway communication with India *status quo* would be altered seemingly to the disadvantage of Russia.

At the same time I think I would communicate our Afghanistan proposals as they are to M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] when the Amir has left India and when their *pro-memoriâ* as to Persia has been communicated in writing, as then perhaps they would precisely state what their views and wishes are.

Questions are too important to be hustled through but at the same time it would now I venture to submit be advisable to allow as little delay as possible to occur in the continuous course of the negotiations.

MINUTE.

Suggest to the India Office that we should tell Sir A. Nicolson that prospects appear to be acceptable in principle that we must reserve final opinion till we see them in writing, but that we expect after receiving them to be able to put forward something about Afghanistan and that he may inform M. Isvolsky to this effect.

E. G.

(1) [Tel. No. 25 of February 19, 1907. Its substance is given more fully in Sir A. Nicolson's despatch No. 98 of February 19, *supra*, pp. 428–31, No. 388.]

No. 471.

Foreign Office to India Office.

F.O. 371/320.

Sir,

Foreign Office, February 19, 1907.

With ref[erence] to my letter 3227 of the 30th ultimo,(1) I am directed by Sec[retar]y Sir E. Grey to transmit to you herewith to be laid before the S[ecretary] of S[tate] for India, copy of a tel[egra]m from H[is] M[ajesty's] Amb[assado]r at St. Petersburg relative to the Anglo-Russian negotiations.(2)

It will be observed that Sir A. Nicolson, in anticipation of a question which may probably be addressed to him by M. Isvolsky, enquires whether he is authorised to inform His Excellency, at the proper moment, that H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t would recommend the Amir to permit intercourse between Russian and specifically selected Afghan frontier officials on local and non-political matters, and not merely that they would raise no objections to such relations.

Sir E. Grey is of opinion that although at a later stage in the negotiations it may become necessary to make certain recommendations to the Amir it is premature to raise the question at the present moment. He considers it desirable that H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t should first learn (1) what are the Russian proposals in regard to Persia and whether they are likely to prove acceptable, and (2) what are exactly the Russian proposals in regard to direct Russo-Afghan relations, before any communication is made to the Amir on the subject.

Sir E. Grey would be glad to be favoured with the observations of the S[ecretary] of S[tate] for India in the matter, and he proposes, if Mr. Morley concurs, to reply to Sir A. Nicolson in the above sense.

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

(1) [This letter transmitted Tel. No. 13 from Sir A. Nicolson of January 28, 1907 (*v. supra*, p. 522, No. 467, *note* (2)), to the India Office, and stated that Sir E. Grey considered it inadvisable to lay the British proposals on Afghanistan before the Russian Committee, and that he wished to hear the Russian proposals regarding Persia before communicating the British proposals on Afghanistan.]

(2) [*v. supra*, p. 523, No. 469.]

No. 472.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.

(No. 104.)

St. Petersburgh, D. *February* 23, 1907.
R. *March* 4, 1907.

Sir,

During my interview with M. Isvolsky this afternoon, I said that I wished to speak with him in regard to Afghanistan, and that I should like to remind him that on several occasions the Russian Government had given assurances to His Majesty's Government that they considered the above country outside the sphere of Russian influence. His Majesty's Government were, at the same time, aware that certain inconveniences were caused by the absence of recognised means of communications between Russian and Afghan frontier officials on questions of local and non-political interest, and he would observe from the paper which I would hand him that His Majesty's Government were prepared to take the question into consideration. He would understand that it would be necessary to first obtain the consent of the Ameer before any arrangements were concluded on the subject, and that it would be necessary for His Majesty's Government to be acquainted with the views of the Russian Government, and the mode in which they proposed that they should be realized, before the Ameer could be approached. I might add, I said, that the Ameer was always

sensitive on the question, and was, I believed, not very well disposed to entrusting much latitude to his officials.

I gave M. Isvolsky the paper, of which I have the honour to enclose a copy, and he read it through carefully. He asked what was exactly meant by the term "agents" in the third paragraph. I said agents of all categories, officials, officers, &c. He asked how our relations were conducted with the Ameer. I said that we had an agent, a native Indian official, at Cabul, and that on occasions direct correspondence passed between the Indian Government and the Ameer. He observed that he did not quite understand what was meant by "bounties in subsidies" in the 4th paragraph. I said that allusion was made to bounties in the shape of subsidies, which I believed were accorded to Russian trade, and he would see that paragraph 5 offered facilities to Russian commerce if such bounties were removed. He asked whether I could tell him what bounties were accorded. I said that I was unable to do so off-hand, but doubtless he could obtain all information in some Russian Department.

M. Isvolsky said that he must of course study the paper and asked if he was to regard it as a Draft project of a Convention. I replied that it was by no means intended to be so, it merely represented in outline the views of my Government, and I should be happy to receive full details of the views of the Russian Government in respect to Afghanistan.

His Excellency said that he would supply me with them later, and doubtless after a comparison and explanation of the respective views, material would be found for a Draft project of Convention.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 472.

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

1. His Majesty's Government would require the Russian Government to acknowledge Afghanistan as being outside the Russian sphere of influence, and under British guidance in all matters of external policy,

2. They would raise no objections to the establishment of direct communications between Russian officials and officials designated by the Ameer of Afghanistan as to matters of purely local character and of nonpolitical complexion,

3. They would require the Russian Government to abstain from sending agents into Afghanistan.

4. to discontinue giving bounties in subsidies to Russian trade in that country,

5. His Majesty's Government would raise no obstruction in the way of the same facilities being accorded to Russian trade with Afghanistan as British and British-Indian traders now enjoy in the territory of the Ameer.

MINUTE.

The text of the inclosure is the same as that of Sir A. Nicolson's instructions.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 473.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 147.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *March* 20, 1907.
Sir, R. *April* 2, 1907.

I mentioned to M. Isvolsky to-day my hope that he would shortly be able to give me a reply to the amendments which His Majesty's Government desired to see

introduced into the Russian Draft Convention as to Persia,(1) and also that I should be favoured with the proposals of the Russian Government in regard to Afghanistan.

His Excellency said that he trusted to be in a position before long to give an answer in regard to the first question, but in respect to Afghanistan the matter was not in his hands, but was being studied by others. I remarked that I trusted that the proposals, when formulated, would be of such a nature as would be acceptable to His Majesty's Government.

M. Isvolsky said that he understood that there would be a proposal to establish Commercial Agents in Afghanistan, that some security should be afforded against the Ameer's troops being organized by Anglo-Indian officers, and against strategical railways being constructed with assistance from India. There were also questions in regard to treatment of frontier affairs, and other matters generally, which would reassure the Russian Government that Afghanistan would not be transformed from a "buffer state" into an *avant-garde* of the Indian Empire.

I observed that, in respect to Commercial Agents, we ourselves had none in Afghanistan, and that we had already made proposals as to intercourse between frontier officials. I did not wish to enter at present into other points, though I should remark that we expected Russia to recognize, as she had already done, that Afghanistan was outside of the sphere of her influence. M. Isvolsky said that, of course, it would be premature to discuss proposals which were not before us, but he thought that we had a resident at Cabul. I said that we had no Resident, but simply an agent, an Indian native official, and I would only repeat the hope that the Russian proposals when I received them, would be of a reasonable character, and that it would be remembered that Great Britain had the external affairs of Afghanistan under her guidance.

M. Isvolsky then mentioned that he had received from Count Benckendorff a "formula," which you had communicated to him in regard to some understanding as to the districts neighbouring to the countries in regard to which we were treating.(2) His Excellency said that he had read the communication from Count Benckendorff hurriedly, and could not remember the exact terms. He sent for the paper but it could not be found at the moment, and he said he would let me have a copy of it later.

I expressed the hope that now that our negotiations were attracting the attention of the press, and that incomplete information in regard to them was oozing out, it would be possible for us to push on with our discussions, as the sooner they were concluded the better. His Excellency said that he would do his best, but that he feared that question of Afghanistan might create some little difficulty. I told him that I did not see why this should be so, but I did not pursue our conversation, as being his reception day there were many waiting to see him.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

After the concessions made relating to the Dardanelles(3) and Mongolia we must be stiff about Afghanistan.

C. H.
E. G.

(1) [*cp. supra*, pp. 437–40, No. 395, and *encl.*]
(2) [The text of this formula is given, *supra*, p. 285, No. 262 (*a*), *encl.*]
(3) [*cp. supra*, pp. 279–82, Nos. 257–9.]

No. 474.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 175.) Confidential. *St. Petersburgh*, D. *April* 2, 1907.
Sir, R. *April* 15, 1907.

M. Poklewski called upon me the day before yesterday and informed me that the General Staff had communicated to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs their views as to Afghanistan, and that M. Isvolsky had handed the dossier to him to report upon it. M. Poklewski enquired why I had telegraphed to London that I feared that the Russian proposals in regard to Afghanistan would be unacceptable.(1) I told him that, from some observations which M. Isvolsky had made to me in regard to Russia desiring to have commercial agents in that country, and also in respect to one or two other points, I did have misgivings, but that I should be glad if they were to prove unfounded. M. Poklewski gave me to understand that probably the question of commercial agents would be dropped. He then asked me if I thought that my Government would give any undertaking not to assist the Ameer in reorganising his forces, or in building forts and railways. I told him that perhaps a well organized Afghan army might have equal, if not greater, danger to India than to Russia, possibly not under the present Ameer but under his successors. Moreover, so far as I was aware, the Ameer himself had shown no desire to enlist the services of British officers, and if he had such a desire I should think that it was extremely improbable that it would be a very popular measure in Afghanistan. As to railway construction, personally I was doubtful if my Government would be disposed to tie their hands for the future. Furthermore if the Ameer was seized with a wish for railway development, it would be impossible to prohibit him from giving effect to it.

M. Poklewski then asked how far I thought that my Government would be prepared to go in reassuring the Russian Government. I told him that I really could not tell, as I did not know what the Russian Government desired. I thought that I could go so far as to state that we had no desire to annex or appropriate any Afghan territory, and he would doubtless recollect that in February 1905 the British Government of that day had so stated.(2)

M. Poklewski asked what view I thought would be taken if the Russian Government stated that they had no aggressive views in regard to the Indian frontier, or words to that effect, and requested that the British Government would give an assurance that their influence in Afghanistan would be employed solely in a pacific manner and with no aggressive intention against Russia.

In my own mind I admit that it seemed to me that if the Russian Government would be satisfied with such an interchange of intentions it would be extremely satisfactory, but I merely said to M. Poklewski that, doubtless, any suggestions from the Russian Government would be well considered by my Government. He then asked whether we held to the abolition of bounties. I said that it was a point on which we should be glad to see Russia meet our wishes. He said that he was studying that question, and was ascertaining what bounties were given; he believed they were accorded merely on petroleum and sugar. I said that I had every hope that an arrangement could be arrived at on that point. He then asked what facilities were accorded to British Indian traders in Afghanistan. I said that I really did not know, and that I had telegraphed recently to enquire.

I told M. Poklewski that I sincerely trusted that I should receive before long the proposals of the Russian Government in regard to Afghanistan. I was desirous of hastening our negotiations now that we had agreed on the main points with respect to Persia and Thibet, and moreover public attention was being directed to the negotiations and the Press was publishing fragmentary accounts of them. M. Poklewski assured

(1) [Tel. No. 147 from Sir A. Nicolson of March 20, 1907. Not reproduced.]
(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 520–1, No. 466 (*a*).]

me that M. Isvolsky was animated with the same desire; and that he hoped in a few days that I should receive a communication.

I report my conversation with M. Poklewski simply for the purpose of record, and it may be possible that some of his suggestions may find expression in the communication which I hope shortly to receive from M. Isvolsky in respect to Afghanistan.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

MINUTES.

These are only M. Poklewski's impressions apparently.

F. A. C.

After Sir A. Nicolson's telegram was received a hope was expressed in conversation to Count Benckendorff that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t would repress any adverse tendency of this kind. This no doubt is the source of M. Poklevsky's information.

We should I imagine be able to give the assurance suggested by M. Poklevsky on the second page. [*i.e.* paragraph 3.]

E. G.

No. 475.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, April 5, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 11 A.M.
Tel. (No. 60.) R. 2 P.M.

Russian proposal as to Afghanistan.

M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] told me yesterday that he would not be in a position to communicate proposals to me for ten days or so and that then he would give me a draft convention. I believe that he is discussing question of bounties with Minister of Commerce.

No. 476.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 233.) *St. Petersburgh,* D. *April* 29, 1907.
Sir, R. *May* 13, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit copy of a despatch which I have received from Colonel Napier, Military Attaché to this Embassy, reporting a conversation which he had held with General Palitzin, Chief of the General Staff, in respect to the negotiations concerning Afghanistan. I trust that the observations made by Colonel Napier will meet with your approval. They appear to me to be well timed and judicious.

I may state that M. Poklewski informed me on the 27th instant that an inter-departmental Committee was to meet on that day in connection with the question of Afghanistan, and he trusted that in 3 or 4 days I should receive the proposals which the Russian Government would present to His Majesty's Government.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 476.

Lieutenant-Colonel Napier to Sir A. Nicolson.

(No. 16.) Confidential.

Sir, *St. Petersburgh, April* 27, 1907.

I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that I had a long conversation to-day with General Palitsin, Chief of the General Staff to whom I was paying a farewell visit. He at once turned the conversation on to our negotiations regarding Afghanistan. Of course no allusion was made to my visit to the Emperor the day before yesterday, but I know that General Palitsin was at Tsarskoe Celo yesterday, at the parade of the Life-Guard Grenadier Regiment, held by His Majesty, and it is not improbable that he was aware that the Emperor had spoken to me on that subject.

General Palitsin expressed the same view that His Majesty had laid stress upon, as to the necessity of opening up trade relations with Afghanistan, that it would be advantageous both to our country and theirs, and that the present state of affairs could not continue. I asserted that the Amir himself objected to widening his trade relations, as I believed, both with the Russians and ourselves. The General argued that Russia was negotiating with England, not with Afghanistan, and that he supposed Afghan policy was dictated by us, and we could bring pressure to bear on the Amir if we chose. I said the only way to come to an agreement was to be quite frank with each other. Speaking entirely of my personal views, I believed that our wish was to retain Afghanistan as a buffer State independent in its internal affairs either of England or Russia. What did Russia want? The General declared that that was also Russia's wish. At the same time they could not disguise the fact that we were, in India a strong Mahomedan Power, and that our Mahomedan subjects were loyal and not nearly so fanatical as were the Mahomedans in Russian Central Asia, that they apprehended that it might be possible for us at some future time, when we were in disagreement with Russia, to raise the Mahomedans against them, and hurl the Afghans against their borders. Therefore they were anxious that we should not make use of Afghanistan for offensive purposes towards their Central Asian possessions. On the other hand, there had been a great deal of loose talk about Russia's aggressive intentions with regard to India. It was said that because Russia had been able to transport one million men to Manchuria by a single line of railway, therefore she could send and maintain at railhead two million men at the termini of her railways in Central Asia. This of course was nonsense, and in fact, the idea of an invasion of India was a mere phantasy that had never been seriously entertained by responsible Russians. I replied that the idea of our invading Central Asia was quite out of the question with our little army, and that we should never try to stir up Mahomedan fanaticism against Christians, however strong we might be in India. It would be too dangerous a policy to pursue for any European nation with a large number of Mahomedan subjects. General Palitsin agreed to this, but was flattering enough to make the most of our potential strength in India in view of assistance from our colonies &c. This I did not disclaim, nor did I discuss the feasibility or otherwise of a Russian invasion of India. I believe however that his apprehensions as regards our aggressive intentions in Afghanistan were genuine, and I did my best to remove them. Of course our Indian army, I said, will look with regret on an agreement with Russia, that will deprive them of their one chance of active service against an enemy worthy of their attention, but that was not a point to be considered. General Palitsin expressed the opinion that we should have to fight the Afghans before long, who were getting more and more powerful. I said it was quite true that we had helped them to get strong, and had given them arms, bearing in mind the possibility that we might some day find them turned against ourselves, but in our anxiety to preserve a strong buffer state we had chosen what we believed was a lesser evil. The General said perhaps we were right; if we had not armed Afghanistan, some one else would have done so. As it was, Afghanistan imported arms from other places besides India.

I asked if any came from Russia. He said no, but they come from the Persian Gulf, and arms are even imported through Afghanistan into Central Asia, which is very disagreeable for us.

