

CHAPTER XXIX.

THE RECEPTION OF THE ANGLO-RUSSIAN CONVENTION.

No. 518.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, September 2, 1907.

F.O. 371/372.

D. 8 P.M.

Tel. (No. 180.)

R. 10 P.M.,

Persian Arrangement.

Following is text of the communication which, subject to your approval and any amendments you may desire, Russian Government suggested that two Representatives should address to Persian Government :—

“The Governments of Russia and of Great Britain, desiring to avoid any cause of conflict between their respective interests in certain regions of Persia contiguous with or in the neighbourhood of Russian frontier, on the one hand, and of frontiers of Afghanistan and of Beluchistan on the other, have signed a friendly Arrangement on the subject.

“In that Agreement the two Governments mutually agree to the strict integrity and independence of Persia, and testify that they sincerely desire the pacific (? development) of that country as well as the permanent establishment of equal advantages for the commerce and industry of all other nations. Each of the two States further engages not to seek concessions of any nature whatsoever in the regions adjoining or in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of the other. In order to prevent misunderstandings in the future, and to avoid creating an order of things which might place the Persian Government in an embarrassing situation in any respect whatever, the above-mentioned regions are clearly defined in the Arrangement. In mentioning the revenues which are affected to the loans concluded by Persian Government with the Discount and Loan Bank and with Imperial Bank of Persia, the Russian and British Governments recognize that these revenues will be in the future affected to the same purpose as in the past. And the two Governments equally engage, in the case of irregularities in the amortization or in the payment of interest of above-mentioned loans, to enter on a friendly exchange of views in order to determine by common agreement the measures of control which it would be necessary to take, and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles of that Arrangement.

“In signing that Arrangement, the two States have not for a moment lost sight of the fundamental principle of the absolute respect of the integrity and the independence of Persia. The Arrangement has no other object than that of avoiding any cause of misunderstanding between the Contracting Parties on the ground of Persian affairs. The Government of the Shah will convince itself that the agreement arrived at between Russia and Great Britain can but contribute in the most efficacious manner to the security, the prosperity, and the ulterior development of Persia.”

Instructions are added as follows :—

“Please concert with your British colleague, who will be furnished by his Government with similar instructions as to making an identic official communication to the Persian Government in the terms of present telegram.”

Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs asked when the communication should be made. I said that I presumed immediately the two Governments had agreed upon terms.

No. 519.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, September 2, 1907.

F.O. 371/325.

D. 8.1 P.M.

Tel. (No. 181.)

R. 9.30 P.M.

Minister for Foreign Affairs before leaving suggested that besides communication to Persia, some notification should be jointly made at Peking as to Thibet Arrangement. In regard to other Powers, he proposed that each Government should be at liberty to select those to whom it would wish to make a communication, confidentially, of Convention before publication.

Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs asked whether anything should be said at Constantinople. It was not custom of Russian Government to make such communications to the Porte, but perhaps in this case it might be well to do so.

Please give me your views.

MINUTES.

I cannot see any necessity for communicating the Convention before publication to the Porte which is in no way affected by it.

I suppose we should communicate it to the Japanese Gov[ernmen]t and French Gov[ernmen]t.

W. E.

Sept. 3.

Sir F. Campbell.

What are your views as to making a communication to the Chinese G[overnment]t?

L. M.

I see no real necessity for it; but on the other hand there can be no harm in it, as we have decided to work with China or through China in regard to Tibet; and therefore recognize her suzerainty. As the Russians appear to wish to make such a communication we can certainly agree. We have already jointly with the Russians enquired at Peking as to the boundaries of Tibet, and we are to approach the Chinese Gov[ernment] formally in regard to prohibition of scientific missions into Tibet. This might be done at same time.

F. A. C.

I think that the paramount consideration is secrecy at present—if texts are communicated it is sure to come out and then we should have to publish.

On the other hand, we have already told Geoffray something and we should certainly inform the Japanese of the gist of the agreements as soon as maybe.

If the Russian G[overnment]t agree to the above (supposing you approve) we might then draw up a telegram from MacDonald and instruct Bertie to make a verbal comm[unicatio]n to M. Clemenceau.

L. M.

The Japanese Ambassador communicated to us the text of the Japanese agreement with Russia. He should be told confidentially the substance of ours; he practically knows it already from conversation with me; he might also be told that the whole will be published very soon.

E. G.

[ED. NOTE.—Tel. No. 80 of September 5 to Sir Claude MacDonald directed him to explain the Agreement verbally to Japan. A telegram No. 100 of September 6 to Sir F. Bertie directed that explanations should be given to France, and a similar one was sent for the information of the Amir of Afghanistan. For the latter's subsequent attitude, v. ch. XXVII, pp. 574-7, and *Ed. note.*]

Sir C. Hardinge to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nico,

Kimbolton, September 4, 1907.

I have received this morning three letters from you for which I thank you greatly, especially for the personal line which you wrote.

I agree with you in thinking the conclusion of this Russian Convention a most important and far-reaching business which will, I believe, be productive of the most beneficial results to us in the future. It has been the greatest pleasure to me to cooperate with such an old friend as you in a matter of which the realisation has been my dream for the last four years. I have been so imbued with the importance of an agreement with Russia that it was one of the reasons which induced me to give up the Embassy at St. P[etersburg] since I felt that I could do more by impressing my views on people at home, and I promised both Lamsdorff and the Emperor that I would do my level best to bring it about. It seems to me hardly credible that it is now done, but it is a great joy to think of it as being done. We have now to see that it is carried out and I am confident that in this Isvolsky will show as much loyalty as he has shown during the negotiations.

I received this morning a letter from the King in which there was the following passage which I am delighted to send on to you:—

“I was delighted to get Grey’s and Nicolson’s cypher telegrams last night, telling me that the Anglo-Russian Convention had been signed at St. Petersburg.

It must be a great relief to your and Grey’s minds, and Nicolson deserves the *greatest* praise for having carried out these most difficult negotiations with such skill and perseverance. When you write to him please tell him how deeply I feel it. These last negotiations and the part he played last year at Algeciras place him in the front rank of our Diplomatsists.”

I have replied to him this morning saying that the F[oreign] O[ffice] cordially agree with his appreciation of your services. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours ever,

CHARLES HARDINGE.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

⁽²⁾ [The closing sentences of the letter are of no importance.]

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

(No. 457.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 4, 1907.

R. September 16, 1907.

The Acting Minister for Foreign Affairs, Monsieur Goubastoff, gave me the day before yesterday a Draft of the communication which the two Governments might make to the Persian Government explanatory of the agreement concerning Persia. I had the honour to telegraph the full text in my Telegram No. 180 of the 2nd instant,⁽¹⁾ and I beg leave to transmit copy of the document. It told Monsieur Goubastoff that as soon as I received your views I would let him know their tenour without delay, so that the Representatives at Tehran might receive the necessary instructions. It was, I added, of great importance that nothing should appear in the public press, by indiscretion, intentional or unintentional, until the Persian Government had received the communication, and above all before the Ameer had received from the Govern-

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 578–9, No. 518.]

ment of India the substance of the Afghan Convention. This latter condition was most essential.

His Excellency said that he had understood from Monsieur Isvolsky that the "Novoe Vremya" might receive an outline of the Convention in 8 or 10 days time. I begged that no date should be fixed until I knew when the communication from the Government of India would reach the Ameer. My Government, I said, had telegraphed to ascertain the time which it took for a communication to reach the Ameer, and as I believed the latter was on a tour, this time might have to be extended.

I am, nevertheless, doubtful if I shall succeed in securing that secrecy will be maintained for more than a few days. The Ministry is anxious to propitiate the "Novoe Vremya," a widely read journal, and which of late has been attacking with some asperity the methods of Russian diplomacy. It is for this reason that I trust very shortly to receive your views as to the communication to be made to the Persian Government and also informed as to the date approximately when the Ameer will be in possession of official information in regard to the Convention.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 521.

Proposed Joint Communication to be made to Persian Government by British and Russian Governments.

Les Gouvernements de Russie et de la Grande Bretagne, désireux d'éviter tout motif de conflit entre leurs intérêts respectifs dans certaines régions de la Perse, contiguës ou voisines à la frontière russe d'une part et aux frontières de l'Afghanistan et du Beloudjistan de l'autre, viennent de signer un arrangement amical à ce sujet.

Dans cet accord les deux Gouvernements s'engagent mutuellement à respecter l'intégrité et l'indépendance de la Perse et témoignent qu'ils désirent sincèrement le développement pacifique de ce pays, aussi bien que l'établissement permanent d'avantages égaux pour le commerce et l'industrie de toutes les autres nations. Chacun des deux États s'engage en outre à ne pas rechercher de concessions de quelque nature que ce soit dans les régions attenantes ou voisines aux frontières de l'autre; afin de prévenir des malentendus à l'avenir et pour éviter de créer un ordre de choses qui pourrait mettre le Gouvernement Persan dans une situation embarrassante sous un rapport quelconque, les régions susmentionnées sont nettement définies dans l'arrangement. Mentionnant les revenus qui sont affectés au service des emprunts conclus par le Gouvernement Persan à la Banque d'Escompte et de Prêts de Perse et à la Banque Impériale de Perse, les Gouvernements Russe et Anglais reconnaissent que ces revenus seront affectés à l'avenir au même but que par le passé. Les deux Gouvernements s'engagent également, pour le cas d'irrégularités dans l'amortissement ou le paiement des % des emprunts susmentionnés, d'entrer dans un échange de vues amical afin de déterminer d'un commun accord les mesures de contrôle qu'il serait nécessaire de prendre et d'éviter toute ingérence qui ne serait pas conforme aux principes de cet arrangement.

En signant cet arrangement, les deux États n'ont pas perdu de vue pour un seul instant le principe fondamental du respect absolu de l'intégrité et de l'indépendance de la Perse. L'arrangement n'a d'autre but que celui d'éviter toute cause de malentendus entre les Parties Contractantes sur le terrain des affaires Persanes. Le Gouvernement du Schah se convaincra que l'accord survenu entre la Russie et l'Angleterre ne pourra que contribuer de la manière la plus efficace à la sécurité, à la prospérité et au développement intérieur de la Perse.

Veuillez-vous entendre avec votre Collègue d'Angleterre qui sera muni par son Gouvernement des mêmes instructions afin de faire au Gouvernement Persan une communication officielle identique rédigée dans les termes du présent télégramme.

No. 522.

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/825.

(No. 121.)

Sir,

Vienna, D. September 5, 1907.

R. September 9, 1907.

The news of the signature of the Anglo-Russian Agreement has been favourably received by the Vienna Press. Although any criticism of its contents is not yet possible the mere fact that England and Russia have come to an understanding relating, as is generally believed, to the Affairs of Central Asia and Persia, is held to be an event of the greatest political significance and one calculated to still further secure the general peace to which the recent meetings of Sovereigns and leading statesmen have already so largely contributed. . . .⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.

E. GOSCHEN.

⁽¹⁾ [The omitted paragraphs give summaries of Press notices.]