This led up to the subject of frontier relations, and the settling of minor disputes direct with the Afghans, which he considered was necessary, not only for the sake of convenience, but also for the prestige of Russia. I said I believed that our Government had already previously expressed its willingness to concede this point but that was a very different matter to opening up the country to trade. If it was true that Russia wished to preserve the independence of Afghanistan, that was not a wise measure. General Palitsin failed to see how that could in any way menace the independence of the country. I then made use of the argument that Your Excellency mentioned to me the other day, namely that if European traders &c., had access to the interior, a Russian subject might be murdered, and the maintenance of Russian prestige might demand a punitive expedition. The General considered that this was far-fetched, that Russia had experience of the same sort of people as the inhabitants of Afghanistan in Central Asia. I replied that it was impossible to compare the Afghans with a State like Bokhara or with the Sarts and other Mahomedans in Russian territory. It was true that the tribes immediately bordering on the Afghan frontier were some of them less fanatical than others, but that the true Afghan was intensely fanatical. I had been in Afghanistan and also in Russian Central Asia, and could assure him that nothing was more probable than that a European trader in Afghanistan would get into trouble and be killed. To touch one of their women was quite sufficient to bring about this result. The General seemed much impressed by this argument. He went on to say that Afghanistan was of great importance to Russia. Whereas England had many avenues of approach against Russia in case of hostilities, by the Baltic, the Black Sea, &c., Russia had only one against England, namely through Afghanistan, therefore if we both entered into an agreement not to make use of Afghanistan for the sake of making hostile advances against each other, England was giving up only one of her possible lines of advance, whereas Russia was abandoning her only point of vantage. I replied that my private opinion was that any military measures that we might adopt in the direction of Afghanistan, had in view merely the defence of India, and that if Russia left us alone in this part of the world, Central Asia was the last place we wished to attack. In my humble opinion if they wished to carry through an agreement with us, it would be better to confine the matter to the question of direct communication with the Afghans on purely frontier matters of petty disputes, and to a mutual engagement that neither Power should make use of Afghanistan for the sake of making hostile advances against the other, and leave matters of trade alone.

General Palitsin then said that we had promised to grant them the same facilities of trade that we ourselves enjoyed. What were they? I replied that I did not think that we had any special facilities, except that caravans of merchandise passed through the Khyber Pass on certain days of the week, but that no European traders or Europeans of any kind were admitted into the country, except one or two private servants of the Amir. He asked me what were the conditions of trade on the Kandahar route. I said I did not know exactly, but no Europeans were admitted there at all, and anyone crossing the frontier was liable to be shot or taken prisoner.

General Palitsin then went on to talk about Persia, saying he believed we had come to an agreement on that subject and was beginning to enlarge upon their immense sacrifice in giving up Seistan, when I discovered that I was already half-an-hour late for my interview with General Polivanov, the Assistant of the Minister for War, and that my conversation with General Palitsin had lasted an hour.

On reaching the Ministry for War, I met L[ieutenan]t-Colonel Sniesareff coming out of General Polivanov's room. The former is an officer of the General Staff, in what corresponds to the Intelligence Division, and is a specialist on Afghanistan.

General Polivanov at once broached the subject of Afghanistan and said that

it was at this moment much occupying the Government, which had every confidence in M. Izvolsky bringing it to a successful conclusion. I remarked that there was every reason for two great Mahomedan Powers such as Russia and England to live in amity together and that I did not see that we had any opposing interest in Central Asia. General Polivanov agreed and said that Central Asia was big enough for both of us, and that the great advantage of friendly relations between us was that we could each speak quite frankly to each other. I did not see any object in being involved in any further discussion on the subject and turned the conversation to other topics. General Polivanov has always been particularly friendly to me, but I do not know that his opinions on this matter would have much weight.

I think it is evident from General Palitsin's remarks that Russia is really anxious to guarantee herself from any hostile action on the part of Afghanistan, goaded on by ourselves, and from any insidious advances that we may make under cover of Afghanistan whether for purposes of offence or of defence. The Russian General Staff must be well posted in the problem of the defence of India, seeing that the Times Correspondent's book on Imperial Strategy is being translated by them into Russian. It will perhaps appear somewhat fantastic that Russia should really be apprehensive of the harm that we could do her in Central Asia, in the magnificent position that she now occupies there thanks to the Orenburg and Central Asian Railways, but it must be remembered that she is still smarting from the Japanese defeat that we were the indirect means of inflicting upon her, and the loss of prestige of an unsuccessful war coupled with the revolutionists at home has evidently greatly shaken her hold upon her Central Asian Mahomedan subjects, and it is of the greatest importance that we should take advantage of this frame of mind. It is with most sincere regret that the Military Department will abandon any means of improving their strategical position, and it is possible that they may have abandoned Seistan in the hopes of gaining more substantial advantages in breaking down the barrier of an unknown and hostile Afghanistan. The thin end of the wedge is undoubtedly the question of direct relations with the Afghans, which is only harmless so long as our relations with Russia remain cordial.

I ventured to speak to General Palitsin with freedom, feeling that even if my views were not approved of by Your Excellency, they could only be expressed by a military attaché as his personal ideas, and could in no way compromise his Government, while it might make some impression on the military advisers of the Russian Government, or at any rate throw some light on their views.

I have, &c.

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

MINUTE.

General Palitsin's remark that we should probably have to fight Afghanistan ourselves is in itself a reason for being careful not to promise too much in the way of abstaining from interfering with Afghan affairs.

I am convinced that the apprehension of the Russians that we might adopt an aggressive policy against them in Central Asia is a real one on their part. It came out in the Russian agreement in 1895.

E. G.

No. 477.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 249.) *St. Petersburgh,* D. *May* 6, 1907.
Sir, R. *May* 13, 1907.

I expressed to M. Isvolsky today the hope that I should be very shortly furnished with the proposals of the Russian Government in regard to Afghanistan,

as time was slipping by and I knew that my Government were desirous of moving on with the discussions. His Excellency replied that he could assure me that he was doing his best to push on matters, and he could safely say that he had now secured the assent of all the interested Ministries to the essential points, and, so far as he was in a position to judge, he thought that the proposals of the Russian Government would be in accord with the views of His Majesty's Government. He was at present in discussion with the Minister of Commerce in regard to certain trade matters, especially with respect to the question of bounties; and he trusted that these discussions would be shortly concluded. He wished to communicate to us a Draft Convention, and he hoped that then no serious delay would ensue in concluding the whole matter. He recognised that he could have hastened on matters if the Ministry for Foreign Affairs had dealt alone with the question, but to ensure that the agreement should be a durable one, he had considered it desirable to obtain the full concurrence of other Departments and this procedure had necessarily taken time. I must not, he said, think that the question was being hung up, as he had been in daily communication with the other interested parties, but he feared that he could not have the Draft Convention ready this week.

I had to content myself with these assurances, though I confess I am disappointed in not being able to send the Draft Convention by the Messenger of this week.

M. Isvolsky added that the Conventions in respect to Persia and Thibet were now practically concluded, with the exception of the two telegraph lines and the Geographical definition of Thibet.

I enquired of M. Isvolsky in what form he proposed to draw up our Convention or Conventions. Did he wish a general preamble covering all the three agreements, or did he wish to sign three separate agreements? Furthermore was each agreement to be drawn up in the form of a regular Convention with interchange of Full Powers, ratifications, &c.? It seemed to me that in regard to Persia and Thibet we had already agreed upon preambles in each case, which it was desirable to preserve; and it struck me that perhaps it would therefore be as well to have three separate agreements for each subject.(1)

M. Isvolsky appeared to agree with this view, though he stated that he had not seriously considered the question. He also thought that perhaps it would be sufficient if we merely stated that we were "duly authorized by our respective Governments, &c." without the Sovereigns naming us as Plenipotentiaries to conclude the Convention. I should be grateful if you would kindly inform me of your wishes in regard to the above questions of form, so that I may be later in a position to discuss the matter more fully with M. Isvolsky.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

(1) [For further reference to this subject, *v. supra*, p. 299, No. 281, and pp. 499–500, No. 452, and *encl.*]

No. 478.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 260.)
Sir,

St. Petersburgh, D. *May* 15, 1907.
R. *May* 21, 1907.

M. Isvolsky gave me this afternoon a Draft Convention concerning Afghanistan, of which I have the honour to transmit a copy herewith.(1) His Excellency read it over to me, and said that it was based on various communications which had from time to time passed between the two Governments, and he trusted that it represented

(1) [*v. infra*, pp. 541–4, No. 483, column 1.]

fairly accurately the views of His Majesty's Government. He wished to draw my especial attention to Article IV. I would observe that the Russian Government engaged not to send agents into Afghanistan, and he had been obliged to add a clause which referred to the future, and which he had inserted to meet several objections which had been offered to a simple bare announcement that no agents would be despatched. I would see that the additional clause was quite harmless, as the two Governments engaged in certain future contingencies, which might never arise, merely to exchange views on the subject of Commercial Agents. This would not imply that His Majesty's Government need ever agree to such agents being sent, and in his own opinion he thought that the additional clause would in practice remain inoperative. He hoped that I would explain this confidentially to you, so as to remove any misunderstandings.

With respect to Article VI, M. Isvolsky repeated what he had on more than one occasion previously explained, that Russia did not give any bounties or subsidies, but that on certain manufactured articles she merely remitted the duty which had been paid on the raw material. This was not a procedure special to her trade with Afghanistan, but was one generally adopted with regard to the whole export trade of Russia. Her trade with Afghanistan was on the same footing and subjected to exactly the same treatment as her commerce with the rest of the world, and it would therefore be difficult to make an exception in regard to Afghanistan.

As regards trade matters I told M. Isvolsky that I should like to point out to him that Article VII was of a very positive character, and as it stood, would practically tie the hands of the Ameer. He would understand that we could not do this without consultation with the Ameer and without his consent, and the same remarks applied to Article V. His Excellency said that he understood this, but that it was of no practical advantage to Russia that we should merely state both in respect to Articles V and VII that we would place no obstruction in the way of, or had no objection to, frontier officials entering on certain relations with each other, or to Russian trade enjoying the same facilities as British Trade. Russia, he added, bound herself to have no direct relations with the Ameer, and therefore she could only look to us to arrange with the Ameer the matters to which reference had been made. A passive attitude on our part would be of no use to Russia, and in a Convention Russia could only recognise His Majesty's Government and leave it to them to arrange with the Ameer. I admitted that this was perfectly true, and I quite saw the force of his observations. I had in my mind chiefly the length of time, and it would be considerable, which would elapse if we were to delay the Convention while we discussed such matters with the Ameer, who was extremely susceptible on all questions affecting his commerce and internal affairs. M. Isvolsky asked if I could suggest any other phraseology, as he was under the impression we had already accepted the principle of intercommunication between frontier officials, and equality of Commercial treatment. I begged His Excellency not to misunderstand me, or imagine that I was wishing to withdraw from anything I had already communicated. I was sure that my Government recognised the principle which he had mentioned, and indeed it was so stated in the 5 points which I had originally communicated to him. I was thinking rather as to how to turn the difficulty to which I had alluded, and I had not a formula ready in my mind. At the same time it was not perhaps impossible to discover some phraseology which would meet the circumstances, but on this I must of course consult with my Government.

M. Isvolsky said that he had had a really hard fight to win over conflicting views to accepting the broad principles which underlay the Draft Convention, and Article II embodied the principle to which he believed His Majesty's Government attached great importance. I told His Excellency that I was sure this would be fully recognised at home, and I did not pursue further the conversation on the subject of Afghanistan beyond saying that I would transmit the text of the Draft Convention to you tomorrow.

I made no allusion to Article I, which characterises the political position of

Afghanistan, but the Russian Government evidently attach importance to the term "buffer state," as M. Isvolsky has frequently employed the term to me, and it was admitted by Lord Lansdowne in his despatch to Sir C. Hardinge of March 8, 1905,(2) of which a copy was communicated to Count Benckendorff. Articles V and VII offer some difficulties; and it is clear that the Russian Government will expect that we should adopt in the treatment of the questions therein mentioned something more than an attitude of benevolent neutrality. Indeed it would, I submit, be advisable that some steps should be promised on our part in order to exclude the possibility of the Russian Government endeavouring, in case of our refusing to actively interest ourselves in the matter, to seek some other methods of attaining the ends which they desire.

I hardly venture to make any suggestions on questions outside of my province, but I respectfully submit that I might perhaps secure the assent of the Russian Government to prefacing each of the two articles by the words "His Majesty's Government recognise that," and further stating that His Majesty's Government will use their good offices to procure the fulfilment of the provisions, or words to that effect. The last alinéa in Article VII that a uniform customs tariff should be established along the whole of the Afghan frontier, is a new proposal, and one which I submit might be usefully excluded from the present convention. I think I could satisfy the Russian Government that too much must not be asked of the Ameer, and that they could well rest content with a recognition on our part of equality of treatment and that we would be ready to do what was possible to secure it. The whole of Article VII is somewhat comprehensive both for the present and for the future, but it should be borne in mind that the Russian Government have made a great departure from the attitude they had hitherto maintained in formally acknowledging that Russia must treat with the Ameer only through the intermediary of His Majesty's Government and in engaging not to despatch agents into Afghanistan.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

(2) [*v. supra*, p. 521, No. 466 (*b*).]

[*ED. NOTE.*—The following minutes are attached to Sir A. Nicolson's telegram No. 76 of May 15, 1907, of the substance of which the above despatch gives a fuller account:

MINUTES.

I do not exactly know what a "buffer" State implies but I would point out that L[ord] Lansdowne, in his desp[atch] to St. Petersburg no: 88 of March 8, 1905,(1) says:—"C[oun]t Benckendorff attached importance to the expression 'a buffer State,' and I said that it seemed to me an appropriate description of the position which both Gov[ernmen]ts desired to assign to Afghanistan."

C. H.

We cannot go back on what Lord Lansdowne said about a "buffer state"; but there is no recognized definition of this phrase and it must be taken as defined by what follows.

The first sentence of article III is dangerous; it is more than we can promise. As to the Ameer's concurrence I think we might get over that point by making Article V dependent upon it and stating that we will raise no objection and will so inform the Ameer.

The commercial stipulations will have to be more vague. We might agree not to ask for special facilities for British trade in the sense of lower duties, but the rest might be renewed for a commercial treaty with the Amir.

Send the tel[egram] to the I[ndia] O[ffice] but reserve comments as proposed, till the despatch arrives.

E. G.]

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 521, No. 466 (*b*).]

No. 479.

Foreign Office to India Office.

F.O. 371/320.

Sir, *Foreign Office, May* 24, 1907.

I am directed by Secretary Sir E. Grey to tr[ansmit] to you herewith a desp[atch] which has been received from H[is] M[ajesty's] Ambassador in St. Petersburg enclosing a draft Convention relating to Afghanistan and containing a record of his conversation with M. Isvolsky on the occasion of its communication by the latter.(1)

The Convention, consisting of a preamble and seven Articles, has been carefully studied in this Dep[artmen]t and I am directed by Sir E. Grey to transmit to you for the consideration of Mr. Secretary Morley a counterdraft which, in his opinion, would meet the requirements of H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t.(2)

I am desired to point out that in view of the ambiguity of the expression "buffer State" Sir E. Grey has considered it advisable to delete this Article, but in the event of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t wishing that some reference should be made to Afghanistan as an intervening State between British and Russian territory, he is of opinion that an allusion to the geographical situation of Afghanistan might be more suitably inserted in the preamble than in an Article of the Convention.

Sir E. Grey further considers it desirable that this Convention, together with those relating to Persia and Thibet, should be concluded without prolonged delay, and in view of the care which has been taken in Art[icle]s 4 and 5 of the counter-draft not to commit the Ameer definitely he trusts that if the proposed text meets with Mr. Morley's approval it may not be necessary to obtain the Ameer's adhesion before proceeding further with the negotiations with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, a course which would entail prolonged delay.

As matters now stand it is hoped that if the Agreement is concluded in the proposed form, the Ameer will recognize, when it is communicated to him that the position of Afghanistan is secured and strengthened from outside interference and that as regards internal administration every consideration for him has been shown by making any changes dependent upon his consent.

I am, &c.
F. A. CAMPBELL.

(1) [*v.* immediately preceding document.]
(2) [This counter-draft is that given on p. 539, No. 481, *encl.* It was amended in accordance with the views of the India Office.]

No. 480.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 204.)

Sir, *Foreign Office, May* 28, 1907.

Count Benckendorff came to see me to-day, and asked me about the Afghanistan proposals.

I said I had been favourably impressed by them, and emphasised this point. But we should have some alterations to propose, and I would let him have the draft of them as soon as possible.

Count Benckendorff said that the question of the occupation of Afghanistan, by which I understood him to mean the agreement on our part not to occupy, was one which had been mentioned by Lord Lansdowne, and recorded in the despatch to

Sir Charles Hardinge some time ago.(1) That was why he had introduced the phrase into the Russian draft.

I said I understood the position to be that, if Russia declared Afghanistan to be outside her interest, and agreed that all political communication were to pass through the British Government, she wanted to be sure that Afghanistan would not be used aggressively against her. This point was perfectly clear, and we were in complete agreement about it. The difficulty in connection with it was one of words. We wished to express this intention in such a way as not to tie our own hands in the case of trouble between ourselves and Afghanistan, which might arise some day in connection with our own frontier tribes.

I am, &c.
E. GREY.

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 521. No. 466 (*b*).]

No. 481.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 202.) Confidential.
Sir, *Foreign Office, May* 29, 1907.

I have received Y[our] E[xcellency's] desp[atch] No. 260 of the 15th inst[ant](1) forwarding a draft convention, handed to you by the Russian Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs], for the regulation of Anglo-Russian relations in Afghanistan, and reporting a conversation which you had with M. Izvolski on the subject.

The Russian draft has been carefully studied in this Dep[artmen]t and I tr[ansmit] to Y[our] E[xcellency] herewith, for your conf[identia]l information and for any observations which you may wish to offer, a counter-draft based on the results of that examination which, in my opinion, would meet the requirements of the situation, and which has now been submitted to the Gov[ernmen]t of India.

The following observations will make clear to Y[our] E[xcellency] the considerations which have led me to put forward the modified proposals embodied in this counter-draft.