No. 523.

*Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey.*Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward Grey,

Marienbad, September 5, 1907.

M. Iswolsky arrived today in Marienbad to have the honour of lunching with the King. As His Excellency arrived at 12, and luncheon was not till 1 o'clock, I invited him to my hotel and took the opportunity of having some conversation with him. Of course we talked at once of the Convention, which, as I reminded him, had been foreshadowed in a conversation between His Majesty and himself at a lunch at the British Legation in Copenhagen when he and I were colleagues together. I told him that I was sure that it was greatly owing to his tact and conciliatory spirit and to the broadminded views, which he has always displayed in our political talks together at Copenhagen, that this eminently useful work had been brought to a successful conclusion; and I admired the courage and patience which had enabled him to triumph over all the difficulties and opposition which lay in his path. He admitted that the difficulties had been great, and that he had sometimes been almost in despair. He was under the impression that we thought him too German, and he *knew* that the Germans thought him too English, but as a matter of fact he was Russian, and his only idea was to do the best for his country. He said that the idea of the arrangement had at the beginning been most distasteful to Germany, and that it had required all the patience at his command to withstand the continual "hammering" to which he had been subjected from Berlin, and to remain at the same time good friends with Germany. In this he had been much helped by his old colleague, M. de Schoen, who had always done his best to make things as little unpleasant as possible. Alluding to Nicolson, he said that a wiser choice of negotiator could not possibly have been made. He had always been good tempered and friendly, and had never lost patience for a single moment, displaying at the same time political sagacity and insight of the highest order. He had always thoroughly understood and appreciated the difficulties of his (M. Iswolsky's) position in view of the state of Russian internal politics, and had always touched the right note when discords might have been produced by a less sure hand. He congratulated himself that he had to do with a man so eminently qualified in every way to carry on such difficult and delicate

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

negotiations. Returning to the Convention itself, he said that his troubles were by no means over. He was sure that he would be subjected to violent criticism. The liberal party in Russia, to which, as I might remember, he belonged in spirit, was now, and always had been, in favour of an agreement with Great Britain; from them he would receive every support. But the military party and the general staff were to a man against him, and from them and the reactionary party generally he expected an avalanche of criticism as soon as the Convention was published. To him the chief significance of the arrangement was peace in the Far East, and time for the political and military regeneration of the Empire. Talking of the Far East, he said that he had moments of depression when fears would come into his mind lest the zeal of the more distant agents of both countries might outrun their discretion, and so give rise to incidents of an unpleasant nature. Such occurrences were by no means rare in remote districts. He himself was firmly resolved to do all in his power to prevent all cause for friction, and to see that the Convention was carried out not only in the letter, but also in the spirit. He trusted that His Majesty's Government would do the same, and that in any case the greatest patience would be exercised on both sides.

In Persia he anticipated considerable difficulty. The language of the Articles of the Convention dealing with that country had been chosen with the greatest care: nevertheless there were certain clauses which could not fail to be somewhat unpalatable to the Persian Government. Any difficulties which might arise, however, would easily be met if the two Signatory Powers remained firm and united. His Excellency here hinted that he was by no means easy in his mind with regard to German action in Persia. The German Government seemed to him to be too busy there, and to be anxious to gain a footing totally out of proportion to their actual interests. He also gave me to understand that sooner or later he would have to come to some definite arrangement with them with regard to Persian matters. His Excellency added that it had been reported to him that the Germans had been at the bottom of the trouble on the Persian frontier, with a view to stepping in as mediators and so increasing their influence and prestige in Persia. He did not exactly believe this report, but still he could not banish it from his mind, and it made him uneasy.

M. Iswolsky then turned to the European situation. He said that, though the Convention chiefly dealt with the Far East and distant countries, he hoped that it would make its effect felt also nearer Home. He was eminently satisfied with your statements on the subject of Macedonia, and with what he had heard of Sir Charles Hardinge's conversations with Baron d'Aehrenthal, and as long as His Majesty's Government remained in the same mind in which he understood them now to be all would go well. He knew how much you were urged to go forward, and how much pressure was brought to bear on His Majesty's Government in that direction. But he hoped and trusted that you would continue to resist this pressure. Russia was bound to keep well with Austria in the Near East Question, and both countries had to be careful as regards Germany. He had received most satisfactory assurances of support from Prince Bülow, but he felt that that support depended on a thread, and that a too forward and too hasty policy might defeat its own end, and lead to the stiffening of the Sultan's back by Germany and consequent protracted opposition and delay. "As long as we all remain united all will be well, but the slightest sign of want of unity amongst the Powers will have fatal results. So that if you have an opportunity of writing to Sir E. Grey I hope you will beg him not to increase the 'tempo.'"

I asked him how the Judicial Reforms were getting on. He replied that it had been his wish that the two Ambassadors should have presented a *complete* project to their colleagues. This, however, had not been found altogether possible, and some alternative clauses had been introduced in the project. This of course meant a certain delay, which was regrettable but unavoidable.

In speaking of the difficulties and hard work of his post, M. Iswolsky touched

on the preliminary negotiations with regard to the Hague Conference. These, he said, had cost him more anxiety and labour than all his other work put together. He told me that, to his great surprise, he had found that in the matter of the Armaments discussion Baron d'Aehrenthal had been more recalcitrant and more obstinate than Prince Bülow. He said that it had been generally understood that Austria's policy had been more or less dictated from Berlin. All he could say was that if this was true Baron d'Aehrenthal "had greatly exceeded his instructions!" and that at one time, owing to His Excellency's attitude he had almost given up all hope of the Conference assembling at all.

After luncheon M. Iswolsky had a private audience with the King, at the conclusion of which His Majesty presented him with a Grand Cross of the Victorian Order. M. Iswolsky expressed to me afterwards his deep appreciation of this distinction and his high sense of the gracious and kindly reception which had been accorded to him by His Majesty.

Before leaving Marienbad M. Iswolsky said to me that he must give something to the Press. They were clamouring for information as to the Convention in Russia, and some even of the more moderate papers were joining their reactionary contemporaries in abusing him for his silence. I was rather against making any communication, but I admitted that, if it was limited to generalities, there could be no harm in it. We therefore drew up a very vague statement to the effect that the Convention would not be published until after its ratification, but that everyone might rest assured that it contained nothing which could possibly arouse the susceptibilities of any Power whatsoever, that it was designed to eliminate in the future all grounds for misunderstandings between the two countries, and that it thus formed a fresh guarantee for the preservation of the general peace.

I am glad to be able to report that the cure has, as usual, agreed wonderfully with the King, and that His Majesty both looks and is in the very best of health. His Majesty leaves for England to-morrow afternoon.

Yours very sincerely,
W. E. GOSCHEN.

• No. 524.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.

F.O. 871/872.

Foreign Office, September 7, 1907.

Tel. (No. 108.)

D. 3.15 P.M.

Your Tel[egram] No. 246 of Sep[tember] 6.⁽¹⁾

Anglo-Russian Convention.

It is very important to delay publication of any portion until that resp[ectin]g Afghanistan has been comm[unicate]d officially to Amir. This will take about 16 days.

You should concert with your Russian colleague who is receiving similar instructions as to making identic official communication to Persian Gov[ernmen]t in following terms:

"The Gov[ernmen]ts of G[rea]t Britain and Russia desiring to avoid any cause of conflict between their respective interests in certain regions of Persia contiguous with or in the immediate neighbourhood of frontiers of Afghanistan and of Beluchistan or Beluchistan on the one hand, and of Russian frontier on the other, have signed a friendly arrangement on the subject.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. Sir C. Spring-Rice referred in this telegram to the danger of allowing a "long interval to pass between announcement of signature and an explanatory statement." He suggests publication of an official communiqué through Reuter and the Russian Telegraph Agency.]

"In that Agreement the two Governments mutually agree to the strict integrity and independence of Persia, and testify that they sincerely desire the pacific (? development) of that country as well as the permanent establishment of equal advantages for the commerce and industry of all other nations. Each of the two States further engages not to seek concessions of any nature whatsoever in the regions adjoining or in the neighbourhood of the frontiers of the other. In order to prevent misunderstandings in the future, and to avoid creating an order of things which might place the Persian Government in an embarrassing situation in any respect whatever, the above-mentioned regions are clearly defined in the Arrangement. In mentioning the revenues which are affected to the loans concluded by Persian Government with the Discount and Loan Bank and with Imperial Bank of Persia, the Russian and British Governments recognize that these revenues will be in the future affected to the same purpose as in the past. And the two Governments equally engage, in the case of irregularities in the amortization or in the payment of interest of above-mentioned loan, to enter on a friendly exchange of views in order to determine by common agreement the measures of control which it would be necessary to take, and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles of that Arrangement.

"In signing that Arrangement, the two States have not for a moment lost sight of the fundamental principle of the absolute respect of the integrity and the independence of Persia. The Arrangement has no other object than that of avoiding any cause of misunderstanding between the Contracting Parties on the ground of Persian affairs. The Government of the Shah will convince itself that the agreement arrived at between Russia and Great Britain can but contribute in the most efficacious manner to the security, the prosperity, and the ulterior development of Persia."

You should request Persian Gov[ernmen]t to consider this information as confidential until publication here.

If Persian Gov[ernmen]t enquire as to definition of regions adjoining respective frontiers you may communicate following details:—

Russian line starts from Kasr-i-Shirin crosses and includes Isfahan Yezd and Kaphk ending at point on Persian frontier at intersection of Russian and Afghan frontiers.

British line goes from Afghan frontier viâ Gazik, Birjand, Kerman ending at Bunder Abbas.

No. 525.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/925.

(No. 458.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 7, 1907.

R. September 16, 1907.

I called on M. Goubastoff yesterday, and told him that His Majesty's Government accepted the communication which the Russian Government proposed should be made to the Persian Government in regard to the arrangement recently concluded between Great Britain and Russia concerning Persia.⁽¹⁾ I added that you were of opinion that in the event of the Persian Government requesting to be furnished with information regarding the delimitation of the two zones, the Russian and British Representatives at Tehran might supply the desired details.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 578-9, No. 518, and p. 581, No. 521, *encl.*, and *infra*, pp. 589-90, No. 529, *encl.*]

M. Goubastoff said he quite agreed with this suggestion and asked if he could now telegraph instructions to M. de Hartwig. I replied that he could do so, as my Government would send similar instructions to Sir C. Spring-Rice as soon as they heard from me that the Russian Government were in accord.

I told M. Goubastoff that M. Isvolsky had asked me to enquire of His Majesty's Government whether they would have any objection to a joint communication being made to the Chinese Government by the two Representatives of the Arrangement regarding Thibet.⁽²⁾ I had received a telegram from you to say that you agreed with this course and had suggested that the two Representatives might take advantage of the opportunity to approach the Chinese Government in regard to the prohibition of scientific Missions. M. Goubastoff said that two or three days ago the text of the Thibet Arrangement had been despatched by post to the Russian Minister at Peking, where it would arrive in 18 or 20 days, and he had been informed that he would later receive instructions by telegraph. He enquired if Sir J. Jordan would be in possession of the text. I replied that I could not say for certain: but if not, he could doubtless procure a copy from his Russian colleague. I suggested that Monsieur Goubastoff should telegraph to the Russian Minister in a few days to concert with Sir J. Jordan in the sense His Majesty's Government desired, and he promised to do so.

I said there was another point on which I wished to speak to him, and that was in regard to the communications to be made to the Powers. Monsieur Isvolsky had proposed that, apart from the joint communication at Tehran and at Peking, each Government should be at liberty to communicate the Convention to those Powers whom it might select. My Government saw no objection to this on condition that the communication should be verbal and strictly confidential, and that the Powers in general should not be made acquainted with the text of the Convention until a few days before its publication. Monsieur Goubastoff said that the Russian Government would like to give the French Government a general idea of the Convention: and I replied that I was sure that my Government would not object to this course on the conditions above stated. I should like, I said, to add privately that it would be wise to say nothing at Washington as it was most difficult to prevent leakages there. I left with Monsieur Goubastoff a "Notice," of which I have the honour to enclose a copy in regard to the subjects on which I had spoken to him.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 525.

Notice communicated by Sir A. Nicolson to M. Gubastov.

Le Gouvernement Britannique accepte le projet de communication à faire au Gouvernement Persan. Si ce dernier demande à savoir le tracé des zones respectives, les deux Représentants, à l'avis du Gouvernement Britannique, peuvent y donner suite.

Le Gouvernement Britannique est prêt à donner des instructions au Ministre Anglais à Pékin de se concerter avec son Collègue de Russie pour communiquer en commun au Gouvernement Chinois l'arrangement concernant le Thibet. Les deux Représentants pourraient en même temps causer avec le Gouvernement Chinois au sujet de l'interdiction des missions scientifiques.

Le Gouvernement Britannique pense qu'il serait mieux de ne pas communiquer le texte de la Convention aux autres Puissances que quelques jours avant la publication: mais il ne voit pas d'objection à une communication verbale, mais à titre tout à fait confidentiel et secret, du sens de la Convention aux Puissances avec lesquelles les deux Gouvernements ont des relations intimes. Il est très essentiel de prier ces Puissances de garder le secret.

(²) [*v. supra*, p. 579, No. 519, and *min.*]

La communication à l'Amir sera faite prochainement, et comme l'Amir est en tournée dans son pays on estime 16 jours avant que le texte de la Convention soit entre ses mains.

Saint-Petersbourg, le 24 août/6 Septembre, 1907.

No. 526.

Lord Morley to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Arthur,

September 7, 1907.

Your welcome word of friendly salutation (Aug[ust] 30) finds me on Lake Lemán—my first holiday since we got our seals. It just anticipated a letter from me to you, to offer you my very warm congratulations on success in an extremely arduous and complex series of operations. For patience, resource, and tenacity, the sight of your work has been a liberal education to me. I should guess that it is one of the most skilful performances in the records of our British diplomacy.

I fancy that the fight in England will centre on Persia; but on that chapter, the contention will all turn on geographical *details* that will not much stir the Man in the Street, so long as the Gulf is left where it is. And on the general issue, public opinion will cordially approve. As you say, the results will depend on the spirit in which the thing is taken by officers and agents on the ground. We can hardly count on very loyal acquiescence on the part of the "majority" who gave trouble on the night of your serious hitch. And on the other hand, I shall have to keep a very vigilant eye in my diocese.

The Amir is 16 days from Simla, so he has not yet got the communication which we instructed L[or]d Minto to make to him. I hope he will not be troublesome, but he may be *slow*.

We owe you a great debt,—I mean the country. Grey,—and perhaps I for the moment,—have respectable characters with the directing classes. So I am in good heart.

Yours very sincerely,
JOHN MORLEY.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

No. 527.

Sir F. Bertie to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/925.

(No. 497.) Secret.

Sir,

Paris, D. September 9, 1907.

R. September 10, 1907.

I showed to the President of the Council this morning a summary of the Anglo-Russian Convention signed on the 31st ultimo.

Monsieur Clemenceau promised to keep secret the information which I had given him and he said that he thought that it was very satisfactory to have settled the questions with which the Convention dealt particularly that of Persia as it cleared the ground for a discussion of the question of the Bagdad Railway and of the Persian Gulf which latter would really be the important one if it were raised.

I observed to His Excellency that our policy in regard to the Persian Gulf had been publicly declared by both political parties in England, and if any Power showed an inclination to oppose our interests as thus publicly defined it would mean that that Power desired to seek a quarrel with us.

I have, &c.
FRANCIS BERTIE.

MINUTE.

Sir F. Bertie was justified in saying what he did, but as we are shortly going to publish a declaration about the Persian Gulf, we need not say anything more meanwhile.⁽¹⁾

E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [The declaration as to the Persian Gulf was published on September 26, with the text of the treaty. It is printed *supra*, pp. 501-2, No. 455.]

No. 528.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Tehran, September 10, 1907.

F.O. 371/372.
Tel. (No. 252.)

D. 1.30 P.M.
R. 5 P.M.

I am informed that opposition to agreement would be much counteracted if the two Powers would consent to join Persia in asking adherence of other Powers to clause respecting independence etc as this would be regarded as pledge of good faith and proof that we mean principles in question to be part of public law and not subject to the will of two Powers.

(Sent to India.)

No. 529.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/373.
(No. 199.)
Sir,

Gulahek, D. September 13, 1907.
R. September 30, 1907.

I have the honour to state that on receipt of your telegram No. 108 of the 7th instant,⁽¹⁾ relative to the Anglo-Russian agreement, I called on the Russian Minister with a view to drawing up an identic note, in the terms of your instructions, for confidential communication to the Persian Government.

Monsieur de Hartwig had received a telegram from his Government containing instructions as to the terms of the note. His Chancery had been unable to decypher it and I accordingly gave him a copy of the text as telegraphed by you.

As some delay would have been caused by a further reference to St. Petersburg, which we were both anxious to avoid in view of the prevailing excitement caused by the news of the signature of the convention, he agreed to send in a note in Persian (translation enclosed) which was drawn up by Abbas Kuli Khan and the Oriental Secretary of the Russian Legation, in the terms of your instruction.

I suggested two slight alterations to which he agreed, and which, I trust, will meet with you[r] approval. The first was the insertion of a clause relative to concessions. We thought it advisable to make a reference to the fact that foreign concessions were forbidden by the constitution without the consent of the Assembly, and we have consequently, in our note, inserted the proviso "if the Persian Government agrees to foreign concessions at all." The second had reference to the arrangement in the eventuality of the non-payment of the interest on English and Russian loans. We

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, pp. 584-5, No. 524.]

thought it better to avoid using the word "control" which might have been misunderstood, and we consequently agreed on a wording which alluded to the measures to be taken according to international law for safeguarding the interests of creditors.

We propose to inform the Foreign Minister that he is at liberty to explain to the Assembly, which is pressing for information, that the two Governments have communicated an explanatory memorandum setting forth the general objects of the agreement, and that the text will be confidentially communicated when it is received.

I informed Monsieur de Hartwig that I had heard that the popular leaders desired, as a pledge of good faith, that the adhesion of other Governments should be obtained. We both agreed that, as the arrangement would be no doubt officially communicated to the great Powers of Europe, it would be advisable to take advantage of this formality in order to enable the Persian Government to assure the public that the clause in the preamble, as to the independence and integrity of Persia, and freedom and equality of trade and commerce, was concurred in by other European Nations, and could be therefore regarded as containing a principle accepted by all the Nations of the world. It might even be possible to associate the Persian Government itself in the formal communication. I ventured to telegraph to you on the subject which appears to me to be of some importance if we wish to avoid arousing popular opposition in this country to the agreement we have concluded.

I venture to add that the opposition excited in China and in Morocco to the recent agreements concerning those countries has not passed without notice from the Persian press, and that it may possibly be thought advisable by the English and Russian Governments to take into consideration local feeling and the *amour propre* of a sensitive people in making their final arrangements with regard to this country.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

Enclosure in No. 529.

Translation of joint note addressed by British and Russian Legations to Persian Government.⁽²⁾

F.O. 371/378.

September 11, 1907.

The Governments of Great Britain and Russia, desiring to avoid any cause of conflict between their respective interests in certain regions in Persia contiguous to, or in the immediate neighbourhood of, [the] frontiers of Afghanistan and Baluchistan, on the one hand, and the Russian frontier, on the other hand, have signed a friendly agreement on the subject.

In that agreement the two Governments mutually agree to the strict integrity and independence of Persia and testify that they sincerely desire the pacific development of that country as well as the permanent establishment of equal advantages for commerce and industry of all other nations. Each of the two States further engages, in case the Persian Government grants concessions to foreigners, not to seek concessions adjoining, or in the neighbourhood of, the frontiers of the other. In order to prevent misunderstandings in future and to avoid creating an order of things which might place the Persian Government in an embarrassing situation in any respect whatever, the above-mentioned regions are clearly defined in the arrangement. In mentioning the revenues which are affected to the loans concluded by the Persian Gov[ernmen]t with the Discount and loan Bank and the Imperial Bank of Persia, the Russian and British Governments recognize that these revenues will be in future affected to the same purpose as in the past and the two Governments equally engage in the case of irregularities in the amortization or in the payment of interest of the above-mentioned loans to enter on a friendly exchange of views in order to determine by common

⁽²⁾ [Printed in *A. & P.* (1912-18), CXXII, (Cd. 6077), pp. 51-4, and *B.F.S.P.*, Vol. 102 (1918), pp. 906-7.]

agreement the measures which, in conformity with the law of Nations, it would be necessary to take *in order to safeguard the interests* of the creditors and to avoid all interference which would not be in conformity with the principles of that arrangement.

In signing that arrangement the two States have not for a moment lost sight of the fundamental principle of absolute respect of the integrity and independence of Persia. The arrangement has no other object than that of avoiding any cause of misunderstanding between the contracting parties on the ground of Persian affairs. The Government of the Shah will convince himself that the agreement arrived at between Russia and Great Britain can but contribute in the most efficacious manner to the security of the prosperity and the ultimate development of Persia.

[*ED. NOTE.*—On September 4, Sir C. Spring-Rice had sent a previous explanatory letter to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs. He reported this in his despatch No. 202 of September 18, *infra*, pp. 590-2, No. 530, but did not send a copy of the actual communication. The text was, however, published at the time in the Persian press and was reprinted in E. G. Browne: *The Persian Revolution* (1910), pp. 190-2, where the date is given as September 5. As the result of a debate in the House of Commons on December 14, 1911 (*Parl. Deb., 5th Ser.*, Vol. 32, p. 2600), inquiries were made by the Foreign Office and a copy of the letter obtained (F.O. 4266/4266/12/84). In a debate in the House of Commons on February 21, 1912, Sir E. Grey stated that the letter was an unofficial communication, and that Sir C. Spring-Rice "regarded it as so unofficial that he did not send it home at the time, and that is why I never saw it." (*Parl. Deb., 5th Ser.*, Vol. 34, pp. 672-3.)]