The preamble proposed by M. Izvolski is unobjectionable, and has been retained in its original form.

In view of the ambiguous nature of the expression "buffer state" used in Art[icle] I of the Russian draft to describe the *status* of Afghanistan, I have considered it advisable to delete this article altogether. I am however of opinion that, in the event of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t wishing that some reference should be made to Afghanistan as an intervening state between British and Russian territory, an allusion to the geographical situation of that country might more suitably be inserted in the preamble than in an article of the convention.

Art[icle] 2 of M. Izvolski's draft appears to be satisfactory and is therefore retained as Art[icle] 1 of the counter-draft.

In Art[icle] 3 of the Russian draft (Art[icle] 2 of the counter-draft) I desire the omission from the first sentence of the word "occupy," as, in the event of the cooperation of an unfriendly Amir with tribes within the limits of British territory or of the infraction of Treaty agreements with H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment], it might unfortunately become necessary to undertake another expedition to Kabul. H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would have no objection, however, to agreeing not to "annex" any portion of Afghan territory and that word is therefore retained. The words "or its dependencies," in the same

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 533–5, No. 478.]

sentence, are omitted. They are vague and there is no doubt as to the position of the frontiers of Afghanistan. At the end of the same sentence I should prefer to substitute for the word "affairs" the word "administration" which is more definite and less comprehensive. H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would have no objection to the retention of the second sentence of this article but would prefer that it should contain a reference to the Agreement signed at Kabul by Sir Louis Dane, which has accordingly been inserted, and that the unilateral engagement which it embodies should be made bilateral by the addition of the further clause which now follows it.

In view of the considerations set forth in the earlier part of Y[our] E[xcellency's] desp[atch], H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] will raise no objection to the mention in the second sentence of the Russian Art[icle] 4 (Art[icle] 3 of the counter-draft) of the possible admission, at some future time, of Russian commercial agents into Afghanistan. They would prefer, however, to substitute the words "will agree as to what measures shall be taken in this sense" for the words "will exchange views on the subject." The wording now suggested implies the necessity of an agreement which the Russian text does not.

In Art[icle] 5 of the Russian draft (Art[icle] 4 of the counterdraft) I desire to insert after the word "may" the words "with the consent of the Amir, which H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] will endeavour to obtain." This insertion makes it clear that the proposed arrangement is dependent on the consent of the Amir and expresses at the same time the readiness of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] to serve as an intermediary to secure his adhesion, points which, as Y[our] E[xcellency's] desp[atch] shows, you also consider it desirable to emphasise.

H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would be unable to accept Art[icle] 6 of M. Izvolski's draft as it stands, since it would imply a recognition of the right of Russia to apply to her trade with Afghanistan the system which Great Britain describes as one of "bounties."

Further, H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] could not undertake to compel the Amir to establish a uniform customs tariff on the frontiers of Afghanistan as contemplated in the last Russian article, since such action would constitute an interference with the internal administration of that country in violation of the present agreement.

I am of opinion that these two articles should be remodelled in the wider terms adopted in Art[icle] 5 of the counter-draft, which are to a great extent those of the draft instructions furnished to Y[our] E[xcellency] and communicated by you to M. Izvolski on Feb[ruary] 23 last as reported in your desp[atch] No. 104 of that date.(2)

H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] consider that this agreement, together with those relating to Persia and Thibet, should now be concluded without prolonged delay, and they are of opinion that, in view of the care which has been taken throughout to consider the susceptibilities of the Amir and, by the wording of Art[icles] 4 and 5 of the counter-draft, to avoid committing him definitely, there is no necessity to obtain his acceptance of the provisions of this instrument before proceeding to its signature, a formality the accomplishment of which would entail a very considerable delay.

As matters now stand, it is hoped that, if the agreement is concluded in the proposed form, the Amir will recognise, when it is communicated to him, that the position of Afghanistan is secured and strengthened from outside interference and that, as regards internal administration, every consideration for him has been shown by making any changes dependent on his consent.

I am, &c.
E. GREY.

(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 525–6, No. 472.]

Enclosure in No. 481.

Draft Convention between Great Britain and Russia relating to Afghanistan (Counterdraft).

The High Contracting Parties, in order to assure the perfect security of their respective frontiers in Central Asia and to maintain there a solid and lasting peace, have agreed as follows:—

ARTICLE I.

The Russian Government recognize Afghanistan as outside the sphere of Russian influence and engage that all their political relations with Afghanistan shall be conducted through the intermediary of His Majesty's Government.

ARTICLE II.

The British Government, having recorded in the Treaty signed at Kabul on March 21, 1905,(3) that they recognize the sovereignty of the Amir and that they have no desire to interfere in the internal government of his territories, Great Britain engages not to annex any portion of Afghanistan or to interfere in the internal administration of the country provided that the Ameer fulfils the engagements already contracted towards H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] under the above-mentioned Treaty. Great Britain further undertakes to exercise her influence in Afghanistan only in a pacific sense towards Russia and will not herself take in Afghanistan or encourage Afghanistan to take any measures which may be considered as threatening the Russian frontier. On the other hand, the Russian Government undertake not to annex any part of Afghanistan, nor to take any measures either involving interference with the internal government of the territories of the Amir or such as may be considered as threatening the Afghan frontier and calculated to provoke retaliatory measures. It is understood that the British and Russian Governments maintain the right to carry out such railway projects as may seem desirable to them within their own frontiers.

ARTICLE III.

Russia engages not to send any agents into Afghanistan. If in the future the development of commerce clearly shows the utility of commercial agents, the two Governments will agree as to what measures should be taken in this sense.

ARTICLE IV.

The Russian and Afghan authorities specially designated for the purpose may, with the consent of the Amir which His Majesty's Government will endeavour to obtain, establish direct relations with each other for the settlement of local questions of a non-political character.

ARTICLE V.

The Governments of Great Britain and Russia affirm their adherence to the principles of the "open door" and of equality of commercial opportunity and with a view to the same facilities being accorded to Russian trade and traders in Afghanistan as British and British Indian traders now, or may in the future, enjoy in the territory of the Amir, H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t will undertake to exercise their influence to secure the reciprocal observance of these principles in Afghanistan.

(3) [Printed in *A. & P.* (1905), LVII, (*Cd.* 2534), p. 459.]

No. 482.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 233.)

Sir, *Foreign Office, June 12, 1907.*

With reference to my telegram No. 78 of yesterday,(1) relative to the proposed agreement between Great Britain and Russia respecting Afghanistan, I transmit to Your Excellency herewith a draft Convention(2) in which have been inserted the further modifications now agreed upon in consultation with the India Office.(3)

I have to request Your Excellency to communicate this paper to the Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, and to express the hope that the amended draft may prove acceptable to his Government.

In making this communication to Monsieur Izvolski Your Excellency should add, with reference to Article 3 of the draft (previously Article 4), that His Majesty's Government hope to learn as soon as this d[ra]ft agreement has been accepted the points on the frontier to which it is proposed to appoint the Russian officials to be designated for the purpose of settling local and non-political questions with Afghan officials.

It is necessary that H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] should have this information as soon as possible so as to enable them to make the necessary comm[unicatio]n to the Ameer without delay.

I am, &c.
E. GREY.

(1) [Tel. No. 78 to Sir A. Nicolson of June 10, 1907, gave "further amendments for insertion in the British counter-draft" after consultation with the India Office. *v. infra, Ed. note.*]
(2) [*v. infra*, pp. 541–4, No. 483, column 2.]
(3) [*v. infra, Ed. note.*]

[*ED. NOTE.*—The following minute by Sir C. Hardinge shows the methods by which the final British counter-draft was evolved.

F.O. 371/320. *Foreign Office, June 7, 1907.*

The accompanying amended counterdraft containing the alterations proposed by the Political Committee of the India Office was given to me yesterday by Mr. Ritchie who informed me that the plan proposed is that Sir E. Grey, after considering the proposed changes, should decide with Mr. Morley as to their acceptance or further modification.

Art. II. The amendments in the first sentence are, in my opinion, an improvement on the former text.

The omission of the words "which may be considered as" is also of advantage since it removes all ambiguity as to the nature of the measures to be avoided.

I recommend the omission of the last words of the amended article "or threatening the Afghan frontier." I have had one interview with C[oun]t Benckendorff and two interviews with M. Poklewsky, who both declared that such a limitation of the action of Russia within her own frontiers was quite inadmissible and would never be accepted by the Russian Gov[ernmen]t. They argued that no restriction is placed on the action of the Gov[ernmen]t of India within the Indian frontier, nor on the action of the Ameer within the Afghan frontiers, all that they ask being that our influence in Afghanistan should be of a pacific character, that *we* should take no military measures in Afghanistan and that *we* should not encourage the Afghans to threaten the Russian frontier. I put a concrete case to them of the eventuality of the Afghans building a fort close to the Russian frontier and asked whether this would entail an obligation on our part to prevent it. The reply was in the negative provided that we did not encourage or help the Afghans to build the fort. To sum up, according to the Russian view, England, Russia and Afghanistan are to be free to take such action as they may choose within their respective frontiers, but that England is to engage to pursue a pacific policy in Afghanistan and neither to take in Afghanistan nor encourage the Ameer to take any measures threatening the Russian frontier. It seems to me that the liberty of action of Afghanistan within her own frontiers and the withdrawal of any responsibility on our part for such action as the Ameer may take are well worth the omission of the last few words of the article which would be very difficult of interpretation. Thus, would the construction of a Russian railway to Termez, or the reinforcement of the garrison at Tashkend be regarded as a menace to the Afghan frontier? Or what is the

limit of that which constitutes a threat and that which does not? The retention of these words would, I am convinced, provide endless causes of friction and misunderstanding with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t in the future.

Article III. The clause about commercial Agents is inserted at the end of Art[icle] V which deals with commercial matters. This clause, according to M. Isvolsky, is inserted to save the face of the Russians.

Article IV. " When the consent of the Ameer shall have been obtained . . . . ."

I wish to point out that this phraseology entails no obligation upon us to endeavour to obtain the Ameer's consent and in his desp[atch] No. 260,(1) herewith annexed, Sir A. Nicolson points out that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t will expect from us in the treatment of this question " something more than an attitude of benevolent neutrality." Sir A. Nicolson adds: " Indeed it would, I submit, be advisable that some steps should be promised on our part in order to exclude the possibility of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t endeavouring, in case of our refusing to actively interest ourselves in the matter, to seek some other methods of attaining the ends which they desire." This argument is very convincing and I venture to think that our wording " with the consent of the Ameer, which H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t will endeavour to obtain " is the best and the most likely formula to be accepted by the Russians. It is true that it involves action on our part with the Ameer, but as L[or]d Lansdowne admitted in principle that direct relations on the frontier should be allowed under certain conditions it was inevitable that any real arrangements would have to be communicated by us to the Ameer, and we can hardly with reason claim to have sole control of the foreign relations of Afghanistan if we fail to put before the Ameer, and to endeavour to obtain his consent to, arrangements which have been agreed upon between the British and Russian Gov[ernmen]ts.

See also M. Isvolsky's statement that " a passive attitude would be of no use to Russia " and that " Russia could only look to us to arrange with the Ameer matters to which reference had been made."

Article V. " agree that any facilities . . . . . shall be equally enjoyed . . . . ."

It is of no use the British and Russian Gov[ernmen]ts agreeing as to what " *shall* " be done in Afghanistan if nothing is done to see that their wishes are realised. The Russians are precluded from doing anything so it is obvious that we shall be expected to see that the agreement does not remain a dead letter. I therefore think that we should add after the words " Russian traders " the following sentence: " H[is] M[ajesty's] Government further undertake to exercise their influence to secure the reciprocal observance of these principles in Afghanistan." Otherwise the article would be valueless to the Russians and would look like an evasion of our responsibilities.

The rest of Art[icle] V seems all right. . . .

C. H.]

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 538–5, No. 478.]

No. 483.

Anglo-Russian Convention respecting Afghanistan.

F.O. 371/320.

[*ED. NOTE.*—The following table shows the Russian and British drafts of May 15 and June 17 respectively and the text as finally determined. The use of italics indicates identity with the final text. The British draft sent to Sir A. Nicolson on May 29 (*v. supra*, pp. 537–9, No. 481 and *encl.*) was not communicated to M. Isvolski and is therefore not entered on this table.]

Russian Draft.	British Counter-draft.	Final Text.(1)
(Handed to Sir A. Nicolson by M. Isvolski, May 15, 1907.)	(Handed to M. Isvolski by Sir A. Nicolson, June 17, 1907.)	(Signed, August 31, 1907.)
Les Hautes Puissances *contractantes*, dans le but *d'assurer* en Asie Centrale *la sécurité parfaite* de leurs *frontières respectives* et d'y	*The High Contracting Parties, in order* to assure *the perfect security of their respective frontiers in Central Asia, and to maintain there*	Les Hautes Parties Contractantes, en vue d'assurer la parfaite sécurité sur les frontières respectives en Asie Centrale et le main-

(1) [This " Convention concernant l'Afghanistan " constitutes the second part of the Anglo-Russian Convention concluded on August 31, 1907. The text is printed from the British original text in the Foreign Office. It was sent home by Sir A. Nicolson in his despatch No. 445 of August 31, 1907, *v. supra*, p. 502, No. 456. The preamble to the treaty is also printed on that page. The whole treaty is reprinted for convenience of readers, *infra*, pp. 618–20, *Appendix* I.]

Russian Draft.	British Counter-Draft.	Final Text.
maintenir *une paix solide et durable*, sont convenues de ce qui suit :—	*a solid and lasting peace*, have agreed as follows : —	tien dans ces régions d'une paix solide et durable, ont conclu la convention suivante :
Article I. L'Afghanistan constituera un Etat - tampon (buffer state) entre les possessions respectives des deux Puissances contractantes.		Article I. Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique déclare qu'il n'a pas l'intention de changer l'état politique de l'Afghanistan. Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique s'engage en outre à exercer son influence en Afghanistan seulement dans un sens pacifique et il ne prendra pas lui même en Afghanistan et n'encouragera pas l'Afghanistan à prendre des mesures menaçant la Russie.
Article II. *Le Gouvernement Impérial* reconnaît que *l'Afghanistan* se trouve *en dehors de la sphère d'influence russe et s'engage* à user *pour toutes ses relations politiques avec l'Afghanistan de l'intermédiaire du Gouvernement* Royal. [See also Article IV.]	Article I. *The Russian Government* recognize *Afghanistan as outside the sphere of Russian influence, and engage that all their political relations with Afghanistan shall be conducted through the intermediary of His Majesty's Government; they further* undertake *not to send any Agents into Afghanistan.*	De son côté, le Gouvernement Impérial de Russie déclare qu'il reconnaît l'Afghanistan comme se trouvant en dehors de la sphère de l'influence russe, et il s'engage à se servir pour toutes ses relations politiques avec l'Afghanistan de l'intermédiaire du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique ; il s'engage aussi à n'envoyer aucuns Agents en Afghanistan.
Article III. *La Grande Bretagne s'engage à n'annexer*, ni *occuper* aucune partie *de l'Afghanistan* ou de ses dépendances et à ne pas intervenir dans les affaires intérieures du pays.	Article II. The British Government having recorded *in the Treaty signed at Kabul on the 21st March*, 1905, *that they recognize the agreement and the engagements concluded with the late Ameer Abdur Rahman, and that they have no* desire to interfere *in the internal government of* his *territories, Great Britain engages* not *to annex* or *to occupy in contravention of that Treaty any portion of Afghanistan or to interfere in the internal administration of the country, provided that the Ameer fulfils the*	Article II. Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique ayant déclaré dans le traité signé à Kaboul le 21 Mars 1905 qu'il reconnaît l'arrangement et les engagements conclus avec le défunt Emir Abdur Rahman et qu'il n'a aucune intention de s'ingérer dans l'administration intérieure du territoire Afghan, la Grande Bretagne s'engage à ne pas annexer ou occuper, contrairement au dit traité, une partie quelconque de l'Afghanistan, ni à s'ingérer dans l'administration intérieure de ce pays, sous

Russian Draft.	British Counter-Draft.	Final Text.
	engagements already contracted towards His Majesty's Government under the above-mentioned Treaty. Great Britain further undertakes to exercise her influence in Afghanistan only in a pacific sense towards Russia, and will not herself take in Afghanistan, or encourage Afghanistan to take, any measures threatening the Russian frontier. On the other hand, the Russian Government undertake not to annex or to occupy any part of Afghanistan, nor to take any measures involving interference with the internal government of the territories of the Ameer.	réserve que l'Emir remplira les engagements déjà contractés par lui à l'égard du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique en vertu du traité susmentionné.
Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique n'exercera son influence en Afghanistan que dans un intérêt pacifique et ne prendra lui-même, ni n'encouragera l'Afghanistan à prendre des mesures militaires qui pourraient être considérées comme une menace pour la frontière russe.		
Article IV.		
La Russie s'engage à ne pas envoyer d'agents en Afghanistan. Si, toutefois, dans l'avenir, le développement du commerce russe avec l'Afghanistan démontrait l'utilité évidente d'agents commerciaux dans ce pays, le Gouvernement Impérial entrerait à cet effet dans un échange de vues avec le Gouvernement Royal.	[See Article IV on p. 544.]	[See Article IV on p. 544.]
Article V.	Article III.	Article III.
Les autorités des provinces frontières, *russes et afghanes, spécialement désignés à cet effet,* pourront établir entre elles des *relations directes pour* le règlement des *questions locales* n'ayant pas de caractère politique.	*The Russian and Afghan authorities* on the frontier *especially designated for the purpose* may, when the consent of the Ameer shall have been obtained by H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t and communicated to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t by them, *establish direct relations with each other for the settlement of local questions of a non-political character.*	Les autorités Russes et Afghanes, spécialement désignées à cet effet, sur la frontière ou dans les provinces frontières, pourront établir des relations directes réciproques pour régler les questions locales d'un caractère non politique.

Russian Draft.	British Counter-draft.	Final Text.
Article VI.		
Le Gouvernement Impérial déclare qu'il n'applique pas actuellement et s'engage à ne pas appliquer à l'avenir au commerce russe avec l'Afghanistan de mesures de faveur spéciales autres que celles qui sont ou qui pourraient être prises d'une manière générale par rapport à toute exportation russe dans quelque pays que cela soit.		
Article VII.	Article IV.	Article IV.
Le commerce, les négociants et les sujets russes seront placés dans l'Afghanistan, tant au point de vue des droits de douane, que des taxes intérieures et sous tous les autres rapports, sur le même pied et profiteront des mêmes facilités dont le commerce, les négociants et les sujets anglais et anglo-indiens jouissent actuellement dans ce pays ou qui pourraient leur être accordées dans l'avenir. Il est entendu qu'un régime douanier uniforme sera établi sur toute la frontière afghane.	The Governments of Great Britain and Russia *affirm their adherence to the principle of equality of commercial opportunity*, and *agree that any facilities which may have been, or shall be hereafter obtained for British and British-Indian traders, shall be equally enjoyed by Russian traders. Should the progress* of commerce *establish the necessity for commercial agents, the two Gov[ernmen]ts will agree as to what measures shall be taken, due regard being had to the Ameer's sovereign* powers.	Les Gouvernements de la Grande Bretagne et de Russie déclarent reconnaître, par rapport à l'Afghanistan, le principe de l'égalité de traitement pour ce qui concerne le commerce et conviennent que toutes les facilités qui ont été ou seront acquises à l'avenir au commerce et aux commerçants anglais et anglo-indiens seront également appliquées au commerce et aux commerçants russes. Si le développement du commerce vient à démontrer la nécessité d'agents commerciaux, les deux Gouvernements s'entendront sur les mesures à prendre, eu égard bien entendu aux droits souverains de l'Emir.
		Article V.
		Les présents arrangements n'entreront en vigueur qu'à partir du moment où le Gouvernement Britannique aura notifié au Gouvernement de Russie le consentement de l'Emir aux termes ci-dessus stipulés.

No. 484.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 326.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *June* 17, 1907.
Sir, R. *June* 24, 1907.

I handed to M. Isvolsky to-day a copy of the counter-draft of a Draft Convention between Great Britain and Russia relating to Afghanistan which was forwarded to me in your despatch No. 233 of the 12th instant,(1) and I have the honour to transmit a copy of a private letter which I addressed to His Excellency giving certain explanations.

I told M. Isvolsky that I trusted and believed that he would find that, although the form of the Convention had been recast, the desiderata of the Russian Government had been met, and I wished to impress on him the earnest desire of my Government that no time should now be lost in terminating all our Conventions.

I pointed out to His Excellency that we had deleted his article I. The expression "Buffer state," though perhaps a useful term to employ in conversation, was hardly one to be used in a solemn Convention, and that moreover it was ambiguous and subject to different interpretations. As to Article II, I wished to explain to him that we had several points of importance to consider. In the first place there were the susceptibilities of the Ameer, which we had to take seriously into account; and there was also the observance by him of his engagements towards us, a matter of great importance to the peace and security on our frontier. A loosely worded article binding Great Britain not to interfere in the affairs of Afghanistan might, I would tell him frankly, lead to the interpretation that under no circumstances were we to take any step to ensure the observance of Treaty stipulations. He would understand that we must exercise care on this point, and we had therefore recited the fact of our Treaty engagements, and had also inserted a proviso. We were practically following the course taken in the case of the Thibetan Convention. I would further observe that the engagement not to occupy or annex any portions of Afghanistan must be a bilateral one. This doubtless required no explanations, as it was self-evident. With regard to Article III it was clear that we could not bind the Ameer without his consent, and we were therefore obliged to insert a reservation in that sense. If the Article were accepted as it stood we should be ready to sign the Convention without awaiting the consent of the Ameer which would entail considerable delay: but that it would be desirable that we should be informed as to the exact points on the frontier where the Russian Government proposed to place their officers.

With respect to commercial matters, I would tell him frankly that the system of the levy of duties seemed to be a little haphazard, and our information as regards the duties was not so precise as could be wished. I gave him, for his private guidance, certain information which I had received which would show him that the duties on British Indian trade varied greatly, and indeed in some instances rose as high as 60%. We had never discussed these matters seriously with the Ameer, and we always regarded them as affecting his internal administration in which we had no desire to interfere. In the circumstances it was only possible to draw up an Article dealing with commercial facilities in general terms, and he would see that our proposed Article IV affirmed the principle to which both Governments attached importance, and afforded, I thought, all reasonable satisfaction to the wishes of the Russian Government.

M. Isvolsky said that he must carefully study the project; and on my pressing him to allow no delay to elapse, he stated that I could rely on him to do his best, but that he would have to consult with the others, presumably meaning the General Staff and the Ministers of Commerce and Finance. I observed that this need take no time, as we had made no substantial changes in our counter draft, and that our

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 540, No. 482.]

proposals chiefly related to rearrangement and drafting. M. Isvolsky said that he did not deny that we had preserved the "grandes lignes," but that the whole "économie" of the project had been altered, and he feared that some time must elapse before he could come to an agreement with the others who were interested. In short His Excellency was distinctly not encouraging as to the period which would elapse before I received a reply. It is possible that when he has examined the matter more closely he may see that it is not so complicated as a first hasty perusal might have led him to imagine. I think that Article II gave him cause for reflection.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 484.

Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

Mon cher Ministre, *Saint-Pétersbourg, 4/17 Juin, 1907.*

En vous communiquant le texte d'un Contre Projet d'une Convention au sujet de l'Afghanistan, je me permets de l'accompagner à titre privé et confidentiel, de quelques explications.

Nous acceptons le préambule tel qu'il a été rédigé dans votre projet: mais nous proposons d'exclure votre Article I car l'expression "Etat tampon" (buffer state) comporte quelque ambiguïté qu'il serait mieux d'écarter. Nous acceptons votre Article II en y ajoutant la première phrase de votre Article IV. Vous trouverez la seconde phrase de votre Article IV avec une petite modification, intercalée dans notre Article IV où elle serait plus à propos.

En ce qui concerne votre Article III (notre Article II) nous proposons quelques amplifications ainsi que quelques modifications de rédaction, dans le but d'en rendre le sens plus clair et précis. Comme les frontières d'Afghanistan sont bien connues il serait mieux d'exclure le mot vague "dépendances"; et nous désirons faire mention, comme il a été fait dans notre Convention concernant le Tibet, des Traités ou Conventions que nous avons conclus avec l'Amir. Au lieu "d'affaires intérieures" nous préférons l'expression plus précise de "l'administration intérieure." Nous sommes aussi d'avis, et à ceci, je n'en doute pas, vous n'y verrez aucune objection, que l'engagement devrait être bilatéral. Je pense que cela va de soi, mais il serait bien de le préciser. Au lieu des mots "des mesures qui pourraient être considérées comme une menace" nous préférons les mots "measures threatening."

Quant à votre Article IV (notre article III) il est clair que les provisions de cet article ne peuvent être mises en exécution qu'avec le consentement de l'Amir; et nous y avons intercalé une réserve à cet effet. Je suis autorisé à prier le Gouvernement Impérial une fois qu'un accord est réalisé, de vouloir bien me faire savoir les points sur la frontière où il propose de placer les autorités Russes en question. Je serais heureux d'en être informé aussitôt que faire se pourra afin que mon Gouvernement pourrait communiquer sans délai à ce sujet avec l'Amir.

Nous sommes prêts à exclure votre Article VI, et nous avons remanié votre Article VII (notre Article IV) de façon à le rendre plus compréhensif. Vous y verrez une modification, à mon avis une excellente modification, de rédaction. Au lieu du "Gouvernement Impérial entrerait dans un échange de vues" nous proposons "the two Governments will agree as to what measures should be taken in this sense."

J'aime à croire que notre contre projet sera acceptable au Gouvernement Impérial, et je serai heureux de voir réaliser mon vœu sans trop de délai, car il est très à désirer de compléter aussitôt que possible nos Conventions concernant l'Afghanistan, la Perse et le Tibet.

Veuillez, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

Sir A. Nicolson explained our views well.

C. H.
E. G.

No. 485.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 343.)

St. Petersburgh, D. *June* 25, 1907.
R. *July* 2, 1907.

Sir,

M. Isvolsky, in referring to Article III of the Draft Convention regarding Afghanistan, enquired of me what guarantee the Russian Government would possess that the Ameer would consent to Russian and Afghan frontier officials settling local questions of a non-political character. Supposing the Ameer were to refuse, what then? I told His Excellency that we would do our best to secure the consent of the Ameer, but it was clear that we could not tie his hands before he had been consulted. I trusted that the Ameer, when he had knowledge of the whole Convention, would be disposed to agree to the procedure which had been proposed. M. Isvolsky observed that perhaps the Russian Government might make a reservation in order to meet the possibility of a refusal on the part of the Ameer. He did not quite know what officers would be appointed or the localities where they would be placed. I said that the Russian Government could select the officers who were to be specifically designated for the purpose, and that I had already requested the Russian Government to indicate the localities in question. M. Isvolsky said that the Governor-General of Turkestan would have to be consulted. I remarked that this would take some time; to which he assented, and murmured something which I could not clearly catch as to the desirability of holding over certain points to be arranged subject to the signing of the Conventions.

It will be well to await the written reply of the Russian Government to the last proposals which I submitted to him; but I presume that His Majesty's Government would raise no objection to the consideration of Article III being deferred.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 486.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 358.)

St. Petersburgh, D. *July* 8, 1907.
R. *July* 8, 1907.

Sir,

M. Isvolsky told me this afternoon that he was not yet in a position to give me the reply of the Russian Government to our Draft Convention regarding Afghanistan, and he doubted if he would be able to do so for 8 or 10 days. I expressed my surprise at this notification as I had expected to receive a reply this day and I did not understand what difficulties could exist in the way of accepting our proposals. It was true that we had eliminated one or two unimportant articles of his draft project, that we had rearranged others, and interpolated a very necessary mention of the Treaties with the late Ameer. Surely, I said, this could give rise to no lengthy consideration, as all the principal points of his project had been preserved in their entirety. His Excellency said that the elimination of the Articles gave no cause for any objection, nor the rearrangement of some others, nor indeed,

the mention of the Ameer's engagements: but there were other points which required close examination. I enquired what they were. He said that he could not enumerate them off hand as he had not his papers by him. I pressed him to give me at least some indication of their nature. After a little time M. Isvolsky said he would instance the clause as to both parties engaging not to occupy nor to annex any portion of Afghanistan. As regards Russia this was an unconditional prohibition, but as regards Great Britain their engagement not to take measures was dependent on the Ameer fulfilling his Treaty obligations. What was Russia to do if the Ameer attacked her? I replied that I presumed that Russia would in that case defend herself, and as regards the condition laid down by Great Britain it was a very necessary condition: otherwise the present or some subsequent Ameer might imagine that he could violate his engagements with impunity. I could not see that any serious objections could be raised to the wording of that article.

M. Isvolsky then said that the Article regarding the relations between the Russian and Afghan frontier officials required to be carefully revised. In the first place we referred to "authorities on the frontier" while the Russian Government had mentioned "the authorities of the frontier provinces." The former might be only subordinate officers, and not competent to discharge the duties foreshadowed. I told him that here I thought he had forgotten the additional words, "specially designated for the purpose," and this phrase would enable the Russian Government to appoint special officers of a suitable rank. We had requested that they should notify to us the localities at which they would place such officers, so that we might communicate with the Ameer. His Excellency observed that there was a further question connected with this article, and which indeed applied to other portions of the Convention. We had made all the engagements by which Russia might benefit, such as the frontier relations and trade, dependent on the consent of the Ameer, while all the obligations which Russia took upon herself were to become operative immediately the Convention was signed. It amounted, therefore, that a personage who was not a contracting party, with whom Russia was not to treat directly, and over whose foreign relations Great Britain assumed control, could by a simple refusal render nugatory the stipulations of a Convention, in so far as they benefited Russia. This was a very one-sided arrangement and it appeared to him to be a strange and inconvenient situation, and one with which it was difficult to deal. The whole "appareil" was very "compliqué."

I told His Excellency that he seemed to be embarking on rather a large question if he wished to discuss British control over the foreign relations of the Ameer. I did not deny that perhaps this "appareil" was complicated, but it had worked very well for a number of years. In any case it was clear that we could not bind the Ameer or lay upon him obligations without consulting with him and obtaining his consent, and that consent I did not doubt that we should do our best to obtain. There was only one alternative and that would have been to have postponed signing the Convention until negotiations with the Ameer had been concluded, and this would have entailed much delay which neither he nor my Government desired. It was, therefore, clear that we had to insert a reservation as to the consent of the Ameer being requisite. I told His Excellency that if all these questions were to be threshed out once more, much time would elapse, and I really could not see the necessity of doing so. I would however wait for his written communication as we were merely discussing matters conversationally. M. Isvolsky said he was only making observations in a purely unofficial manner and the question then dropped. I should add that he hinted that perhaps a clause could be inserted stating that the Convention would not come into force until the Ameer had consented to the stipulations regarding frontier relations and trade.

I was, I confess, surprised at the general tone of M. Isvolsky's remarks, as they not only seemed to indicate a desire to place Russia on exactly the same footing as ourselves in respect to Afghanistan, but they were also in contradiction with an observation which he had made a day or two ago to me that the amendments which

the Russian Government would propose to our Draft Convention were merely small points of drafting. We must of course await the official written reply, which may not be of the character of his verbal observations.

M. Isvolsky repeated to me more than once his eager desire to speedily settle all the Conventions, but his language today, though always courteous and friendly, did not quite correspond with these admirable intentions.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 487.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, July 8, 1907.
D. 10·20 P.M.
R. 9 P.M.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 124.) Confidential.

Afghanistan.

Minister for Foreign Affairs is not yet in a position to communicate their replies, and cannot tell me when he will be. He hopes in a week, but I do not rely on this.

I pressed him to tell me the difficulties. I gathered they will demur strongly to what he terms unconditional engagement on the part of Russia not to annex or occupy any portion of Afghanistan, and, after discussion, he gave me to understand they would probably wish to insert a saving clause—something to the effect that their engagement held good provided that no change occurred in actual state of things in Afghanistan. If any such proposal is made, I presume it would be quite inadmissible, as it would open wide door to Russian intervention.

In Article III I think that they will press for retention of their original wording "authorities of the frontier provinces" in preference to "authorities on the frontier."

I told him that I did not see at all necessity of changing the wording as the questions with which frontier officials would have to deal would be trifling ones, such as robberies of sheep and horses, and such like matters, which frontier officials could settle. He did not agree, and I said that they consider questions to be settled should be of a wider scope, which is, I imagine, precisely what we desire to avoid. He said that we apparently wished to restrict relations between Russian and Afghan officials within very narrow limits, and I replied that certainly we did so intend. He repeated his former objections to making execution of Articles depend on consent of Ameer. He endeavoured to prove to me that we had shifted our original ground, but this was easy to refute, and I explained that we had originally given Russian Government some bases on which we were prepared to negotiate, and that we had never deviated from the principles then laid down. In their counter project they had apparently wished that we should subscribe to engagements without consent of Ameer having been obtained, and this was manifestly impossible. I told him that our attitude had been logical and consistent throughout.

Our conversation was quite friendly, and he assured me that he was most anxious to terminate negotiations, but that he had to discuss all Afghan matters once more with the General Staff, and I imagine that they are making difficulties. I was not at all satisfied with our conversation this afternoon, but I report to you to let you know line on which they are apparently running.

I am afraid that in the circumstances it will be quite impossible to finish the negotiations before Parliament rises, and Minister for Foreign Affairs said he feared they would take some time yet.

MINUTE.

This Afghan Convention is, I fear, likely to give trouble and may require some straight talking.

The engagement to be taken by Russia " not to annex or occupy any portion of Afghanistan " was dealt with in our tel[egram] of yesterday to Sir A. Nicolson,(1) and the insertion which we now hear of as suggested by M. Isvolsky would be quite inadmissible

I do not think we could reasonably admit in Art[icle] III the Russian wording " authorities of the frontier provinces " instead of " authorities of the frontier " although we are perfectly well aware that the " authorities of the frontier provinces " do correspond with the Russian provincial Authorities on the other side of the frontier.