No. 530.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/373.

(No. 202.)

Sir,

Gulahek, D. September 18, 1907.

R. September 30, 1907.

For some time past, owing to rumours of the impending conclusion of an Anglo-Russian agreement respecting Persia, there has been some excitement in political circles here. The reassuring statements made by yourself and Monsieur Isvolsky to the Mushir ul Mulk do not appear to have been known. I communicated to the Foreign Minister the sense of those statements of which you had been good enough to inform me: but he does not appear to have given them publicity.

On the 2nd instant it was rumoured in the town that the agreement had been signed on August 31st, and it was added that the two Powers had agreed to divide Persia into spheres of influence and that intervention would take place immediately.

I had taken for granted that I should have been informed either by you, Sir, or by Sir A. Nicolson of the signature of the agreement and therefore stated in reply to inquiries that I had had no information of the signature, which I accordingly did not believe had taken place, and that in any case there could be no question of a division of Persia, or of intervention. In order to put a stop to such rumours I again communicated in writing to the Minister for Foreign Affairs a statement of the assurances made by the two Governments to the Shah's special envoy: and I took measures to make this statement generally known.

On the 2nd instant Monsieur de Hartwig informed me that he had received the official notification of the signature and that the two Legations would receive instructions by messenger as to the manner of the communication to the Persian Government. We agreed that in the present state of public opinion a long delay would be inadvisable in view of the growing excitement, as to which we had both received abundant evidence. We informed our Governments accordingly.

On September 4th I received from the Foreign Office the formal notification of the signature. In the meantime although public opinion should, as it would seem, have been fully occupied by the murder of the Attabek, and the formation of a new Government, the question of the Anglo-Russian agreement was discussed in the Majlis and in the secret societies, and according to the information which reached me from various quarters, the comments generally made were hostile to the two Governments and generally of a very virulent character, especially against England who was regarded as having sold Persia to Russia and as having betrayed the cause of Persian independence. In view of the impotence of the Government and the general state of disorder which prevails in the country, I considered that energetic measures were necessary in order to put a stop, if possible, to the growing excitement.

I called on a gentleman connected with the political societies who had been deputed to interrogate Mr. Churchill as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government.

He said that his friends had been accustomed to look to England for sympathy and support, and that they were convinced that England was vitally interested in the maintenance of Persian power. The news of the conclusion of the agreement was a great blow to them. However disguised, it meant that Russia was given a free hand in the North, that is over the seat of Government, and that England had definitely withdrawn her opposition to Russian aggression in return for a share of the spoil. This meant for Persia a hopeless situation: she had no means of resistance and would have to yield once and for all to Russian control.

I explained to him at length the nature and objects of the agreement: that you had elaborately discussed its provisions with the Mushir ul Mulk,⁽¹⁾ that it secured the formal recognition of the independence and integrity of Persia, and the principle of the open door, and that it contained a provision that neither party should attempt to obtain concessions in the frontier provinces injurious to the other. I pointed out that the agreement was but one of many, all couched in similar terms, and all aiming at the maintenance of the *status quo* in Asia, and a final conclusion of the policy of aggression which had so long been pursued by the European nations, with such deplorable results both to themselves and to the Asiatic peoples. I said that there was nothing in the agreement to wound the susceptibilities of the Persian people and that agreements of a somewhat similar character had been made by the Great Powers with regard to some smaller European nations, which had had the happiest results. I urged that if Persia took advantage of the new situation created by the agreement, she would be able henceforth, without fear of interference, to devote herself to the task of reform and progress.

He listened with attention and promised to repeat what I had said, but he added that the Assembly would expect to be consulted.

I said that I had just heard from you that a confidential communication should be immediately made by the two Legations to the Persian Government explaining the provisions of the agreement and that the actual text, as soon as it was received, would be confidentially communicated to the Persian Minister for Foreign Affairs who would no doubt consult the secret committee of the Assembly. It was the duty, I said, of the leaders of public opinion to explain to the people that until the text of the agreement was known they should reserve their judgment, and above all it was essential that nothing should be done or said to inflame public resentment against foreigners, as any attack on them would lead to those very consequences which we all wished to prevent.

He assured me that the popular leaders were fully aware of the danger, but that they were deeply imbued with the distrust of Russia, and that their confidence in England had received a rude shock. I asked him if he thought that England had done a disservice to Persia in securing a formal recognition of her independence and integrity and whether England would have done more for the popular cause in

(¹) [*cp. supra*, pp. 474-5, No. 427.]

refusing to negotiate with Russia, in openly encouraging the popular movement, and in thus giving Russia a pretext—and more than a pretext—for interfering by force of arms. Russia had, I firmly believed, been actuated throughout the negotiations by the determination not to intervene by force: and this was mainly due to the abstention by England from any form of interference. Finally the agreement had been concluded and Persia was relieved for ever from the fear of foreign intervention as long as she respected the lives and the properties of foreign residents.

With regard to the special arrangements made between England and Russia, their object was to avoid for ever all causes of friction arising from the mutual fear that each would use undue influence in Persia to secure advantages detrimental to the other. This competition had had the most deplorable effect on Persia: it had been the cause of the loans which had ruined her finances, and of the diplomatic pressure which had impaired her independence. I hoped it would be now at an end.

He replied that if things were as I stated the agreement would be an advantage to Persia. But I knew, he said, that the Persian people were now determined to grant no further concessions to foreigners. I said if this were so the agreement as to concessions would fall to the ground and be no longer necessary, but we had to consider the possibility of a breakdown of the new institutions and a return to the old system. For that event we had provided, by binding ourselves not to ask for concessions injurious to each other. There was nothing in that offensive to the Persian people. He agreed, but said that it would be wise to insert a clause to the effect that “*if foreign Concessions were given, the two Governments would not ask for concessions mutually injurious.*”

He then said that his friends were agreed that although a guarantee by England and Russia was of undoubted value, it would be of more value, and inspire more confidence, if other Powers were invited to adhere to it. It was the intention of the Persian people, or at any rate of his friends, to demand the recognition of these principles, not by the two Powers alone, but by all the Great Powers of Europe. He hoped that no obstacle would be placed in the way of this project by the English Government. I have informed you of this suggestion, which has reached me from many sources, in my telegram No. 252 of the 10th instant.⁽²⁾ The reasons which he urged for making this proposal were mainly based on the popular conviction that a *dual* arrangement between England and Russia could easily be changed from one of non-intervention to one of joint intervention; but that if the adherence of other Powers was invited, this would be regarded as a proof that the clause as to the independence and integrity was not, as was thought, a mere blind, but was seriously intended to be a fundamental principle to be solemnly incorporated in the public law of nations.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 588, No. 528.]

No. 581.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/812.

(No. 203.)

Sir,

Gulahek, D. September 18, 1907.

R. September 30, 1907.

I have the honour to report that the local press is taking up a violent attitude against His Majesty's Government in connection with the conclusion of the *entente* with Russia. I enclose translations by Mr. Smart of articles which have appeared in the “*Hablul-Matin*” of Tehran.⁽¹⁾ Similar articles are appearing in other newspapers. You will observe that Russia is hardly mentioned, and that the articles are directed

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced.]

almost entirely against England. The mention of the fact that Isfahan and Kermanshah are included in the Russian line points to foreign inspiration. No mention has been made of such a provision by any member of this Legation. The Saad-ed-Dowleh, as I have already pointed out is in close connection with the "Hablul Matin" and has strong Russian sympathies. The Court party will of course do their best to irritate public opinion against England, and thus to put an end to the English sympathies of the popular party, and, *per contra*, to alienate the sympathies of England from her former friends.

The task is not a difficult one. It appears quite impossible to convince popular opinion that Russia will ever desist from her designs on Persia and her new liberties. The fact that the liberal Government of liberal England has made an agreement with Russia about Persia is quoted as a proof that there has been a corrupt bargain by which England, for certain practical advantages, abandons Persia to Russian control in spite of all her promises to the contrary, and in spite of the natural sympathy of a people already free for one which is struggling for freedom.

The result of the agreement, as I have had the honour to point out on several occasions, will probably be to create a very strong feeling of indignation against England and Englishmen—far stronger in fact than against Russia, who is not accused of disguising her policy or of ever having seriously pretended to friendship for the Persian people, or a desire for Persian prosperity and independence.

I trust that, on reflection, a different view may be taken, but there can be no doubt as to the present current of public opinion, or as to the fact that England will be held responsible for any action which Russia may take in the future against Persia or in support of the Shah against the popular party. And as England is less an object of fear than Russia, it is probable that Persian irritation will be directed against England as the safer course.

I have, &c.

CECIL SPRING-RICE.

MINUTES.

The annoyance of the Persians at not being able to play off Russia against England any more to their own advantage was to be foreseen but there does not appear to be any cause for alarm at the irritation displayed towards England.

C. H.

And all this was written before the text of the Agreement was known in Persia; we are told it has been well received there.

E. G.

No. 582.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Sir Edward,

September 19, 1907.

I congratulate you on the signature and I hope you are enjoying a well deserved rest. Your difficulties are over for the time. I venture however to warn you that difficulties here may be beginning. It is not necessary after Moroccan experience to point out why. The Persians are beginning an agitation which may be formidable; that is formidable to the English here or who have interests here. There is the further consideration of the effect of the agreement on Mohammedan public feeling here and in Afghanistan. This of course you are prepared for.

Hartwig shares my feelings. He says it is difficult to persuade his government that Persia has changed. They seem to believe that the old state of things

⁽¹⁾ [Grey MSS., Vol. 81.]

continues to exist and that Persian public feeling can be safely ignored because the Persian people are not serious. A child with a match box is not a serious person but he can be a dangerous one. That depends not on the child but on the matches. In this case the matches do burn.

I do not wish to be alarmist but it is impossible to ignore what is happening here; the entire disorganization of government, the feud between Shah and people; the conviction that Russia is secretly on the side of the Shah, and that the Shah is determined to organize disorder throughout the country in order to bring on intervention; the belief that the two European Governments are privy to the plan and have made their arrangements to profit by it.

If we take no measures to safeguard our interests and our people we do not know what may happen at any moment. If we do take such measures we are accused of preparing for annexation and a division of Persian territory with Russia. We are worse off than the Russians because we are not feared as they are and because we are regarded as having betrayed the Persian people. All assurances English and Russian are regarded as so many blinds and it is unfortunately true that though the Russian Government has made the most satisfactory promises and explanations those who are supposed to be in the confidence of Russia and are known to frequent the Russian Legation are the open enemies of the new order of things which the Persians are so proud of and to which they look to cure all the ills of the country. And we are supposed to be accomplices, for our own advantage and for a consideration. . . .⁽²⁾

Yours sincerely,
C. A. SPRING-RICE.

⁽²⁾ [The rest of this letter refers to personal affairs and opinions.]

No. 533.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir C. Spring-Rice.

F.O. 371/872.

Tel. (No. 117.)

(Agreement respecting Persia.)

Your telegram No. 252.⁽¹⁾

Foreign Office, September 14, 1907.

D. 2 P.M.

We would not favour such a course which would give Powers, especially Germany, excuse for interfering in Persian affairs. You should discourage idea, and if approached you should say that a formal Agreement between the two Powers chiefly interested in Persia owing to their geographical position should be ample, and that we should regard such a request from Persian Government as amounting to a slur on our good faith.

Russian Government have promised to instruct Russian Minister to conform his attitude to yours.

⁽¹⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 588, No. 528.]

No. 534.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/872.

(No. 476.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. September 14, 1907.

R. September 30, 1907.

I called on Monsieur Goubastow yesterday and mentioned to him that information had reached Sir C. Spring-Rice that the arrangement which had been

concluded between the Governments of Great Britain and Russia in regard to Persia would be rendered more acceptable to the Persian Government if other Governments were invited to join in the recognition of the integrity and independence of that country. I also gave His Excellency the substance of the reply which you proposed to send to the above suggestion,⁽¹⁾ and left with him an *Aide-mémoire* of which I have the honour to enclose a copy.

Monsieur Goubastow said that he had heard nothing from Monsieur de Hartwig on the subject; and enquired what steps he should take. I said that perhaps he would kindly communicate to Monsieur de Hartwig the substance of the *Aide-mémoire*, and instruct him to shape his attitude on that of Sir C. Spring-Rice. This he said he would do. I pointed out to Monsieur Goubastow that it was desirable to check at once any tendency of the Persian Government to mingle other Governments in the matter of our Arrangement; and it seemed to me that an endeavour on the part of that Government to seek to confirm our engagements as to the integrity of their country by soliciting the endorsement of other Powers was neither courteous nor necessary.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

Enclosure in No. 534.

Aide-mémoire communicated by Sir A. Nicolson to M. Gubastov.

Le Ministre d'Angleterre à Téhéran a raison de croire que l'arrangement au sujet de la Perse serait rendu plus acceptable au Gouvernement Persan si les deux Puissances consentiront à s'associer avec la Perse pour solliciter l'adhésion d'autres Etats à la clause reconnaissant l'indépendance et l'intégrité de ce pays. On pense que cette démarche serait considérée comme un gage de bonne foi et comme une preuve du désir des deux Puissances de faire baser l'intégrité de la Perse sur le droit public et de ne pas la faire dépendre de leur bonne volonté.

Le Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique se propose de faire savoir au Ministre d'Angleterre qu'il doit décourager l'idée ci-dessus énoncée car le Gouvernement Britannique est d'avis qu'une pareille démarche fournirait à d'autres Puissances un prétexte de s'ingérer dans les affaires persanes. Si on s'adresse au Ministre il devrait répondre qu'un arrangement formellement conclu entre les deux Puissances principalement intéressées en Perse, en vue de leur position géographique, devrait constituer un gage suffisant et que le Gouvernement Britannique envisagerait une pareille démarche de la part du Gouvernement Persan comme mettant sa bonne foi en doute.

Le Gouvernement Britannique serait heureux de savoir si le Gouvernement Impérial était disposé d'envoyer des instructions identiques à son Représentant.

St. Pétersbourg, le 31 août/13 septembre 1907.

⁽¹⁾ [v. immediately preceding document.]

No. 535.

King Edward to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾
My dear Nicolson,

*Tulchan Lodge, Advie, Strathspey, N.B.,
September 17, 1907.*

Many thanks for your kind letter just received of 11th Inst[ant].

I am very glad that Sir C. Hardinge delivered my message to you. Nobody congratulates you more sincerely than I do that the successful ending of the most

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

difficult negotiations with the Russian Gov[ernmen]t are now accomplished. The Anglo-Russian Convention is a great triumph for British Diplomacy and the way in which you carried out that most difficult task entitles you to the well merited approval of your Sovereign and Country!

I was much pleased with my conversation with M. Isvolsky at Marienbaud on 5th Inst[ant] and to renew my acquaintance with him.⁽²⁾ He is undoubtedly a very able man and I believe honest and straightforward. He praised you very much and the manner in which you conducted the negotiations with him—rejoicing at the same time that so able a British Ambassador had been appointed to St. Petersburg.

Hoping that you will now get some rest from your labours.

Believe me,

Yours very sincerely,
EDWARD R.

⁽²⁾ [cp. *supra*, pp. 582-4, No. 523.]

No. 596.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

St. Petersburg, September 17, 1907.

F.O. 371/325.

Tel. (No. 192.)

D. 8.12 P.M.

R. 10.30 P.M.

Anglo-Russian Convention.

We propose to exchange ratifications on the 23rd instant, and Russian Government suggest that communication should be made to Great Powers on the 24th instant and publication on the 26th instant.

Minister for Foreign Affairs asks if British Ambassador at Washington could give Russian Ambassador at Washington a copy of Convention for communication to United States' Government, as Russian Ambassador has none, and it would take some time for one to be sent from here. Pray inform me if you approve above dates and procedure.⁽¹⁾

I have asked them to send instructions to Tehran to communicate text on 24th September, and to inform Minister for Foreign Affairs that there are no Secret Articles.

⁽¹⁾ [The procedure adopted by the British Government was to send copies of the agreement by post to Washington with instructions to communicate on the 24th or as soon after as possible. In case the text should not arrive by the 24th, a text was given on that day to the United States' Ambassador at London. A text was given on the same day to Baron Komura. It was sent by post to Rome, Vienna and Madrid. It had already been sent to the British Ambassadors at Paris and Berlin, who were instructed to communicate it on the 24th.]

No. 597.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nicolson,

Foreign Office, September 18, 1907.

I send you a copy of a letter, which you will find interesting.

I can't tell you how much all of us, who have been cognizant of the Russian negotiations admire the way you have handled them. Certainly since I have been at the F[oreign] O[ffice] I can say without qualification that in everything in which you have been engaged, you have made a success. I wish you could be multiplied at will so as to be available at once in every place where there were difficulties.

⁽¹⁾ [Carnock MSS.]

We shall have to keep the Russians up to the spirit of the Agreement in dealing with their local agents.

Cambon said to me yesterday that we had got much the best of the Agreement and on my remarking that it would be criticized in some quarters in this country he said "Those who criticize will do so without knowledge; you have secured a great part of the Persian Littoral, strengthened your position as regards the Gulf, and obtained a recognition of your Protectorate of Afghanistan. The inland of Persia of which the Russians have so much is mountains and desert" or words to that effect.

Y[ou]rs sincerely,
E. GREY.

No. 538.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.C. 371/812.

(No. 488.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. September 24, 1907.

Sir,

R. September 30, 1907.

The Mushir ul Mulk, Persian Minister here, called upon me this afternoon prior to his departure for Tehran. He has been named Minister of Justice in the present Persian Cabinet, but owing to the sudden death of his father, the Mushir ed Dowlah, and the necessity of his attending to his private affairs, he is in doubt whether he will accept the post. He also had, I could see, some misgivings as to whether the present Cabinet would be of long duration.

I asked the Mushir ul Mulk how matters were proceeding in Persia, and he remarked that the great and pressing difficulty was the want of money, and he did not see how the country could emerge from the present crisis unless funds were obtainable. I remarked that, as far as I was able to understand, little or no funds were to be found in the country, and apparently the Assembly was strongly opposed to seeking for a loan outside of Persia. In these circumstances it seemed difficult to see a way out of the dilemma. The Mushir ul Mulk said that the Assembly and the people in general were in fact most strongly opposed to any foreign financial assistance, because loans could only be contracted under onerous conditions, and there was no security that their proceeds would be properly expended. I replied that I perfectly understood the latter objection, but I should have thought that it would have been possible to devise some means whereby the Assembly could exercise control over the mode of expenditure. If, as he said, money was urgently needed, and without money the country would go from bad to worse, I should have thought that a loan of moderate dimensions might offer a solution of the difficulty. So far as we were concerned there was this difficulty. He could well understand that we should not advance any money unless we were assured that it would be properly expended to meet urgent needs; and above all we should most certainly decline to give any assistance unless the Government and the Assembly were to solicit it. I could tell him frankly that the very last thing my Government would desire would be to furnish funds which might be employed in a manner which would facilitate even indirectly a return to the old order of things, and which might lead to a suppression of the rights which the Assembly had acquired. In short we should do nothing which might check or suppress a legitimate popular movement towards a liberal and constitutional régime. We had no desire to intervene in any way in the internal affairs of the country. But I should think that if the Assembly, backed by popular opinion, and urged by public necessity, were to solicit through the Government for the financial assistance of Russia and Great Britain, some means might be found of meeting their wishes. If a loan had to be made it seemed to me that it should be to Russia and Great Britain that Persia should look in preference to other Powers; and though it was possible that the conditions, in present circumstances, would not be particularly easy, still I did not consider that they need be unnecessarily onerous. However these were matters

for the Persians themselves to decide, and he would understand that I was merely speaking academically. The Mushir ul Mulk said he quite agreed with what I had said, and he was fully convinced that Great Britain would never take any steps which would run counter to the popular wishes. He would bear my remarks in mind. I observed that he must understand that we took no sides in the struggle proceeding in Persia; our attitude was strictly one of abstention, so long as British interests were not directly imperilled.

He then asked if he could be informed, confidentially, of the substance of our arrangement with Russia. I told him that a summary of the arrangement had already been communicated to his Government, and I believed that the full text would be handed in to-day to the Persian Ministry for Foreign Affairs. I, therefore, saw no objection to my giving him an outline of the agreement, and I proceeded to do so. He would see that the arrangement was eminently favourable to Persia, and how baseless were the reports that Russia and Great Britain had contemplated a partition of Persia. The two Powers had merely agreed not to annoy each other in certain regions, and the rights and prerogatives of the Persian Government were fully recognized and remained unaffected and undisturbed. It was not correct to speak of "spheres of influence," as by that expression it might appear as if the two Powers wished to restrict the liberty of action of the Persian Government in certain regions, and to exercise influence therein themselves. Nothing of this was meant by the arrangement; and all that had been agreed upon was that the two Powers would abstain from applying to the Persian Government for concessions and privileges in certain districts, so that there should be no clashing of interests and no more rivalries between Russia and Great Britain. To this surely the Persian Government could not object, and indeed they should be gratified at the restraint which each Power had imposed upon itself, and above all on their having solemnly recognized the integrity and independence of Persia.