We have always been perfectly consistent in this matter and Lord Lansdowne in his d[ra]ft letter sent to C[oun]t Benckendorff on Feb[ruary] 17, 1905,(2) alluded to " the interchange of communications between the Russian and Afghan frontier officials on non-political questions of a local character," as the words used by C[oun]t Benckendorff to define the change which the Russian Gov[ernmen]t wished to obtain in their relations with Afghanistan. Unfortunately this letter was only sent to C[oun]t Benckendorff in d[ra]ft form, so we cannot assume that in the absence of a denial, the words hold good as being the view of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t at that time. Still they represent what Lord Lansdowne understood C[oun]t Benckendorff to state to him and consequently are of importance. As a matter of fact I find no previous mention of " authorities on the frontier," but in April 1903 L[or]d Lansdowne suggested to the I[ndia] O[ffice] " That communications between Russian and Afghan local officials on either side of the frontier should be permitted etc. . . . . "(3) The difference between this wording and that of the Russian text " authorities of the frontier provinces " is not at all clearly defined.

C. H.
E. G.
[July 9, 1907.]

(1) [This refers to the telegram to which the present minute is attached.]
(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 520–1, No. 466 (*a*).]
(3) [*v. supra*, p. 516, No. 465.]

No. 488.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 103.) *Foreign Office, July* 8, 1907.

Your tel[egram] No. 119.
Afghanistan.
Point no. 1.

You should explain to M. Isvolsky that the real objection to giving an unconditional pledge not to annex nor occupy Afghan territory is that this would modify our *locus standi* with the Ameer which at present rests on the Treaty contracted with him and that although we should be most unwilling to annex to occupy Afghan territory the fear that we may do so is the chief incentive to the Ameer to observe his Treaty obligations towards us. It also serves as a means of exerting pressure upon the Ameer in the event of a dispute between him and the Russian Gov[ernmen]t.

Point no. 2.

It is perfectly true that we are unable to compel the Ameer to accept obligations which may be distasteful to him except by exerting pressure upon him. Consequently it is preferable to obtain in the first place his voluntary consent, and the admission in the agreement that such consent is necessary is more likely to produce the desired result than if no mention of it at all were made. Further the omission of the qualifying clause would make it necessary for us to defer signing the agreement till the Ameer's consent to the proposed arrangement for direct communications had been received.

No. 489.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 104.)

Foreign Office, July 10, 1907.
D. 8·50 P.M.

Afghanistan.

Your tel[egram] No. 124.(1)

Your language approved.

The "saving clause" which you understood M. Isvolsky to say the Russian Gov[ernmen]t would probably wish to insert would be quite inadmissible for the reason you mention.

You should inform M. Isvolsky that we must insist on the maintenance in Art[icle] III of the wording "authorities on the frontier specially designated for the purpose" as being practically the same as that used by C[oun]t Benckendorff to L[or]d Lansdowne on Feb[ruary] 17, 1905 when stating the change which the Russian Gov[ernmen]t desired in the *status quo* on the Afghan frontier, and you may express the hope that no further difficulty will be raised on this point.

Even with this wording the door is opened to intervention by Russian officials in the affairs of Afghanistan and we have to rely upon the good faith of Russian authorities to see that the provision is not improperly used. The Russian Gov[ernmen]t must also rely upon our good faith to use all our influence to secure a friendly attitude towards Russia and equal facilities for Russian trade on the part of the Ameer, and our mention of the Ameer's consent is due to our desire and intention to preserve his internal independence, which is also what the Russian Gov[ernmen]t wish us to do. As to our engagement not to annex or occupy being conditional we must preserve our right to bring pressure to bear on the Ameer in the event of intolerable provocation on his part. We do not anticipate such a contingency; the Russian Gov[ernmen]t must trust us not to make use of force except in last resort, and under no circumstances to use our influence in a manner hostile to Russia. If we did so, the whole agreement would come to an end, but we cannot tie our hands further than is proposed.

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 549, No. 487.]

No. 490.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, July 13, 1907.
D. 8·22 P.M.
R. 11 P.M.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 126.)

Afghanistan.

I had a long conversation with Minister for Foreign Affairs this afternoon,(1) which he initiated on subject of draft Convention. Their reply is evidently nearly prepared, as he consulted a document during conversation, though I doubt if I shall receive it for a few days.

(1) [A fuller account of this interview was given by Sir A. Nicolson in his despatch No. 375 of July 14, 1907. In this despatch Sir A. Nicolson stated that he had suggested privately to M. Isvolski "that, if he agreed with me, I thought that before I received his proposals formerly in writing I had better run over to London to consult with you." On the 14th M. Isvolski said he thought this desirable, and would give Sir A. Nicolson his view in writing before he left. These views are expressed in the memorandum enclosed in the succeeding document. Sir A. Nicolson accordingly visited London, returning to St. Petersburgh early in August.]

He said that Russian Government would probably agree to eliminate their Article I as to buffer State, but would probably suggest some clause in preamble as to both Governments recognizing integrity and independence of Afghanistan. I let that observation pass by, as it will be as well to await their proposal in writing. He then dwelt at length as to the necessity of modifying our proposal that Russia should unconditionally agree not to annex any part of Afghanistan.

I told him I felt sure my Government would not be disposed to accept any condition. As unprovoked aggression on the part of the Ameer on the Russian frontier was inconceivable, and I inquired what condition did he suggest, and to meet what eventuality. He said a disturbance of the *status quo*. I inquired if he meant that if, on the death of the Ameer, disorders were to break out, Russia should have a right to intervene, for in that case we could not admit that Russia should be placed on equal footing with us, and have a door open to intervene. He said this was not the preoccupation of the Russian Government. They wished to anticipate an annexation or occupation by us of Afghanistan, which would change existing situation.

I will send full report by messenger of arguments employed on both sides; result was that I think they will suggest addition to Russian undertaking of a clause, "provided that no change occurs in existing political situation," or words to that effect. I told him my Government would, I thought, have very serious objections to such a saving clause, and he said that Russian Government would have to insist on some such clause. I anticipate great difficulty on this point, but I let him see we attached very great importance to our wording; as to frontier relations, we practically went over old ground and made no headway. He understood that we had to insert clause as to necessity of obtaining consent of Ameer, but said he would have to propose some additional Article as to Convention entering into force when consent of Ameer was obtained.

I told him I had no desire to press him, but I might indicate that before end of August Cabinet would disperse for summer vacation, and it would be well if I could receive his reply before long. He said he trusted to let me have it in a few days.

(Confidential.)

He was a little excited to-day though, of course, friendly, and I think the General Staff are insisting strenuously on his maintaining his objections.

No. 491.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.

(No. 386.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *July* 19, 1907.

Sir, R. *July* 23, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit herewith copy of a memorandum which M. Isvolsky has given me privately and which embodies in an unofficial form the views and *desiderata* of the Russian Government in regard to the counterdraft presented by His Majesty's Government concerning the Convention to be concluded in respect to Afghanistan.(1)

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

(1) [This refers to the draft handed to M. Isvolski on June 17, *v. supra*, pp. 541–4, No. 483, column 2.]

Enclosure in No. 491.

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

Les contre-propositions anglaises relatives à la Convention sur l'Afghanistan offrent matière à de certaines observations, et parmi celles-ci quelques-unes demanderaient à être spécialement étudiées de part et d'autre afin de trouver à chacune d'elles une solution équitable et satisfaisante pour les deux Parties.

Nous n'attachons pas une importance particulière au terme "état-tampon" appliqué à l'Afghanistan et que l'Angleterre voudrait voir éliminé, bien que ce terme ait à notre avis l'avantage de donner une idée nette du rôle que cet Etat est appelé à jouer entre les possessions anglaises et russes dans l'Asie Centrale. Mais il y aurait, d'après nous, quelque inconvénient à supprimer complètement l'article I^er^ qui définit la position internationale de l'Afghanistan. Cet article devrait être rédigé de manière à exprimer clairement que l'Angleterre et la Russie s'entendent pour maintenir le *statu quo* politique de ce pays comme, par exemple, cela a été fait pour le Maroc et l'Egypte dans la Convention Anglo-française de l'année 1904.

L'article II du projet anglais, tout en établissant pour l'Angleterre l'obligation de ne pas occuper ni annexer une partie quelconque du territoire de l'Afghanistan, subordonne cette obligation à la condition que l'Emir de son côté ne déroge en rien aux stipulations du traité conclu entre l'Angleterre et lui. Nous reconnaissons volontiers que le Cabinet de Londres a des motifs sérieux pour formuler cette réserve; mais l'Angleterre étant complètement libre de juger les actes de l'Emir, il pourrait en résulter, à tout moment donné, l'occupation ou même l'annexion d'une partie de l'Afghanistan ou de ce pays tout entier; d'autre part le même article oblige la Russie, d'une manière absolue et inconditionnelle, à respecter en toute circonstance l'intégrité et l'inviolabilité de ce pays. Nous pourrions donc, aux termes mêmes de la convention, nous trouver inopinément en présence d'une modification profonde de la situation politique en Asie Centrale. Il nous semble qu'il serait nécessaire de prévoir ce cas et de reconnaître que la Russie, qui attache la plus grande importance à la conservation de l'équilibre politique dans ces régions, aura la faculté de décider si par le fait d'une occupation ou d'une annexion du territoire afghan, il n'est pas survenu dans l'ordre des choses établi un changement de nature à la délier de ses engagements.

Parmi les droits concédés, en vertu de la Convention projetée, à la Russie il en est de tels dont elle ne pourrait jouir que dans le cas où l'Angleterre y obtiendrait le consentement de l'Emir. Les dispositions ayant trait aux relations directes entre les autorités russes et afghanes et aux agents commerciaux en font mention explicitement; quant aux faveurs réservées au commerce russe, la rédaction du paragraphe y relatif, bien qu'elle n'invoque pas les droits de l'Emir, implique néanmoins la nécessité de son consentement préalable. Dans ces conditions les avantages dont devrait bénéficier la Russie pourraient devenir illusoires, car en s'imposant des obligations incontestables, elle obtiendrait en retour des droits encore à acquérir. Pour remédier à cet inconvénient il faudrait compléter l'accord par un article établissant que la convention n'entrerait en vigueur que du moment où la Russie pourrait jouir en réalité des droits qui lui sont réservés, ou bien aussitôt que l'Angleterre lui aurait notifié le consentement de l'Emir. D'autre part, pour mieux rendre l'idée, comme nous l'entendions au début des négociations, de voir les sujets, les commerçants et le commerce russes et britanniques ou anglo-indiens placés en Afghanistan sur le même pied au point de vue des droits de douane, des taxes intérieures et sous tous les autres rapports, il serait bien de la préciser dans la Convention même et d'amplifier dans ce sens le passage qui s'y rapporte.

L'expression du projet russe "les autorités des provinces frontières" a été remplacée dans le contre-projet anglais par les mots: "autorités à la frontière." Nous voudrions croire qu'il n'y a là qu'une distinction de rédaction et qu'au fond les deux Gouvernements entendent la chose de la même manière. Si par contre,

le Gouvernement Anglais avait l'intention de voir les relations dont traite l'article III confiées aux autorités subalternes résidant sur la frontière même, il y aurait à objecter qu'un tel ordre de choses présenterait de graves inconvénients: les autorités mentionnées ne sont nullement appropriées aux fonctions qui leur seraient imposées et leur incompétence en la matière pourrait devenir dans certains cas une cause de malentendus et de complications. Il serait donc désirable de ne point exclure les autorités respectives investies de pouvoirs plus étendus du nombre de celles qui seraient chargées des relations directes en question.

No. 492.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 295.) Secret.

Sir, *Foreign Office, August* 8, 1907.

I enclose to you herewith copy of a mem[orandu]m drawn up in this Dep[artmen]t, after consultation by me with the S[ecretary] of S[tate] for India, setting forth the views of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] in reply to the observations contained in the unofficial mem[orandu]m upon the British counterdraft of the proposed Convention relating to Afghanistan, handed to you by M. Isvolsky, and forwarded in your despatch No. 386 of the 19th July.(1) You are authorised to give a copy of this mem[orandu]m to M. Isvolsky and to express the hope that the conciliatory attitude adopted by H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] in meeting H[is] E[xcellency]'s views may be the means of removing all remaining difficulties and of arriving at a complete and early agreement.

In the event of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t declining to agree to the deletion of the last sentence of Art[icle] II of our counterd[ra]ft you are authorised as an alternative solution to propose the maintenance of Art[icle] II as it now stands with the addition of the following sentence:—

> "Should any change occur in the political status of Afghanistan the two Governments will enter into a friendly interchange of views on the subject."

I enclose at the same time a copy of the declaration relating to British interests in the Persian Gulf which I propose to make either in Parliament or in a published despatch to you, after the conclusion of the agreement, and you are authorised to communicate a copy to M. Isvolsky at the moment which may appear most suitable to Y[our] E[xcellency] for doing so.(2)

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

Enclosure in No. 492.

Memorandum.

The mem[orandu]m given privately by M. Isvolsky to Sir A. Nicolson, embodying in an unofficial form the views of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t on the counterdraft presented by H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t of the Convention to be concluded in respect to Afghanistan, has received most friendly and careful consideration with a view to finding a means for satisfying the legitimate demands of both Parties.

The following are the views of H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t on the points raised by M. Isvolsky:—

Although the expression "buffer State" was undoubtedly used in conversation by Lord Lansdowne to C[oun]t Benckendorff as applying to Afghanistan its meaning

(1) [*v.* immediately preceding document.]
(2) [For this enclosure, *v. supra*, p. 497, *Ed. note.*]

is ambiguous and incapable of definition. It was therefore considered desirable to omit this expression as a description of the geographical and political situation of Afghanistan. H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] would however entertain no objection to the first Article of the Convention containing words similar to the Anglo-French Declaration of 1904 relating to Egypt and Morocco, which would be in the following terms :—

> "His Britannic Majesty declares that he has no intention of altering the political status of Afghanistan."

As regards the objections raised to the terms of Art[icle] II of the British counter-draft H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] view with satisfaction the fact that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t appreciate the serious reasons which necessitate a certain freedom on the part of Great Britain in her relations with the Ameer of Afghanistan in order to secure the proper observance by H[is] M[ajesty] of his Treaty obligations towards H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment]. Any restriction of such liberty of action on the part of Great Britain could not fail to imperil gravely the peace of Central Asia by encouraging the Ameer and his subjects to ignore the Treaties by which the relations existing between Great Britain and Afghanistan are governed. Such an eventuality as hostile operations by British forces in Afghanistan must always be kept in view, not merely in defence of Anglo-Afghan Treaties, but also to secure the observance of the terms of the present Convention. H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnmen]t, while undertaking to exercise their influence in Afghanistan only in a pacific sense towards Russia, have no desire to modify in any way the actual situation in Afghanistan nor to disturb the existing political equilibrium in those regions.

With a view to removing the objections of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to an unconditional undertaking on their part not to annex or to occupy any part of Afghanistan while a similar undertaking on the part of H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t remains conditional on the fulfilment by the Ameer of his Treaty obligations, H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t, having full confidence in the friendly intentions of the Russian Gov[ernmen]t, and considering that the contingency will be covered by the engagement contained in Art[icle] I of the British counter-draft, will agree to the deletion of the last sentence of Art[icle] II, beginning with "On the other hand . . . ." and ending with "Ameer."

The concessions offered to Russia in Art[icles] III and IV relating to the establishment of direct relations between the frontier officials on local questions of a non-political character, and to the equality of commercial opportunity for British and Russian trade in Afghanistan, would be rendered nugatory by a hostile attitude towards them on the part of the Ameer. The consent of the Ameer to the fulfilment of the terms of these two Articles becomes therefore an essential condition of their validity, and cannot be ignored by H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t in treating with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t questions affecting the sovereign rights of the Ameer of Afghanistan. The consent of the Ameer can no doubt be obtained, but the spirit in which it is given is of importance to avoid difficulties in the proper fulfilment of his obligations. H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t therefore recognise the force of M. Isvolsky's observations as to the possibility of the benefits to be acquired by Russia from this Convention proving illusory for the moment owing to reluctance on the part of the Ameer to give the desired consent to the concessions made to Russia in Art[icles] III and IV, and although they will not lose time, after the signature of the Convention, in making the necessary communications to the Ameer, H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t will be prepared to meet M. Isvolsky's wishes and to accept the addition of an Article providing that the Convention will not come into force until H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t have notified to the Russian Gov[ernmen]t the consent of the Ameer to its terms.

The desire expressed for the amplification of Art[icle] IV appears to be hardly well-founded since its terms are very comprehensive. It implies that any negotiation carried on with the Ameer by H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t for the benefit of

British trade or traders will, *ipso facto*, be for the equal benefit of Russian trade or traders, and that any commercial concessions obtained from the Ameer will automatically be to the advantage of the trade and traders of both nations.

As regards the Russian and Afghan frontier officials who are to be authorised to enter into direct relations with each other on local questions of a non-political character, the essential point, in the view of H[is] M[ajesty s] Gov[ernmen]t, is that certain officials residing either on the frontier or in the frontier provinces, should be specially designated by the Russian and Afghan Gov[ernmen]ts for that purpose. It is important, by limiting the number of those authorised to enter into direct relations with the Afghan officials, to avoid causing alarm to the Ameer by the new change in the situation, and also to insure that difficulties on the frontier may not be created by the passage of communications between unauthorised persons.

No. 493.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 409.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *August* 13, 1907.
Sir, R. *August* 19, 1907.

I called on Mr. Isvolsky yesterday afternoon and informed His Excellency that I was now in a position to communicate to him the views of His Majesty's Government in regard to the observations which he had made respecting the British counter-draft concerning Afghanistan and which he had embodied in a Memorandum for my information and guidance during my recent visit to London.(1) I added that I had been fortunate in having had opportunities of conversing with those members of His Majesty's Government who were principally and more directly interested in the subject of our negotiations and that the proposals which I was about to submit to him could be taken as representing the well-considered opinions of the British Government.

I told Mr. Isvolsky that it would be simpler if I read to him a memorandum which had been prepared on the subject as it expressed very clearly the nature of the proposals which His Majesty's Government were prepared to make.(2)

His Excellency listened attentively to my perusal of the document and on its termination he remarked that certainly a great step had been made towards an agreement and that he would like to study the memorandum,—a copy of which I handed to him—, carefully before giving a final opinion. I said that although I did not expect him to pronounce himself on the subject offhand, I trusted that his impressions of the document were favourable, as he would see that we had gone as far as was possible in meeting the wishes and desiderata of the Russian Government.

His Excellency replied that his first impressions were distinctly favourable and he appeared to have no objection to any portions of the memorandum.

I expressed the hope that we should now be able to conclude our negotiations within a very few days, as it seemed to me that there was no obstacle to our doing so. His Excellency said that I could rely with confidence on his doing his utmost to push matters on, but that he would not be able to see the Emperor this week as His Majesty would be engaged with the General Staff until Saturday in the manœuvres now taking place in the vicinity of St. Petersburg. I understood from His Excellency that he would forward the memorandum and other papers which I left with him to the Emperor without delay.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 553–4, No. 491, *encl.*]
(2) [*v.* enclosure in immediately preceding document.]

No. 494.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320. *St. Petersburgh*, D. *August* 17, 1907, 8·19 P.M.
Tel. (No. 147.) R. *August* 18, 1907, 8 A.M.

Afghanistan.

Contrary to my hopes I am afraid Russian Gov[ernmen]t will not agree to simple deletion of the last part of Clause II. I had informal talk with Min[iste]r for F[oreign] A[ffairs] this afternoon and am to see him again on Tuesday to go fully into the matter.

He considers simple deletion does not entirely remove Russian objections. His argument is that contractual obligations taken in regard to an object cannot remain in full force if a change occurs in the object. We might have to occupy Afghanistan if Amir infringed stipulations or even annex portions of it, and Russia could not then be held to remain quite silent and passive. He asked why formula I had suggested before leaving Petersburg had not been accepted.(1) I told him that frankly we thought it placed Russia more or less on the same footing as ourselves in regard to Afghanistan and left a door open to Russian intervention. He asked how this could possibly be maintained if we read Article I where Russia distinctly engaged that Afghanistan was outside her sphere, etc. He said he had two solutions in view either that an additional article should be inserted at the end of the Convention to the effect that the two Governments would interchange views if the political situation were altered or that he should write a despatch to the Russian Ambassador in London to be published with the Convention saying that if political situation were changed Russia was freed from her obligations. I told him that latter solution would never do. Above is informal and private and he will speak officially to me on Tuesday. I have given him no idea that I am authorized to make a concession but please tell me which of following solutions you would prefer in case I find simple deletion impossible.

(i.) To insert formula I am authorized to propose at the end of new article I, or
(ii.) to insert it as a separate article at the end of the Convention or
(iii.) to insert it at end of present article 2 after engagement on the part of Russia not to annex or occupy.

I should be inclined to adopt solution No. 2 and say nothing in article 2 as to Russia not annexing etc. since I now think such a possibility had on the whole better not even be contemplated as we have tied her down by Article I very tightly and it might look as if she were on an equal footing with us.

Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] said that at present Russia was quite free to do as she liked with regard to Afghanistan: of course it would be an unfriendly act but it would not be a violation of any obligations. After signature of convention her position would be quite different and she would be closely bound. For that reason also he said some clause should be inserted stating that if change occurred in the situation the two Gov[ernmen]ts would speak together.

(1) [This would appear to be a reference to the proposed addition to Article II contained in Sir E. Grey's despatch No. 295 of August 8, 1907, *supra*, p. 554, No. 492. No evidence has been found however to suggest that Sir A. Nicolson mentioned this to M. Isvolski before leaving St. Petersburgh.]

No. 495.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 18, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 2 P.M.
Tel. (No. 149.) R. 3 P.M.

Afghanistan.

My tel[egram] No. 147 of yesterday.(1)

I intend to resist as far as is safe and possible the introduction of any fresh clause but Minister for F[oreign] A[ffairs] will evidently press hard for some formula of the nature indicated.

His programme on Tuesday is to communicate to me a draft project based on our last proposals and he will wish me to tell him whether there is anything in it unacceptable to my Government. If there be we shall have to thresh matter out there and then and when a common ground has been found he will then take steps to obtain consent of the Emperor and interested Ministries. He is anxious to push matters on and have no further discussions or references home. Tuesday will therefore be an important day and I hope that I may before that date receive your views as to which of the three solutions I proposed in my telegram No. 147 is considered most acceptable.

It is, I know, most essential that we should in no wise weaken our special position in Afghanistan but I think that we should rather be emphasizing it by not insisting on Russia taking any engagement similar to our own in regard to non-occupation etc. and it might be best to ignore the possibility of her wishing to occupy. Her engagements under Article I moreover exclude her from taking any action whatever dilpomatic or otherwise in the country. I admit above view is not in accordance with (proposal ?) I ventured to suggest when in London but on thinking over matter and conversing here I would now with all deference submit that a separate article with a general formula like the one I have brought with me would be preferable to reviving the final clause of Article 2 and adding the formula to it.

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

No. 496.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320. *Foreign Office, August* 19, 1907.
Tel. (No. 140.) D. 3 P.M.

If it is necessary to insert formula we wish to retain last part of Article II, which will help to recommend agreement to the Amir; but we should decidedly prefer that formula should be inserted as a separate Article instead of appearing directly after words in Article II as if it was a special qualification of them. You should therefore press for this solution if formula is demanded.

No. 497.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 19, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 8·23 P.M.
Tel. (No. 150.) R. 11 P.M.

Afghanistan.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asked me to see him this afternoon, and has communicated to me a draft Convention as to Afghanistan. The only important

point is the additional Article concerning exchange of views in case of change of political status.

I tried hard to have no Article inserted, but he practically said that Russia could not sign without it. Article runs as follows:—

> "If any modification whatever occurs in political status of Afghanistan, the High Contracting Parties will enter into a friendly interchange of views . .with the object of insuring the maintenance of the equilibrium in Central Asia."

His Excellency said he thought in place of the latter part, of proposing "interchange of views on the subject," but he suggested present wording so as not to give impression that Russia wished to interfere with relations between Great Britain and Afghanistan.

I should be grateful for early reply if I may accept this Article.

There are one or two other modifications, but of no serious importance, and I will telegraph them tomorrow.

No. 498.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 20, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 2·49 P.M.
Tel. (No. 151.) R. 5 P.M.

Draft of the Afghan Convention.

Following are the modifications proposed by the French translation:—

In preamble, "in order to assure" is translated by "animated with sincere desire to assure."

Article I is "His Britannic Majesty's Government declares it has no intention of changing political status in Afghanistan," and then continues with engagements on the part of Russian Government as enumerated in former Article I.

Art[icle] II is literal translation of our Article II. Words "having recorded" are translated by "having declared," as there is no good French word for "recorded."

The last sentence in French translation runs as follows:—

"Great Britain further engages to exercise her influence in Afghanistan only in a pacific sense, and will not herself take and will not encourage Afghanistan to take any measures threatening Russia." He thought "Russian frontier" a little narrow, as the Ameer might take measures not specially against frontier. To avoid repeating the word "Russia" he omitted it after "pacific sense."

Art[icle] III in French translation runs as follows: "The Russian and Afghan authorities specially designated for the purpose may establish direct reciprocal relations for settling local questions of a non-political character." He has omitted "on the frontier" or "in the frontier provinces," as if they are specially designated he thinks he has met our views, and it would make a very clumsy wording, adding, "on the frontier or in the frontier provinces," and moreover words are unnecessary, as the special officers must reside on or near the frontier.

Allusion to consent of Ameer is omitted, as there is a special Article to that effect.

Art[icle] IV is the same as our Article IV down to "Russian traders," with the insertion of the word "trade." It stops there, and he has said nothing as to Commercial Agents. I presume you do not wish me to propose that they should be mentioned.

Art[icle] V says "the present Arrangements will only enter into force from the moment when the British Government has notified to the Russian Government the consent of the Ameer to the terms above stipulated."

Art[icle] VI is the Article regarding change in political status which I telegraphed last night in my telegram No. 150.(1)

Art[icle] VII. The present Convention will be ratified, and ratifications will be exchanged at St. Petersburgh as soon as possible.

Throughout the Convention, in place of Sovereigns, he has mentioned British and Russian Governments. He assures me this is more correct, and I suppose we can accept it. Of course, in the preamble, Sovereigns name Plenipotentiaries. He says that a Convention of this formal nature must be ratified. Perhaps it is more usual, and I have no fear that they will not ratify shortly after signature, and ratification will be more binding in the future.

I should be grateful of reply to this telegram as soon as possible.

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

No. 499.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 20, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 2·53 P.M.
Tel. (No. 152.) R. 4·45 P.M.

I may mention that I told Minister for Foreign Affairs that it had always been a cardinal point in the policy of Great Britain, as regards Afghanistan, not to admit or to recognise direct or indirect intervention of any Third Power in the external or internal affairs of Afghanistan: that this principle has been adopted by the Amir and fully recognised by Persia. It would therefore constitute a grave departure from that principle if it were provided in a Convention that a third Power could in certain eventualities be empowered to have a consulting voice in the relations between Great Britain and Afghanistan.

His Excellency said he understood this and in drafting the proposed new Article he had carefully used such terms as would show no wish on the part of Russia to interfere with the relations above mentioned. I said I did not quite see what was meant by maintenance of equilibrium. He said he had purposely made terms as mild as possible and he merely wished to afford an opportunity for discussion in case of a change in Afghanistan without implying that Russia wished for intervention.

No. 500.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 20, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 2·48 P.M.
Tel. (No. 153.) R. 5·15 P.M.

Your telegram No. 140: Afghanistan.(1)

I told Minister for Foreign Affairs yesterday that I thought that it was possible that if you accepted proposed new Article(2) you would ask for retention of final clause

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 558, No. 496.]
(2) [*v. supra*, p. 559, No. 497.]

of Article II. He said that Russia already by Article I of Convention could not annex or occupy, and in fact was debarred from any action whatever in any circumstances in Afghanistan, and if she took active measures it would be a simple act of war. If I am to press the point, he might observe that in our last Memorandum(2) we admit that Article I does satisfactorily cover question, and we had consequently deleted final clause. I really think that we are quite safe without it, and, indeed, that our special position is more clearly apparent. Would not Article I amply satisfy all Ameer's requirements as to Russia's abstention?

I should be grateful for your final decision if possible before Thursday. If Emperor approves draft Convention, I am sure it will be pushed through other Ministries without change or delay.

(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 554–6, No. 492, *encl.*]

No. 501.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320. *Foreign Office, August* 21, 1907.
Tel. (No. 146.) D. 9 P.M.

Your telegram 153.(1)

We would agree to omission of final sentence of Article II only on condition of first sentence also being omitted. The middle sentence from "His Britannic Majesty further undertakes" down to "Russian frontier" might be inserted in Article I, which would then cover our pledges to Russia as well as her pledges to us, and Article II would disappear. You should propose this to M. Isvolsky as we think it would be an improvement.

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

No. 502.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320. *Foreign Office, August* 21, 1907.
Tel. (No. 147.) D. 9 P.M.

Your tel[egram] 150.(1)

We cannot agree to the words proposed by M. Isvolsky. They are so ambiguous that they might give rise to unforeseen demands and complications and we could not have the word "whatever." You should therefore ask M. Isvolsky to accept as an additional article the formula authorised as an alternative in the last instructions drawn up with you here.(2)

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 558–9, No. 497.]
(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 554–6, No. 492, and *encl.*]

No. 503.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 148.)

Foreign Office, August 21, 1907.
D. 9 P.M.

Your tel[egram] 151.(1)

In Article III words "on the frontier or in the frontier provinces" should be put in. They could be inserted after the word "purpose."

No objection to other alterations except as regards Article II dealt with in previous telegram. We very much prefer omission of any reference to Commercial Agents and hope it is intentional. You should endeavour to prevent its reappearance.

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 559–60, No. 498.]

No. 504.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 430.)
Sir,

St. Petersburgh, D. *August* 21, 1907.
R. *September* 3, 1907.

I have the honour to transmit, herewith, a copy of a Draft Convention* concerning Afghanistan, which M. Isvolsky communicated to me on the 19th instant.(1) I have had two lengthy interviews with His Excellency on the subject, and I will condense into this despatch a report of both my conversations.

The only important point at issue between the two Governments is whether an Article should be inserted in the Convention imposing on His Majesty's Government, in the event of a change arising in the political status of Afghanistan, the obligation to discuss matters with the Russian Government.

I have maintained in conversing with M. Isvolsky the following attitude.

I have explained clearly to him that a cardinal point in the policy of Great Britain in regard to Afghanistan has always been to exclude the intervention, direct or indirect, of any third party in the external or internal affairs of the latter country: and I have stated that this policy has been admitted by the Ameer, and fully recognised by Persia his western neighbour. Were His Majesty's Government to admit the formal recognition in a Convention of the right of a third party, in certain eventualities, to have a consultative voice in the relations between Great Britain and Afghanistan, a grave departure would be made from the policy, hitherto, pursued. I have impressed on His Excellency that Russia having recognised that Afghanistan is outside of her sphere of influence it is of no real moment to her what may occur in that country, so long as no aggressive action is taken in respect to her frontiers: and I have further indicated that the engagements undertaken by Great Britain to use her influence in Afghanistan in a pacific sense, and not to undertake herself nor to encourage the Ameer to take any measures threatening the Russian frontier, should calm any apprehensions which may be felt by the Russian Government. I have also pointed out to M. Isvolsky that the concessions which I was authorized to make, and which were embodied in the Memorandum which I brought with me on my return from London, should convince him of the conciliatory and friendly spirit of His Majesty's Government and that I had confidently anticipated that these concessions would have completely satisfied the Russian Government. Such in brief resumé is the substance

* Identical with text inclosed in Sir A. Nicolson's despatch No. 432 of August 24, 1907.(2)—A. N.

(1) [*cp. supra*, pp. 558–60, Nos. 497–8.]

(2) [Not reproduced. Its contents are indicated by Tel. No. 151 of August 20, *supra*, pp. 559–60, No. 498.]

of the arguments which I have laid before M. Isvolsky in the course of our recent interviews.

M. Isvolsky, on the other hand, while cordially and fully recognising the friendly attitude of His Majesty's Government, has maintained that Russia by the Convention has formally admitted that she has no right to interfere in Afghanistan, directly or indirectly, and has distinctly acknowledged the exclusive position of Great Britain in regard to that country. This he considers should remove entirely any apprehensions or mistrust on the part of Great Britain as to the aims of Russia. If after the signature of the Convention, Russia were to take action of any character whatsoever in Afghanistan, it would be a violation of the Convention and constitute an act of war. He contends that by the Convention entire liberty of action is retained by Great Britain. It is true that she engages not to interfere in Afghan affairs, nor to annex or occupy any portion of Afghan territory, but these undertakings are dependent on the loyal observance by the Ameer of his engagements, and Great Britain is the sole judge of the mode in which that dignitary performs his obligations. Russia does not wish to limit this liberty of action nor to have a consultative voice in the relations between Great Britain and Afghanistan. But Russia is a neighbour of Afghanistan with a long conterminous frontier, and it cannot be asserted that what occurs in Afghanistan is of no concern to her. All that Russia requests is that, in the event of any alteration in the political status of Afghanistan, whether by annexation or occupation on the part of Great Britain or on account of other contingencies, His Majesty's Government would agree to enter into an amicable interchange of views with her, so that the equilibrium in Central Asia should be maintained. He considers that this is not only a reasonable request, but is one on which the Russian Government must insist, as Russia could not possibly view with indifference the establishment of the forces of Great Britain or of British administration in closer propinquity to the Russian frontier or in occupation of strategical positions in Afghanistan. The article which he proposes provides for such an interchange of views; it does not imply that Great Britain is to concert with Russia as to how she is to deal with a recalcitrant or defaulting Ameer, nor does it lead to Russia's interference in the relations between Great Britain and that personage. It simply provides for the case when a change occurs in Afghanistan, the object of the present Convention, and requests that an interchange of views should take place.

I think I have given as fairly as is possible, in a short summary, the gist of M. Isvolsky's observations. I would desire to place this on record, although I have telegraphed the main substance of them. I would beg leave to reserve for another despatch the explanations which he gave me as to other less important amendments, which he had suggested should be introduced into the Draft Convention.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

Mr. Morley should see it; it states very well what the Russian feeling is and the point that M. Isvolsky was driving at.

E. G.

No. 505.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 28, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 8 A.M.

Tel. (No. 162.) Confidential. R. 12 *noon.*

Afghanistan Draft Convention.

M. Isvolsky gives me to understand that your proposed amendments including those as to Article 2 and the additional Article 6 will be accepted and that I shall have

official reply tomorrow. I could not get Commercial Agents dropped as we had already accepted it and omission was a pure oversight of clerk.