The Mushir ul Mulk said the arrangement appeared to him thoroughly satisfactory, and he was pleased to think that what he termed "*la politique de bascule*" would have to be abandoned. He proceeded to say confidentially that he sincerely trusted that the Russian Legation would carry out the Arrangement in its spirit as well as in its letter. He considered that for that purpose it was much to be desired that a thorough reorganization should be made of that Legation, and that a new Representative should be sent to Persia to replace M. de Hartwig. The latter was of the Zinovieff school; opposed to all liberal movements, and anxious to keep the Eastern neighbours of Russia in a backward and stationary state. He knew that M. de Hartwig was at heart opposed to the Assembly, and that, through M. Chapsal, he exercised an unfortunate influence over the Shah, in encouraging His Majesty to place no confidence in the Representatives of the people. He considered that so long as M. de Hartwig remained as Russian Representative there was no likelihood of Russia regaining any popularity among or acquiring the confidence of the Persians. He did not himself believe that Russia had in any way changed her traditional policy; and that in a very few years it would be seen that she would be as active in Central Asia as formerly. The war with Japan and her internal troubles had checked her for the moment; but she was rapidly recovering from the effects of the former, and the Government were obtaining the mastery over the latter. In five or at the outside ten years she would be as strong and as enterprising as formerly, and if within that period Persia had not succeeded in becoming a prosperous and independent country under a constitutional régime he considered that his country was irrevocably lost. He regarded Russia as a most dangerous neighbour, and with that fear in his mind he welcomed cordially the arrangement which Great Britain had made as he considered that it did afford some hope that Russia would be more prudent and less disposed to follow an adventurous policy; and it did give some security to Persia.

The Mushir ul Mulk was educated at a Russian University and is a most intelligent man. Although I am well aware that Persians are adepts in concealing

their real sentiments I feel sure that he was speaking in all sincerity when he dwelt at length and with much emphasis on the fears which he held with regard to Russia. I see in the character sketches of the Members of the Persian Cabinet which Sir C. Spring-Rice has forwarded in his despatch No. 204 of the 18th instant,⁽¹⁾ that it is stated that the sympathies of the Mushir ul Mulk are "on the side of Russia." I should hardly be inclined to subscribe to this judging from the few conversations which I have had with him.

I merely replied to the Mushir ul Mulk that I trusted that Persia would never give any just cause for complaint on the part of Russia, and would do all that lay in her power to live in amicable relations with her powerful neighbour.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTE.

Sir A. Nicolson's language was most judicious and right and should be entirely approved.

The comments of the Mushir-ul-Mulk were very much to the point. We must lend no money except on terms approved by the Assembly. I hope Russia will take the same line. If the Assembly is strong enough to arrange for control of the expenditure and asks for a loan from us or Russia, I should be inclined to join in a loan as a means of putting Constitutional Gov[ernment] on its legs in Persia which is the only hope of strengthening Persia; but we should have to consider this with the India Office. I assume that if a loan is asked for it must be more than the £400,000 originally contemplated if it is to do any good.

E. G.

(¹) [Not reproduced.]

No. 539.

Sir C. Spring-Rice to Sir Edward Grey.

Tehran, September 25, 1907.

F.O. 371/372.

D. 7.40 A.M.

Tel. (No. 277.)

R. 12 noon.

Russian Minister and I have communicated Persian part of agreement to Persian Government and have informed them that agreement will be communicated to Great Powers. Russian Minister thought that a written statement that there is no secret clause would be an embarrassing precedent and a communication has been made verbally.

(Sent to India and St. Petersburg.)

MINUTES.

I think a verbal communication as to the absence of secret clauses was enough but the Russian Minister's objection to a written one is rather amusing.

H. N.

The verbal communication was better and the difficulty of making any communication is that the omission of it on future occasions may be taken to imply that secret articles do exist. No doubt in this case the Russians hope that there will be other developments from the Convention indirectly and are not anxious to emphasize its present completeness.

E. G.

No. 540.

Sir F. Lascelles to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

Berlin, D. October 1, 1907.

(No. 427.)

R. October 7, 1907.

Sir,

With reference to my despatch No. 424 of the 27th ultimo, I have the honour to report that the publication of the Anglo-Russian Convention has on the whole

been very favourably received in the German Press. All the papers contain full summaries of the text, and most of them expend a good deal of time and space in trying to decide whether England or Russia derive most benefit from the Convention. It is generally admitted, with satisfaction, that Germany's interests are in no way affected by the terms; in Afghanistan and Thibet she has no concern, and her relations with Persia are purely commercial and can only be improved by an arrangement which advocates the maintenance of the open door in that country.

The semi-official North German Gazette calls attention to the fact that although the Convention is signed by two Powers only, England and Russia, its universal political significance may be estimated from the fact that it will practically remove all existing causes of friction between England and Russia in Central Asia. It has come as no surprise to Germany, as its scope was foreshadowed by the Imperial Chancellor in a speech delivered on November 14th last, and the Convention as now published shows that Prince Bülow was justified in adopting so calm an attitude towards it as [*sic*] that time. Germany has no political aims in any of the countries concerned; and her commercial interests in Persia will in no wise be injuriously affected; on the contrary it is specifically declared that the trade and industry of other nations shall not be impaired. . . .⁽¹⁾

. . . . The commercial world here seem less well satisfied with the Agreement; several papers express their regret and annoyance at the fact that a Convention should have been signed without the participation of Germany between two Powers, who might quite conceivably have settled their differences at the expense of this country; and these papers also regard, or try to regard the portion of the Convention dealing with Persia as a possible menace to the legitimate commercial expansion of Germany in Persia. Thus for instance the Cologne Gazette consoles itself with the thought that in course of time Russian and British trade will trespass upon each other in Persia and will give rise to further friction between the two powers, of which the others, and Germany in particular should be quick to take due advantage; while the Frankfurter Zeitung, going further still, declares that the genesis of the negotiations lies in a period when Anglo-German relations were very bad, and that the Agreement is a child of English diplomacy which has been born too late into the world. The best that Germans can say of it is that it is a superfluous document; Anglo-German relations have improved meanwhile and Germany can regard the Anglo-Russian Convention with greater equanimity than she could last year; provided of course that the two Powers adhere rigidly to the text of the Treaty especially with regard to Persia, and that they allow German trade and industry free play in that country. If Persia were actually partitioned into commercial spheres as a result of this Treaty, Germany could at first do little, but such a development would hardly contribute to the peace of the world which English policy so persistently declares to be its one aim.

I have, &c.

FRANK C. LASCELLES.

MINUTE.

Not very favourable.

C. H.
E. G.

⁽¹⁾ [Further Press summaries follow.]

No. 541.

Sir E. Goschen to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/325.

(No. 133.)

Sir,

Vienna, D. October 4, 1907.

R. October 7, 1907.

On the eve of Monsieur Isvolsky's arrival in Vienna the Austrian press was replete with the most cordial expressions of welcome to His Excellency, and there was scarcely a journal that did not hail his arrival as the finishing touch to the

good work carried out during the past summer by Sovereigns and statesmen in the cause of peace. . . .⁽¹⁾

Since Monsieur Isvolsky has been here I have had but few opportunities of having any serious conversations with His Excellency, as we have both been much occupied, and he has never been more than two days in Vienna at a time. I called upon him today, however, and finding that he had a spare quarter of an hour, we had a short conversation. I told him that as there had been but few comments in the Vienna press on the subject of the agreements between our two countries, and that as the Emperor and Baron d'Aehrenthal had only spoken to me a few words on the subject expressive of their pleasure at the removal of causes of friction in so many parts of the world, I should be glad if he would give me his own impression of how the Agreements had been received in Austro-Hungarian political circles. His Excellency replied that actually his feeling was that, though there had been a remarkable reticence on the subject in the press, the Agreements had made a favourable impression on public opinion in Austria-Hungary. He had gathered this from his conversations with Baron d'Aehrenthal and other Austro-Hungarian statesmen. But he added, my real impression is that our Agreements do not interest them very much, except in so far that they form an additional guarantee for the general peace. About the details they do not seem to care at all, and as a matter of fact Austro-Hungarian statesmen are at this moment far too much interested in the result of the negotiations with Hungary and other internal questions to concentrate their minds on any question of general policy.

That which was far more interesting to his mind than the feeling in Austria-Hungary was the manner in which the Agreements had been received in Germany and Russia.

In the former country, where the Agreements could not be expected to be exactly popular, they had been fairly received by the official world, while the Press, without being, except in a few cases, directly hostile, had written of them in bitter-sweet language which had neither surprised nor irritated him. He had expected worse. On the other hand the tone of the Russian Press had come upon him as a most agreeable surprise. He had made up his mind to have to bear the greatest hostility and opposition, but on the contrary all the articles he had read in papers which he feared the most had, while certainly not particularly friendly, not overstepped the bounds of legitimate criticism. "Of course" he added "I had prepared the way a little, but you who have been in Russia know how little the Government can do to curb the independence of thought which is characteristic of our leading papers."

Monsieur Isvolsky added that naturally he did not anticipate that he would have an easy time during the next few months and that he had probably much criticism and hostility still to bear and to combat: nevertheless he felt greatly relieved by the attitude which the portion of the Press most opposed to his policy had adopted up to the present moment.

I have, &c.

W. E. GOSCHEN.

⁽¹⁾ [Summaries of Press notices follow.]

No. 542.

Mr. Cartwright to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/925.

(No. 95.)

Sir,

Munich, D. October 8, 1907.

R. October 10, 1907.

If one studies the German press with care one cannot help coming to the conclusion that the Anglo-Russian Agreement does not meet with the approval of the leaders of German public opinion. As regards, however, the attitude of the Imperial Government, it is perfectly correct in tone; they desire to maintain the appearance of a

rapprochement with England and they are determined to avoid doing anything which shall unfavourably affect the hearty welcome which it is expected will be extended to the Kaiser when he visits England next month. This is the reason why we find in the "Süddeutsche Reichskorrespondenz" a defence of Monsieur Iswolsky's policy and arguments used to reassure the public as to the harmlessness of this Asiatic Agreement. But the press, usually so docile to such inspiration in matters relating to foreign affairs, on the present occasion will not allow itself to be entirely persuaded and only accepts the Anglo-Russian Understanding with great reserve. It seems to me that since the publication of the text of that Agreement a regular campaign has been started in the newspapers here to criticise and belittle it; this takes the form not of a direct German attack upon the Agreement but of showing by quotations from English, French and Russian newspapers that public opinion in foreign countries condemns this Understanding. As a sample of this method I will mention an article published in a prominent place in the pages of the Munich "Neueste Nachrichten" a few days ago which professes to give the views of Prince Kotchoubey* as they have appeared in the Paris "Eclair." The chief point of the Prince's remarks as brought out in the German newspaper is that in Russian public opinion Monsieur Iswolsky's policy is considered one of timidity and that by putting his signature to the Agreement he has endorsed the renunciation of Russia's natural ambitions in Asia. He is accused of having done this, first, because he has evidently no confidence in the military power of Russia, and in the second place out of servility to the Czar as he is well aware that His Majesty and his family are imbued with Anglophile sentiments.

Some of the South German newspapers, however, do not limit themselves to quoting foreign opinions with regard to the Anglo-Russian Agreement but indulge in direct criticism of it on their own account.

Thus the Stuttgart "Schwäbische Merkur" remarks that even in England the Anglo-Russian Agreement does not meet with universal approval. These people who are well informed are fully aware that treaties, especially those with Russia, are not intended to last very long. The cause of the little confidence entertained in international political circles as to the durability of Treaties with Russia lies in the fact that the Russian Government is one of those which have little cohesion in themselves. Russia possesses administrative Departments but not a unified Administration; there are Ministers but no responsible Cabinet exists and no one can speak authoritatively in the name of the whole Government. The Minister at the head of each administrative Department recognises only the Czar as his superior and remains absolute in his own Department but outside of it he has no influence or power. Strictly speaking one can never say that "Russia" has concluded a Treaty but only that the Minister for Foreign Affairs has within his restricted powers put his signature to a document which does not in any inevitable way bind the Czar or any of the other Ministers. The Representatives of foreign countries when concluding Agreements with the Russian foreign Minister, can never feel certain that they have obtained the real assent of the Czar to such a document. . . .⁽¹⁾

I have, &c.

F. CARTWRIGHT.

* A bitter Anglophobe.—C. H.

⁽¹⁾ [Summaries of Press notices follow.]

[ED. NOTE.—For the German attitude generally to the Anglo-Russian *Entente* before and after August 31, 1907, v. G.P. XXV, I, ch. 183.]

Sir J. Jordan to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 971/382.

(No. 482.)

Sir,

Peking, D. October 14, 1907.

R. November 30, 1907.

In my despatch No. 470 of the 28th ultimo,⁽¹⁾ I had the honour to report the communication to the Wai-wu Pu by my Russian colleague and myself of the Anglo-Russian Arrangement respecting Tibet of the 31st August last and the steps which we had taken to give effect to our instructions on the subject of the prohibition of Scientific Missions.⁽²⁾

Mr. Liang Tun yen, the Minister to whom the Draft Note inviting the co-operation of China in enforcing the prohibition and requesting a definition of the limits of Tibet was handed, called upon me in connection with other questions on the 4th instant and after leaving sent me the enclosed Memorandum with a private Note explaining that he had forgotten to deliver it personally at our interview. A copy was sent with no covering communication to my Russian Colleague on the following day.

The Memorandum, which is the Wai-wu Pu's reply to our Draft Note, states that China has not in the past permitted foreigners to travel in Tibet and that she will adhere to this course in the future. No change, it is added, has been made in the limits of Tibet and the old limits should be regarded as authoritative. The Board considers that there is no necessity for a definition of them and no need for a formal communication on the subject.

The substance of this Memorandum was communicated to you in my Telegram No. 175 of the 5th instant⁽¹⁾ and since then I have had the honour to receive your Telegrams Nos. 107 and 108⁽²⁾ in which you informed me of the exchange of views which had taken place between His Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg and the Acting Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs and stated that you did not propose to pursue the question further with the Chinese Government.

My Russian Colleague and I both agree that no useful purpose would be served by again approaching the Wai-wu Pu on the subject. As their reception of the recent Franco-Japanese Agreement showed, the Chinese Government are very sensitive at present in matters of this kind, and there is no reason to doubt that they will maintain in principle the policy they have pursued in the past of excluding foreign travellers from Tibet, although the weakness of their administrative control on a long and little known frontier line may render the strict enforcement of this policy a matter of extreme difficulty in practice.

I have, &c.

J. N. JORDAN.

Enclosure in No. 548.

Memorandum respecting Prohibition of Scientific Missions to Tibet.

(Translation.)

Your Excellency recently handed us the draft of a Note to the effect that Great Britain and Russia had decided to permit no scientific mission to proceed into Tibet for a period of three years without the mutual consent of both Governments, and inviting the Chinese Government also to do what lies in their power to prohibit the entry of scientific missions into Tibet for a similar period of three years; and also requesting the Imperial Government to define the limits of Tibet.

The Board has the honour to state that China has not hitherto permitted any

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

⁽²⁾ [Not reproduced.]

foreigners of any description whatever to travel in Tibet, and must still continue to pursue this course. As regards the limits of Tibet, the Board has further the honour to state that no change has ever been made in them, and the old limits should be regarded as authoritative. There is no necessity to send a definition of them. Nor is there any need for a Note on this subject.

No. 544.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/827.

(No. 581.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. October 21, 1907.

R. October 28, 1907.

Baron Motono, the Japanese Minister, called on me today after his return from a leave of absence. He had spent a few weeks in Paris and a few days at The Hague. He said he had been struck, when in Paris, at finding in certain financial circles a desire to come to a thoroughly friendly understanding with Germany, and that among other financial personages who were not so eager in that direction there was considerable uneasiness on that score. The former, he said, were principally members of large Jewish houses, while the latter, who were not of that persuasion, were afraid that in any understanding with Germany the latter Power would gain all the advantages. At the same time there was the great bulk of the French public to be considered who were not disposed to move in the direction indicated: and the unwillingness to adopt the quotation of German stocks on the Paris Bourse showed that even in the financial world the movement towards an understanding had not made great progress. He believed that in German financial circles a movement in the same direction was being advocated, and that with time it might become more active. At The Hague he had been informed that Russia had on several occasions joined hands with Germany and Austria-Hungary, and that there seemed to have been a compact between these three Powers, to oppose British proposals. This led Baron Motono to ask himself whether the future policy of Russia might not be to act cordially with the two above-mentioned Powers and whether we might not witness an evolution towards a general continental understanding to which France might gradually gravitate, and from which Great Britain might be excluded.

I told Baron Motono that, in my opinion, Monsieur Isvolsky would be very cautious in subscribing to any formal and binding engagements with Germany; and I understood indeed that he was indisposed to do so. Still I did foresee the possibility that in future Russian foreign policy, in so far as regards Europe, would be to a great extent inspired from Berlin. There were, to my mind, two facts which would hinder Monsieur Isvolsky from endeavouring at the present moment to bind himself absolutely to Berlin and Vienna. In the first place there was the French alliance, which, however irksome and indeed distasteful it might be in certain influential circles, had perforce to be maintained; and, secondly, the Russian Press, generally speaking, was opposed to identifying Russian policy either with Germany or Austria-Hungary: and the Press exercised a great influence over Monsieur Isvolsky personally. He was singularly sensitive to press criticisms. Still it was equally a fact that a close understanding with Germany and Austria Hungary had many powerful advocates: in the Court, the higher bureaucracy and possibly in some military circles. It would be interesting to see in what frame of mind Monsieur Isvolsky returned from his stay abroad, as he had had the opportunity of personally conversing with the principal sovereigns and statesmen in Europe. My impression was that we must be prepared for a cautious, but none the less decided, tendency towards very intimate relations with Berlin, and a desire to follow advice and guidance emanating from that capital. My impression was that Monsieur Isvolsky

would feel that he owed something to Berlin; and that having concluded an Agreement with Great Britain, which as he himself had told me could not be precisely pleasing to Germany, he would consider that he must now, in a sense, make amends, and while being perfectly loyal towards the French alliance and scrupulous in the execution of the Anglo-Russian Convention, he might win the favour of Germany by his action in many matters which did not directly come within the scope of the above-mentioned instruments. This would require some skill and adroitness, but to my mind M. Isvolsky was exceptionally skilful and adroit; and it would be of great interest to follow the developments of Russian diplomacy in the near future.

Baron Motono enquired whether all this might not eventually lead to what he had foreshadowed in the earlier part of the conversation, and that Great Britain might hereafter find herself isolated, which he believed was the great aim of Germany before she entered on what appeared to him the inevitable struggle with Great Britain for maritime supremacy, which as long as it remained in the hands of the latter Power blocked the way to the attainment of the ultimate goal of German world policy.

I admitted that this was quite possible: and that in the near or far future Great Britain would have to rely solely on her own unaided resources if she had to wage a struggle for commercial and maritime supremacy with Germany as in the past she had been forced to contend with Holland, Spain and France. Still as regards the immediate and narrower issues, I fully anticipated that both Germany and Austria Hungary would achieve a considerable control over the tendencies of Russian European policy; and that in this Monsieur Isvolsky would take care that no ostensible ground would be afforded to France to complain, while as regards Great Britain the settlement of matters in Central Asia need not be disturbed. As to Persia there might be some need of watchfulness on our part: as it was in that quarter that the influence of Germany on Russian policy might make itself unpleasantly felt.

I feel I should apologise for reporting the substance of a conversation with the Japanese Minister which was necessarily of an academical character; and in which I fear I have principally recorded my own observations: but as regards European affairs I think that we may witness in the near future some interesting developments of Russian policy, and I have therefore ventured to trouble you with some of my appreciations of the situation as viewed from this standpoint.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

MINUTES.

This is a very interesting despatch partly on account of the fact that Baron Motono has never been known, since he came to St. Petersburg, to commit himself to any opinion on any important political question.

He considers that we must be prepared for a continental coalition against Great Britain and, eventually, for war with Germany.

H. N.

Oct. 28, 1907.

R. P. M.

The possibility of Great Britain's isolation before a European coalition seems to be a new idea to Baron Motono. The French Entente, the Russian rapprochement and our alliance with his own country do not appear to have impressed him!

L. M.

The possibility of our isolation in Europe is at present somewhat remote. Till five years ago our position had for sometime been one of complete isolation, and yet at our worst moments during the Boer war it was found impossible to make a combination against us. I hope the developments of Russian foreign policy in the near future may show themselves in the Near East, where it will not be easy for Russia and Germany to work together.

C. H.

Russia needs a period of recuperation and for this it is necessary for her to be on as good terms as possible with every body; she is assured of this with France by her alliance; she wants to secure it with Germany by a conciliatory policy.

It is true that we have passed safely through a period of isolation a few years ago, but we might not do so a few years hence, if the German fleet was much stronger, or at any rate our power to do so might be put to the test.

The strength of Germany's position is her power to frighten or overawe her neighbours in Europe, however well disposed they may be to us.

E. G.

No. 545.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 871/327.

(No. 582.)

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. October 23, 1907.

R. October 28, 1907.

His Majesty the Emperor did me the honour to receive me in private audience today at Peterhof. His Majesty at once mentioned the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention which he said had afforded him the greatest pleasure, and that he felt that it was a matter for congratulation that all differences, and possibilities of differences, between the two countries had been laid at rest. He observed that I had been obliged to pay a hasty visit to London at one stage of the negotiations, but that he quite understood that it was far better to discuss matters personally with my Government than over the telegraph wire, and that the results had proved that the step had been a wise one. I told His Majesty that I considered that both sides owed a debt to him for the sympathetic interest which he had always taken towards a satisfactory issue of the negotiations, and I could add that His Majesty the King had been much gratified that the Agreement had been reached. At certain moments I had had doubts if an Agreement would be reached but the goodwill on both sides had overcome all difficulties. We could now, I trusted, efface from the slate all likelihood of trouble between the two countries.

It was also satisfactory to note that public opinion in both countries had, generally speaking, accepted the Convention with very good grace, and I had every hope that the relations would henceforth be cordial and intimate. His Majesty said that he had been specially pleased with the reception accorded to the Convention, and that he looked forward also to the establishment of thoroughly friendly feelings.