M. Isvolsky, in the sentence formerly in Article 2 and now in Article 1 as to our exercising our influence in a pacific sense etc. has begged that word "Russia" instead of "Russian frontier" should be used. I gather you have no objection to this and so I have agreed. It is a small point and so I hope you agree. I told him I thought Amir could hardly threaten Russia but he might annoy frontier.(1)

(1) [Sir E. Grey concurred in Tel. (No. 156) of August 23, 1907.]

No. 506.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 25, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 5 P.M.
Tel. (No. 168.) R. 9 P.M.

Afghan draft Convention.

An unexpected and serious hitch has occurred. Minister for Foreign Affairs had obtained consent of the Emperor to texts of Agreements on their way to you, provided Council of Ministers unanimously agreed to them. Council was held last night, and lasted until 2 o'clock in the morning. Strong opposition was developed, which was eventually concentrated on two points on which Minister for Foreign Affairs with Prime Minister and one military Member were in a minority.

The majority required that first paragraph of former Article 2 down to "under above-mentioned Treaty" be inserted in the Convention either as separate Article or interpolated in new Article I. They also considered that in Article concerning trade relations the words "equality of commercial treatment" did not necessarily imply equality of customs duties, and they wish that I should write a note to the Minister for Foreign Affairs, to be published with the Convention to following effect:—

> "I am authorized by my Government to explain that equality of treatment as regards commerce implies equality of all commercial rights, including custom duties."

After some difficulty all the other texts &c. were agreed to.

As to trade matters I told him equality of commercial treatment could not be wider or clearer, but I would refer question to you.

As to the other more serious question, I said I was convinced my Government would either insist, firstly, on maintenance of old Article II, including unconditional agreement on the part of Russia, or, secondly, on deletion of that engagement, but also in that case suppression of additional Article as to exchange of views in case of change in political status.

It is not necessary to argue with him, as he is of our opinion, but the majority of Council would, he is sure, accept neither of above alternatives. In two words, majority of Council require maintenance of old Article II, without any engagement on the part of Russia, but with additional Article.

I said I would place case before you, and await your decision.

(Confidential.)

He explains to me that, unless he can secure unanimous decision of Council, Emperor will have to decide between opinion of minority and that of majority. Should His Majesty go with former, execution of Convention would be very difficult, and most of good effects of the Agreement would be lost. If His Majesty went with majority, Minister for Foreign Affairs would probably have to resign, and, in any case, Conven-

tions would be lost. If, on the other hand, His Majesty's Government agree to what majority desire, difficulty is removed and unanimity is obtained.

Yesterday Minister for Foreign Affairs was quite confident as to obtaining consent of Council, but it appears there is a strong feeling against his policy regarding Japanese negotiations, and he thinks that the opposition last night was largely directed against him personally and was not in reality concerned with the merits of the case.

No. 507.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 161.)

Foreign Office, August 26, 1907.
D. 9·30 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 168 (of Aug[ust] 25).(1)

We are much disappointed at this unexpected difficulty. I have discussed it carefully with S[ecretary] of S[tate] for India: we feel that we have gone to utmost limit of concession in agreeing to formula of Article V. We cannot lose sight of the prejudicial effect which proposed Russian alterations of Convention would have upon the mind of the Amir and consequently upon our position and influence with him.

Moreover public opinion here will be exceedingly critical of concessions with regard to Afghanistan, even on what may appear to be small points. With every desire therefore to meet Russian views, we cannot go further than the alternatives suggested in your [telegram] No. 168 if any change is to be made in the text we entirely approve your reply.

As to commercial clause the words as they now stand would cover any proved case of differential duties, but to add words proposed might imply an obligation upon us to force Amir to draw up a complete tariff, which would be undesirable and very difficult.

I hope Russian Government will bear in mind that larger issues are indirectly at stake even than those directly involved in these agreements, for it has throughout been our expectation and belief that an agreement as regards Asia worked in a friendly manner would so influence the disposition of this country towards Russia as to make friendly relations possible on questions which may arise elsewhere in the future. Without such an Agreement this expectation must be disappointed.

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

No. 508.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 434.)
Sir,

St. Petersburgh, D. *August* 26, 1907.
R. *September* 3, 1907.

I think that I should place on record the various phases through which the negotiations in regard to the Draft Convention concerning Afghanistan have passed during the last few days.

On the 22nd instant I had the honour to receive some telegrams from you which communicated certain proposals as to the rearrangement and redrafting of some of the Articles in the Draft Convention.(1) You proposed in the first place to suppress Article 2 entirely, but to insert the middle sentence, concerning the

(1) [*v. supra*, pp. 561–2, Nos. 501–3.]

undertaking on the part of Great Britain to exercise her influence in Afghanistan in a pacific sense, in Article I which Article would then cover all the pledges mutually given by both Governments. You further authorized me to propose that the additional Article or Article 5 should be drafted as follows:—"If any change occurs in the political status of Afghanistan the two Governments will enter into a friendly interchange of views on the subject." You also desired that in the Article relating to the relations of frontier officials, the words "on the frontier or in the frontier provinces," should be inserted after "specially designated for the purpose."

I at once called on Monsieur Isvolsky and submitted the above mentioned proposals. He told me that his first impressions were favourable, but that he must examine them and also consult with the Emperor, whom he was to see that evening, before he could give me a reply. He begged me not to telegraph to you till he had seen His Majesty and I acquiesced in his wish. I may add that I could see that the proposals caused Monsieur Isvolsky very evident pleasure.

Late that night, after he had returned from the Emperor he wrote me a private letter to say that he was very happy to tell me that personally he was now ready to recommend to his colleagues to accept the proposals which I had made to him: but that he could not give me a definitive and official reply till after Saturday the 24th instant. I telegraphed to you on the morning of the 23rd to that effect.(2) I saw him on the afternoon of Friday the 23rd instant and he appeared quite sanguine as to the result, and we discussed the form in which the Convention and Agreements should be drawn up, and I subsequently despatched my Telegram No. 163 as to these points.(3) The next morning the 24th instant I received your telegram requesting that all the French texts should be sent to you so that you should have time to examine before the agreements were signed.(4) I acquainted Monsieur Isvolsky with this request, and he kindly suggested that myself and M. O'Beirne should come to the Ministry that afternoon when he would have all the French texts ready for collation, and he said he would be happy to send a special Messenger with them to London the same evening. Mr. O'Beirne and myself attended at the Ministry as had been arranged; and the texts were carefully compared by Monsieur Isvolsky, the Head of the First Department, Mr. O'Beirne and myself, and found to be in accordance with the proposals which I had made to him. I read to him the Despatch(5) which should cover the texts and he concurred with its terms; and I then handed to him the packet for transmission to you.

M. Isvolsky throughout these recent interviews showed no anxiety as to the results of the Council of Ministers which was to be held the evening of the 24th instant; in fact his only anxiety was whether I should receive your approval of the texts in time to permit of the Convention being prepared for signature on the 31st instant. I therefore had no doubt in my mind that, beyond perhaps some drafting amendments, the Council of Ministers would raise no difficulties; and I am sure that no hesitations crossed the mind of Monsieur Isvolsky. This is not only my own impression but also that of Mr. O'Beirne who was present. I asked Monsieur Isvolsky to be good enough to let me know the results of the Cabinet Council, so that I might inform you, if possible before the texts reached you, that the Russian Government had finally and definitely approved the Agreements.

Very early on Sunday morning the 25th instant I received a Note from Monsieur Isvolsky asking me to call at the Ministry and on my arriving there I found His Excellency much perturbed. He told me that the Council had lasted till 2 A.M. and that he had met with very strong opposition from several members

(2) [*v. supra*, 563–4, No. 505.]
(3) [*v. supra*, pp. 301–2, No. 283.]
(4) [Tel. No. 155 to Sir A. Nicolson of August 23. It contained merely the request for the French texts.]
(5) [*v. supra*, p. 502, No. 456.]

of the Cabinet. He had been reproached for having yielded too much, and especially for having agreed to the suppression of Article 2. He argued, he said, till he was hoarse, pointing out that Article I gave all necessary assurances and guarantees, and that Article 5 afforded an opportunity to Russia of discussing matters with us. I had some doubts whether Monsieur Isvolsky clearly explained to the Council all the circumstances attending the various proposals and counter-proposals which have circled round Article 2: not of course from any desire to give otherwise than a perfectly accurate history of the question, but because there is some very natural confusion in his mind on the subject. In any case the majority of the Council required that the whole first sentence of Article 2 should be reinserted either as a separate Article or interpolated into Article 1.

I told Monsieur Isvolsky that if the first sentence of Article 2 were reinserted my Government would then suppress Article 5 or would only consent to the retention of Article 5 on the condition that the whole of Article 2 in its pristine form were restored. To this Monsieur Isvolsky said that he was sure he would not be able to secure the unanimous consent of the Cabinet. I need not report the arguments which I employed with Monsieur Isvolsky, because you can readily gather their tenour, and also because there was really no necessity to drive arguments home to His Excellency who had already agreed to the texts which are now on their way to you. It would, I doubt not, be of more interest to report what Monsieur Isvolsky related to me as to the steps which he had taken since the 22nd instant.

On the evening of the 22nd he proceeded to Peterhof and submitted to the Emperor the Conventions as they had been agreed upon between him and myself, and which are those which will reach you to-morrow. His Majesty said that he would assent to them if the Council of Ministers unanimously agreed to them. His Excellency on his return to St. Petersburg wrote me the note of which I have previously made mention, and he was evidently of opinion that the Council would make no difficulties. He probably considered that should any opposition arise, he would have no great difficulty in overcoming it as he was fortified with the Emperor's conditional assent. He was, however, he told me, surprised by the tenacity of the opposition which encountered him in the Cabinet. This opposition was in reality largely promoted, he considered, by a feeling against his foreign policy in general, as a portion of the press has of late been sharply criticizing his conduct of the Japanese negotiations, and his opponents in the Cabinet were apparently determined that he should not be too conciliatory in those he was now conducting with His Majesty's Government. Be the motives of his opponents what they may, the result was that, a vote being taken, three, himself, Monsieur Stolypin, and one military member (I do not know whether the Minister of War or the Chief of the General Staff) voted for the Convention as arranged with us, and the remaining members voted for the reinsertion of the first portion of the former Article 2.

I enquired of Monsieur Isvolsky what was to be the next step. He urged me to recommend to you that the wishes of the majority should be met. I told him that it was really unnecessary for me to do more than report the present unfortunate situation. In 48 hours you would be in possession of the full French texts: and would be in a position to decide on the course to be followed. What I wished to know was what would be the procedure here, if His Majesty's Government maintained the attitude which I had already indicated to him.

Monsieur Isvolsky said that if His Majesty's Government declined to meet the wishes of the majority of the Cabinet in the way they desired, and if, as he felt confident, the majority maintained their point of view, he would have to wait upon the Emperor, and lay before His Majesty the divergence of opinion which had arisen, and take His Majesty's pleasure. If the Emperor, as was possible, preferred to accept his opinion as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and authorized him to sign the texts as already drawn up, the Convention would then be concluded in

the form determined upon between us. But the majority he was sure would be dissatisfied; the smooth execution of the Convention would be rendered difficult, and the attacks in the Press would be redoubled. If, on the other hand, the opinion of the majority prevailed with the Emperor, it would then be not only a question as to his portfolio but the Conventions would be lost. While if His Majesty's Government could see their way to agreeing to the proposed amendment and the reinsertion of the whole of the first sentence of Article 2, from the words "The British Government having recorded" to the words "above-mentioned Treaty" the difficulty would be completely solved.

I told His Excellency that I would report all his observations faithfully to you.

There was one other point, he said, as to which the Cabinet was not satisfied. In the Article concerning commercial matters, there were doubts whether "equality of treatment" covered equality of customs duties; and it was desired that I should address an explanatory note to him, to be published with the Convention, in the terms of which I beg leave to transmit a transcript. I told him that this objection, he would pardon me for saying so, was ridiculous. I could not conceive a broader or clearer expression than "equality of treatment," and it seemed quite superfluous for me to address to him any explanatory note on the subject. Monsieur Isvolsky said that he quite agreed with me, but to satisfy the Cabinet he begged me to refer the matter to my Government. I said that, of course, at his request I would refer anything to my Government, though I still could not understand what doubts could possibly exist on the point. I then took leave of His Excellency, promising to inform him as soon as I received a reply from you.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 508.

Proposed Explanatory Note respecting the Draft Convention concerning Afghanistan.

Je suis autorisé par mon Gouvernement à préciser que le terme "égalité de traitement pour ce qui concerne le commerce" implique l'égalité de tous les droits commerciaux, les droits de douane y compris.

No. 509.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 27, 1907.

F.O. 371/320. D. 8 P.M.
Tel. (No. 169.) R. 10 P.M.

Afghan draft Convention.

I communicated to Minister for Foreign Affairs today Memorandum embodying the substance of your telegram No. 161 of yesterday.(1)

He expressed disappointment that His Majesty's Government had not been able to accept proposal which he had made on 25th August,(2) and, after the usual arguments, he inquired whether I would be prepared to accept, without further reference to my Government, one of the alternatives, viz.:—

1. Either to maintain Article II in its entirety as recorded in original British counter-project; or
2. Delete final sentence, but then suppress the additional Article V.(3)

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 565, No. 507.]
(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 564–5, No. 506, and pp. 566–7, No. 508.]
(3) [*v. supra*, p. 559, No. 497.]

I said that I felt authorized to do so, provided, of course, that all the other Agreements, &c., were approved by my Government and accepted by Russian Government. I rather anticipate that this will be result. I told him that I felt sure that texts we had already agreed upon offered most satisfactory solution. We had long argument, to my surprise, as to the Commercial Articles. I told him that statement made in my Memorandum by authority of my Government that the Articles covered any proved case of differential duties ought to satisfy Ministry of Commerce, and I considered that it had same force as a note. He said that they feared that one duty might be charged on cottons, for instance, coming over the Russian frontier, and a lower duty on cottons of the same category coming over Indian frontier.

I said that this would be clearly inequality of treatment, and as Convention would have to receive Ameer's consent, we should have good grounds, in case such inequalities did arise, to make representations to him.

He will now have another Council, and let me know result.

As he will probably wish to sign as soon as possible, I have no doubt that I shall receive as soon as convenient your approval of French texts, which should have reached you this morning.

Please let me know which you would prefer in French translation of first sentence of Article II, "déclaré" or "consigné" for the word "recorded."

No. 510.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 438.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *August* 28, 1907.
Sir, R. *September* 3, 1907.

On receipt of your Telegram No. 161 of the 26th instant,(1) conveying to me the views of His Majesty's Government in regard to the latest proposal of the Russian Government and on which I reported in my Despatch No. 434 of the 26th instant,(2) I called on Monsieur Isvolsky and read to him the *Aide-mémoire* of which I have the honour to enclose a copy. His Excellency, on my concluding, remarked that it was "fin de non recevoir." I told him that I by no means agreed with him, and pointed out that His Majesty's Government offered to the Russian Government two alternatives, though to my mind it would be preferable if he were able to induce his colleagues in the Cabinet to accept the texts of the Convention in the form on which we had both agreed, and which I had forwarded to you by the special messenger on Saturday. His Excellency asked me if I felt authorized to accept either alternative without further reference to my Government, and I replied in the affirmative. After going over some of the old arguments in regard to Article 2 and its chequered life, His Excellency observed to me that the portion of the *Aide Mémoire* with which he cordially agreed was the concluding paragraph: and he must again repeat that it was precisely in order to render the Conventions thoroughly acceptable to his Government, and thereby ensure their smooth execution, that he had urged on His Majesty's Government to concede the requests of the Russian Cabinet. However he must now do his best to secure the consent of his colleagues to one of the alternatives which I had submitted.

He much regretted that His Majesty's Government had not seen their way to authorize me to address him the explanatory note in regard to the interpretation of the phrase "Equality of treatment" in the Article concerning commercial relations, as he would then be able to show his colleagues that he had not failed all along the line.

(1) [*v. supra*, p. 565, No. 507.]
(2) [*v. supra*, pp. 565–8, No. 508.]

I explained to His Excellency, after considerable discussion, that he would see in the *Aide-Mémoire* that I had distinctly mentioned, not as my own opinion, but as an authorized statement on behalf of my Government, that the wording of the article clearly covered any proved case of differential duties: that when the Convention came into force the Ameer would have already given his consent to its terms, and that, therefore the Russian Government could, quite justly, in the event of differential duties being established, call upon us to represent the matter to the Ameer who would doubtless give it his serious consideration. The *Aide-Mémoire* was quite as important as a Note would be.

This morning I called on M. Isvolsky to communicate to him the amendments which His Majesty's Government desired to see introduced into the general preamble and in the ratifying article. I found him in much better spirits: and he told me his employés were already engaged in preparing the documents for signature: that a Council was to be held this afternoon when he fully expected that a final decision would be taken, and that the signature could then take place on Saturday next the 31st instant. I said I was quite prepared to fulfil my part on Saturday.

As to the amendments in the general preamble he observed that "Them" or "Eux" must refer to the Sovereigns and that it would be quite unusual to assume that any misunderstandings could possibly arise between the two Sovereigns. He far preferred the original wording, and after some discussion and an unsuccessful endeavour to find more suitable formulas, I consented to accept the wording as it stood, as I considered you would not wish me to insist on a drafting amendment which might delay matters. I said that "Etats" sounded a little oddly in English if translated "States," but perhaps the word "Dominions" would be a suitable rendering.

He agreed to amend the ratifying Article by stating, "la présente Convention sera ratifiée."

He again came back to the Article regarding commerce; and said that the Minister of Commerce was still not satisfied, and that he thought an unsigned *Aide-mémoire* was hardly a very strong staff to lean upon. I may mention that, treating it as an academical question, I had enquired of my French colleague, who is an expert in such matters, whether "égalité de traitement pour ce qui concerne le commerce" would not clearly cover equality of customs duties, or rather would exclude differential duties being imposed on the same articles passing over different frontiers. He said he did not think that the phraseology I had mentioned need necessarily do so. Equality of treatment as regards commerce might refer to permits, consignments of stores and various other similar matters: but it would be more correct and explicit to mention in some form or another customs duties. The addition of the words "dans toutes les matières" would be more explicit, or the addition of some words implying that customs duties were included.

To continue. Monsieur Isvolsky asked whether I could not write him a Note, not for publication or to be annexed to the Convention, but simply to show the Minister of Commerce, stating that His Majesty's Government recognized that they interpreted the Article as covering differential duties. I should be rendering him a great service if I could do so. I told His Excellency that I would consult you on the subject, but in any case I could not go further than what I had stated in the *Aide-mémoire*.

If you see no objection it might be well to meet Monsieur Isvolsky's wishes in this respect.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 510.

Aide-mémoire.

His Majesty's Embassy communicated to His Majesty's Government the proposal of the Imperial Russian Government that the following should be inserted in the

Draft Convention concerning Afghanistan, either as a separate Article or interpolated in Article I.

"Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique ayant déclaré dans le Traité signé à Kabul le 21 mars 1905 qu'il reconnaît l'arrangement et les engagements conclus avec le défunt Emir Abdur Rahman et qu'il n'a aucune intention à s'ingérer dans l'administration intérieure du territore Afghan, la Grande Bretagne s'engage à ne pas annexer ou occuper, contrairement au dit Traité, une partie quelconque de l'Afghanistan, ni à s'ingérer dans l'administration intérieure de ce pays, sous réserve que l'Emir remplira les engagements déjà contractés par lui à l'égard du Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique en vertu du Traité susmentionné."

His Majesty's Government are much disappointed that an unexpected difficulty has arisen when the negotiations were apparently on the eve of being happily concluded. His Majesty's Government considered that they had gone to the utmost limit of concession in agreeing to the formula of Article 5, and they must keep carefully in view the effect which the terms of the Convention will have upon the mind of the Ameer and consequently upon their position and influence with him. Moreover public opinion in Great Britain and in India will be exceedingly critical of concessions with regard to Afghanistan, even on what may appear to be small points.

His Majesty's Government have every desire to meet the views of the Imperial Russian Government, but it will be impossible for them to go further than one of the two following alternatives. 1. To maintain Article 2 in its entirety as communicated to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs on June 4/17 1907 in the British counterproject including the engagement on the part of the Imperial Russian Government as set forth in the final sentence of that Article.(3) Or 2, to omit the above-mentioned final sentence, but in that case to suppress also the additional Article 5 as to an exchange of views between the two Governments in case of a change occurring in the political status of Afghanistan.(4)

As to the Article concerning commerce, it is perfectly clear that the words as they now stand would cover any proved case of differential duties. His Majesty's Government are unable to accept the proposed explanatory note not only because it is superfluous, but also because it might imply an obligation on the part of Great Britain to bring pressure to bear on the Ameer to draw up a complete Tariff.

His Majesty's Government sincerely trust that the Imperial Russian Government will appreciate that larger issues are indirectly at stake than those directly involved in these Agreements, for it has throughout been the expectation and the belief of His Majesty's Government that an agreement as to their respective interests in Asia, if executed in a friendly manner, would so influence the disposition of public opinion in Great Britain as to make friendly relations possible on questions which may arise elsewhere in the future. Without such an agreement this expectation must be disappointed.

St. Petersburg, August 14/27, 1907.

(3) [*v. supra*, pp. 542–3, No. 483, column 2.]
(4) [*v. supra*, p. 559, No. 497.]

No. 511.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/320.
(No. 440.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *August* 29, 1907.
Sir, R. *September* 3, 1907.

I received a private Note from Monsieur Isvolsky last night to say that the Council of Ministers had, after a long discussion, decided to accept what he termed "votre troisième alternative" concerning Afghanistan. To make quite sure that there should be no misunderstanding, I wrote to His Excellency and asked if by the "third alternative" he referred to that which suppressed the final sentence of Article 2, *i.e.*, the sentence by which Russia engaged not to annex &c. and which at the same time also suppressed the additional Article 5 by which we agreed to enter into an exchange of views if any change occurred in the political status of Afghanistan. I received a reply to-day that I had correctly interpreted his letter.

I venture to think that it is of advantage that the additional Article has disappeared, and I am rather surprised that the Council of Ministers agreed to its excision. As Monsieur Isvolsky remarked to me this morning, the Russian Government have in fact accepted the proposals which I made immediately after my return from London.

I explained to His Excellency that as soon as the Convention was signed the Government of India would communicate its purport to the Ameer of Afghanistan, and it was desirable that this communication should reach the hands of the Ameer before the Convention was published: as it would be most unfortunate were the Ameer to receive the first news of the Convention, and possibly in a distorted form, from any other source than the Government of India. His Excellency quite agreed with these views, and said that he must come to some arrangement with me as to the mode and date of the publication of the Convention. I said we might discuss that question a little later, and of course I would have to solicit your views and wishes on the matter.

His Excellency had on the previous night begged me to acquaint him as early as possible with the reply which I might receive from you in respect to my writing a Note with regard to the interpretation and scope of the phrase "equality of treatment" in Article 4. I gave him this morning a Note, of which I have the honour to enclose a copy, and he was much gratified at receiving it. He perfectly understood that it was not for publication, but solely for his information and for the purpose of reassuring the Minister of Commerce. I told him that we were still of opinion that the terms of Article 4 needed no elucidation, but we desired to meet his wishes.

The negotiations are now concluded, and M. Isvolsky today submits to the Emperor the final texts of the Convention for His Majesty's approval, and the signatures will be affixed on Saturday next the 31st instant.

I think that all is in order, and in the form which you desired; and the next stage will be the manner in which the several agreements will be executed. This, I submit, is of great importance: and it is most earnestly to be desired that the local officials of both countries will lend their cordial cooperation in the execution of an instrument, which should be productive of immeasurable benefits to the friendly relations of both countries, and assist greatly towards the preservation of peace in Central Asia.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 511.

Sir A. Nicolson to M. Isvolski.

Monsieur le Ministre, *St. Petersburg, August* 16/29, 1907.

Referring to our conversation of yesterday, I have the honour to inform Your Excellency that I am authorized to state that the words in Article 4 of the

Convention concerning Afghanistan as to "égalité de traitement pour ce qui concerne le commerce" would, in the opinion of my Government, cover any proved case of differential customs duties.

I avail, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

No. 512.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburgh, August 29, 1907.
F.O. 371/320. D. 2 P.M.
Tel. (No. 175.) R. 4 P.M.

Anglo-Russian Convention.

Afghanistan. Council of Ministers has finally decided to accept Deletion of the final sentence in Article II and the suppression of addition to Article V. Convention will therefore consist of

Article I. Engagement of Great Britain not to change political status and engagements of Russia as to country being outside her sphere etc.
Article II. The old Article II with the exception of final sentence.
Article III. Frontier relations.
Article IV. Trade relations.
Article V. Consent of Ameer; and nothing more.(1)

M[inister for] F[oreign] A[ffairs] quite agrees to giving time to government of India to communicate with Ameer.

I will telegraph later as to what he suggests should be told press. We should have to acknowledge fact of signature but nothing more for the moment. His Excellency quite agrees to early date for ratification and he will speak to me later on that point.

I gave him a note not for publication but for his information stating the view of His Majesty's government as to the Article covering Trade. He was very grateful. . . . .(2)

(1) [For the final text of the Treaty see Table on pp. 541–4.]
(2) [The rest of this telegram refers to the exchange of telegraph lines in Persia, *v. supra*, p. 501, No. 454.]

No. 513.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

F.O. 371/320.
Tel. (No. 176.) *Foreign Office, August* 31, 1907, 2·10 P.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 177.(1)

We have telegraphed to the Gov[ernmen]t of India to ask how much time they require for communicating the Agreement to the Amir.

It is essential that publication shall not take place before he receives the Text, but it will not be necessary to await his consent.

(1) [Not reproduced. Tel. No. 177 from Sir A. Nicolson of August 30 referred to M. Isvolski's desire that, if the official publication of the Convention must await the Amir's consent, an unofficial statement giving the outlines should be published shortly, as he felt the signature of the Convention could not be concealed. Sir A. Nicolson wished the official publication to be the first statement on the Convention.]

We should prefer that no announcement at all beyond a verbal reply to enquiries, to the effect that the Convention has been signed should be made until we hear that the Amir has received the Text, but in any case you should urge M. Isvolsky not to allow any communication of the outlines of the Agreement—even by means of an indiscretion to be made pending its receipt by the Amir.

If he insists on the announcement for Sunday, the terms are unobjectionable.(2)

(2) [The instruction to the Viceroy to have the agreement verbally explained to the Amir was sent on September 6. Lord Morley's private letter of 7th, *v. infra*, p. 587, No. 526, stated that it would take sixteen days to reach him, adding "I hope he will not be troublesome, but he may be *slow*." In consequence publication was delayed till the 24th, in spite of Russian protests, and ultimately made on the 26th.]

No. 514.

Mr. O'Beirne to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 17770/3835/08/38.
(No. 235.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *May* 19, 1908.
Sir, R. *May* 25, 1908.

The recent events on the frontier of India and Afghanistan have of course been followed in this country with great interest, and there has been some inclination, not confined to the press or the general public, to take an unnecessarily pessimistic view of them.(1) M. Iswolsky referred seriously to the matter when I saw him at his last official reception, saying that the news sounded alarming, and remarking that the fact of the Ameer not having yet given his assent to the Anglo-Russian Convention regarding Afghanistan made the situation embarrassing.

I need not trouble you by recapitulating the views of the St. Petersburg newspapers as to the causes of the present outbreak, behind which most of them, needless to say, see the wicked machinations of Germany, as indeed, the Russian press does nowadays on every possible occasion. What is of more interest is that these journals, while in many cases they anticipate that England will find herself at war with Afghanistan or at any rate engaged in serious military operations, show no trace either of suspicion as to Great Britain's eventual aims or policy in Afghanistan, or of a desire that Russia should take advantage of the situation to further her own ends. On the contrary, most of the writers emphasize the view that the Agreement arrived at between the two countries enables England to deal with the Afghan difficulty without any misgivings as regards Russia. The "Bourse Gazette" says that both Government and people in England can rest fully assured that Russia will carry out religiously the "obligations resting on her under the Agreement." The "Retch" says that it is no longer possible now for Afghanistan to play off Russia against England. The "Novoe Vremya" observes that England, like Russia, must firmly establish peace and security on her borders. Nowhere have I seen it suggested that Russia's attitude might be affected by the fact that the Ameer has not consented to the Afghan clauses of the Convention.

When one thinks of the alarm, suspicion, and hostility that would, in the absence of an Agreement between the two countries, have been aroused in Russia by the prospect of British military operations in Afghanistan, one cannot but recognise in the attitude of the press on the present occasion a gratifying result yielded by the recent Convention.

I have, &c.
HUGH O'BEIRNE.

(1) [Frontier raids by the Zakka Khels in January 1908 led to the despatch of a punitive expedition in February. Order was quickly restored; but a second expedition was despatched in May to suppress a rising of the Mohmands of a more serious character.]

MINUTE.

The " Bourse Gazette " and " Novoe Vremya " used to be the most implacable enemies of England.

C. H.

No. 515.

Mr. O'Beirne to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 17778/8835/08/38.

(No. 243.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *May* 21, 1908.
Sir, R. *May* 25, 1908.

With reference to my despatch No. 235 of the 19th instant,(1) I have the honour to state that M. Iswolsky to-day again spoke to me about events in Afghanistan. He said he could assure me that neither in official nor military circles in Russia did there exist the faintest suspicion as regards British policy in Afghanistan, nor had any suggestion been put forward that Russia should take advantage of the fact that the Ameer had not consented to the recent Convention respecting his dominions. He need not say that Russia meant absolutely to observe the spirit of the Convention.

At the same time His Excellency said that the Russian Government entertained the hope that Great Britain would not find it necessary to take such action in Afghanistan as would alter the *status quo* and oblige the Imperial Government to reopen the question.

I have, &c.
HUGH O'BIERNE.

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

No. 516.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.(1) *Lightwater, Bagshot,*
My dear Grey, *July* 19, 1908.

Many thanks for your letter and its enclosure. The prospect of obtaining the consent of the Ameer does not seem to be very bright: and if the procedure suggested by the Viceroy should lead to no satisfactory results, we should have to face a regrettable situation. The convention concerning Afghanistan would remain a dead letter: and although this would not necessarily lead to the abrogation or suspension of the Persian and Thibetan agreements, the efficacy of these latter instruments would be greatly weakened and impaired. The Afghan Convention forms part of a whole, and it is clear that its non execution would leave a mutilated portion. The spirit and intentions of the whole arrangement would undergo a change.

Moreover we should have to publicly admit that although we decline to permit Russia to have any direct relations with the Ameer, we are ourselves incapable of exercising any effective influence over that potentate in matters of external policy affecting his country. Russia would, in that case, have some justification in asserting that we were useless as intermediaries, and that it would be more to her

(1) [Grey MSS., Vol. 34.]

advantage to treat direct with the Ameer should the occasion for so doing ever arise. If the Afghan Convention has to go by the board, and if the Ameer were allowed to veto an arrangement to which the Sovereigns and Gov[ernmen]ts of Russia and England had subscribed and had formally ratified, I should imagine that our prestige would suffer seriously throughout the Middle and Far East. Furthermore the opponents, both in and out of Russia, to an understanding between the two countries would be greatly encouraged, and I do not consider that the unfortunate effects ensuing from our failure to secure the consent of the Ameer would be limited solely to the points at issue. The consequences would be more serious, and would flow over a wide field.

I see that the Viceroy is of opinion that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t foresaw the possibility of a disagreement with the Ameer, and he apparently considers that Art[icle]s 3 and 4 were inserted with the object of provoking such a disagreement. I am sure that the view is erroneous. The article as to commerce etc was inserted at the express desire of the Russian Min[ister] of Commerce, who was anxious that the trade of Russia should have equal opportunities with that of India. There were no hidden political aims in the demand. As to relations between the frontier officials, it was considered on both sides that the existing irregular and undefined intercourse should be, as far as possible, placed on a recognized and definite footing, and carried on through specially selected agents. The Russian Gov[ernmen]t, so far as my observation went, would have been perfectly willing to accept the agreement without reference to the Ameer, if we had been in a position to guarantee that all its provisions would be faithfully and fully executed, and if we had been able to answer for its loyal observance by the Ameer. I doubt if the Russian Gov[ernmen]t anticipated that we should fail in obtaining the consent of the latter.

There is one more consideration, which to my mind is of great importance. Essential as a friendly Afghanistan may be to our position in India, equally essential, I submit, is a friendly Russia to our general international position, both as regards the actual situation, and also in respect to that in the not distant future. If we wish, and I presume that we do wish, in the interest of peace, to avert the possibility of any Power assuming a position from which she could dictate to others, a close understanding with France and Russia is, I submit, an object for the attainment of which every effort should be made. We have secured an undertaking with France. That with Russia is in its very early infancy, and will require, for reasons which I need not explain, careful nurture and treatment. Any serious check to this infant growth may kill it before it has advanced in years, and its disappearance would doubtless eventually react on our relations with France. . . . .(2)

Yours sincerely,
A. NICOLSON.

(2) [The closing sentences of this letter refer to personal matters.]

No. 517.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 38886/3885/08/38.
(No. 500.) *St. Petersburgh*, D. *November* 3, 1908.
Sir, R. *November* 9, 1908.

I observed to the Emperor to-day that both you and Lord Morley had been especially gratified with the willingness of M. Iswolsky to act upon the assumption that the Convention concerning Afghanistan was in force, although the consent of the Ameer had not yet been received. This had been considered a most satisfactory assurance, not only as a sign of the good intentions of the Russian Government, but also as enabling us to deal in a friendly spirit with any incidents which might arise. A reply had been received from the Ameer regarding the Convention, and,

though the document was a very lengthy and rambling one, it afforded a basis for further discussion. These discussions would be continued, though I feared that they would take some time, as Afghans, like other semi-civilized Orientals, were slow in their procedure and singularly difficult to convince.

The Emperor said that he quite understood the position, and he was glad to have noticed that the Jamshedi incident had not caused any difficulties between the two Governments.

I have, &c.
A. NICOLSON.

[*ED. NOTE.*—The consent of the Amir to the Convention was never obtained, though it was at one time considered essential, *cp. supra*, p. 555, No. 492, *encl.*, and *infra*, p. 614, No. 549. The British and Russian Governments finally arranged that the Agreement should come into force without his consent being necessary.]