I then mentioned to His Majesty that General Sir J. French had paid a short visit to St. Petersburg, and that he had much regretted not to have had an opportunity of presenting his respects to His Majesty; but that he had been most courteously welcomed by all the Russian Authorities who had rendered him every possible service. His Majesty said that he was sorry he had not been at St. Petersburg to receive the General, whose acquaintance he remembered to have made some years ago at Aldershot. He was pleased to hear that the General had been well received and that he had enjoyed his visit. I remarked that some absurd fantastical rumours had appeared in the papers as to General French's mission here being of a politico-military character, in connection with a military convention in regard to Persia and other wild schemes. It was needless to remark that the General had come here in a purely private capacity, and also to convey a friendly message from His Majesty the King to his Russian Dragoon Regiment. His Majesty said that he paid no attention to the ridiculous reports which appeared from time to time in the press; and he was pleased to hear that the General had seen the King's Regiment.

I told His Majesty that I had had the pleasure recently of a conversation with Monsieur Stolypin and that I had found His Excellency hopeful as to the future. So far as I could judge there was a sensible improvement in the general situation, though what could be described as simple brigandage appeared to be fairly active still. His Majesty replied that it was an undoubted fact that matters had improved, and he

considered that people were becoming weary of continued political agitation; as to the brigandage, his Government must suppress that with a stern hand, and he had impressed on Monsieur Stolypin that simple murderers and robbers must be dealt with unrelentingly. He hoped that the next Duma would act reasonably and work more than talk; and that it would succeed in passing some useful laws. His Majesty made a passing allusion to the Hague Conference, which he said had not been without some satisfactory results. He had, he confessed, not had time to read all the voluminous reports which he had received, but he would study carefully the final Act and the conventions. The conference had lasted a very long time, but its labours had not been fruitless.

The conversation then turned on matters of passing interest, and of no political character. On my taking leave of His Majesty he was pleased to say that it had given him much pleasure to receive me, as he had desired to express personally the sincere pleasure he had experienced at the successful and satisfactory termination of the negotiations.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 546.

Sir A. Nicolson to Sir Edward Grey.

F.O. 371/327.

(No. 570.) Confidential.

Sir,

St. Petersburg, D. November 14, 1907.

R. November 25, 1907.

I called on M. Isvolsky yesterday on his return from abroad and had some conversation with him on affairs in general. His Excellency said that he feared that the situation in Persia was likely to cause some trouble: and he asked me what were my impressions. I said that it was exceedingly difficult to form any opinion as to the probable issue of the present imbroglio, as the situation appeared to change every forty-eight hours. At one time there were rumours of plots against the Shah and as to the danger of his position; and shortly afterwards His Majesty appeared to have established friendly relations with the Assembly while the press published inflammatory articles against foreigners. It was clear that there was a most troubled condition of affairs in Persia, closely resembling a state of anarchy. It seemed to me that, in these circumstances, the wisest course would be to wait and watch events, and to avoid any interference in internal affairs.

M. Isvolsky remarked that there was also the question of the Turco-Persian frontier,⁽¹⁾ and he thought that this was a difficult problem, as if the Russian and British Governments made no serious efforts to procure the withdrawal of the Ottoman troops from Persian territory it might appear to the Persians that the integrity of their country was not in reality a matter of great interest to the two Powers, although it had been formally mentioned in the Convention.

I replied that this might doubtless be the case, and I believed that my Government were quite alive to the necessity of intervening seriously in the question, but there was some doubt whether the present moment was a favourable one. The two Ambassadors at Constantinople considered that the time had not yet arrived for approaching the Sublime Porte, and my Government were awaiting the views of the Russian Government on the subject. His Excellency said that he expected to hear from M. Zinovieff very shortly, and would let me know as soon as possible the opinion of the Russian Government. The Sublime Porte might refuse to admit even the presence of the Consuls at the meetings of the Commission—and what then? I said that, in my opinion, it might be well to first allow the Commission an opportunity of dealing with the frontier—the results would in all probability be nil: and then the two Governments

(1) [*cp. supra*, pp. 510–1, No. 464.]

might demand that Delegates from both Powers should assist in demarcating a frontier. It could hardly be admitted that if such a demand were made that the two Governments should accept a refusal, and the matter would have to be seen through. But I could not imagine that a combined request from Russia and Great Britain could be refused by the Porte: it would be strange were such to be the case. However, these were only my personal views, and it was a matter outside of my province.

M. Isvolsky turned to other subjects: and said that he had been highly gratified with the gracious reception accorded to him by the King and he had had a most interesting and instructive conversation with His Majesty. He had also had opportunities of conversing with Baron d'Aehrenthal, and of course their interviews had been largely occupied with Macedonia. He himself had not been in favour of the Joint Note in respect to Macedonia,⁽²⁾ as he did not anticipate that it would lead to any satisfactory results; and he thought that his doubts had been justified, as the activity of the hands seemed to be in no wise diminished. The project for judicial reforms was being discussed by the Ambassadors, and the next step would be to present it to the Porte, who would probably meet it with a point-blank refusal. It would then be necessary to decide on the course to be followed.

His Excellency then passed to the Anglo-Russian Convention, and remarked that he had been pleased to observe that, on the whole, it had been very favourably received by the Press and both countries. There were one or two discordant notes, but the reception had been far better than he had anticipated. "It is however, impossible to deny" he continued, "that the Convention is by no means welcome to Germany and we must both expect to see her cause us trouble." I enquired if he alluded to Persia. "Not only in Persia" he replied "but everywhere. Prince Bülow gave me positive assurances at Swinemünde that Germany would assist Russia and Austria as regards Macedonia, but as soon as the German Government were in possession of the Draft project of Judicial Reforms, they communicated it to the Sublime Porte. This does not look like friendly co-operation. I have good information that the German Government took this course, and Baron d'Aehrenthal was also similarly informed: and though he is more German than the Germans he was much vexed and displeased." As to Persia M. Isvolsky enquired what in my opinion would be the form that German activity would take in that country. I said that owing to the financial crisis throughout Europe I doubted if Germany would be in a position to develop much activity in the financial direction: and if we could secure shortly the appointment of the French Financial Adviser we might be able to block, in great measure, the expansion of her influence in the finances of Persia. But it was possible that owing to her influence at Constantinople, Germany might be able to render Persia services in respect to the frontier question and this would give her a good position at Tehran.

M. Isvolsky said that M. Stemrich, the late Minister at Tehran was now appointed Under Secretary at Berlin, and would be able to assist in directing a Persian policy from there. We must both be prepared for an active policy. He added that he had seen M. de Schoen at Munich, and had found him much pleased, but a little oppressed, at his new appointment. He considered that M. de Schoen had not an easy task before him, as he had not only to deal with Prince Bülow, but in the background was M. de Holstein, who though nominally retired, was still apparently in the confidence and in intimate daily relations with the Chancellor.

M. Isvolsky said that he had been well satisfied with his visit to Paris: and had some interesting conversations with M. Clemenceau, who had assured him that France would shape her policy in Morocco so as to give rise to no international difficulties. and that she would keep as closely as possible to the Algeiras Act.

In regard to internal affairs, M. Isvolsky said that he anticipated that M. Stolypin would have considerable trouble with the Extreme Right, who though perhaps not numerically very strong in the Duma were powerful outside and had influential support. I would remember that at the close of the last Duma a very determined

(2) [v. Gooch & Temperley, Vol. V, p. 111, and p. 215, No. 169.]

effort had been made to remove M. Stolypin from office, and that "les grands moyens" had to be employed to enable him to retain his position. There were signs that these efforts would be renewed, and he sincerely trusted that they would be defeated. It was far too early to predict how the Duma would act or what would be the development of the situation: and he himself had only been a few hours in St. Petersburg and had seen but very few people and was consequently unable to form an opinion.

M. Isvolsky's return had been delayed some days owing to a severe indisposition, but he was looking well and ready for work. He has not yet seen the Emperor.

I have, &c.

A. NICOLSON.

No. 547.

Count Benckendorff to Sir Edward Grey.

Private.⁽¹⁾

Dear Sir Edward,

Chesham House, Chesham Place, S.W.,

December 25, 1907.

I just received the following telegram from M. Isvolsky:—

Je vous prie d'exprimer à Sir Edward Grey la satisfaction avec laquelle nous avons pris connaissance de son discours à Berwick, notamment des termes dans lesquels il a parlé de la Convention Russe-Anglaise et l'heureuse influence que cet acte a exercé sur les relations entre l'Angleterre et la Russie.

I received through Sir Charles Hardinge your kind message concerning the report in the Times. You see that the impression made by your speech on my Gov[ernment], even as it has been reported, has been excellent. I never doubted it would be so.

Let me add only a few words, quite privately—my personal latest impressions. I don't know whether you noticed the account given in the Times telegrams of the comments in the Russian press concerning our common action in Persia. However deplorable and dangerous this sudden crisis still may remain, I believe it has done more for consolidating our Convention in the minds of the Russian public, than could ever have been expected in so short a time. The press, at least in these questions is entirely free. Unexperienced as they still may be and are, they feel more than they think. I cannot say that I am sorry for it in this instance. When recollecting what it used to be two or three years ago, it seems a dream. But it is not a dream. I feel that stronger than ever.

Excuse me to have troubled you in your holiday and let me add my best wishes for Xmas.

Yours v[ery] sincerely,
BENCKENDORFF.

(¹) [Grey MSS., Vol. 88.]

No. 548.

Extract from Annual Report for Russia for the Year 1907.

(Enclosure in Despatch No. 57 from Sir A. Nicolson, D. January 29, 1908,
R. February 8, 1908.)

F.O. 8648/8648/09/88.

(C.)—*Germany.*

87. In August of this year the Emperor of Russia met the German Emperor at Swinemünde,⁽¹⁾ and M. Isvolsky and Prince Bülow accompanied their respective

(¹) [*v. supra*, p. 297, No. 277, note, and *G.P.*, XXII, pp. 67-72.]

Sovereigns. This Embassy has no information as to what passed at this interview, beyond the fact that the opportunity was taken of explaining to Prince Bülow that the Anglo-Russian Convention, then in course of negotiation, contained no provisions affecting German interests, and that the German Chancellor expressed his satisfaction that the two countries were likely to come to an understanding which would remove causes of friction between them in Central Asia. Reports have been current that the Baltic and the Polish questions were discussed at the meeting, either between the two Sovereigns themselves or between their two Ministers. Although the intimacy between the two Courts may remain on their old intimate footing, and although the Russian Foreign Minister may feel compelled to proceed with great caution and circumspection in all his foreign transactions from the fear of offending the susceptibilities of Germany, occasions have arisen, and will probably continue to arise, on which the policy of the two Governments diverge or clash. Moreover, the Russian press in general is hostile to Germany, and would object to any intimate intercourse. There is a feeling of mistrust of German diplomacy and policy, and it is thought that friendship with Germany soon lapses into vassalage, and that a considerable price has to be paid to enjoy even that rather invidious position. Both in the Near and the Middle East the policies of the two countries necessarily are not in unison. As regards the Middle East, there are two points in German policy which cause considerable perturbation to the Russian Chancellerie. Notwithstanding assurances on the part of the Berlin Cabinet, the Russian Government are hampered with the fear that Germany will seek, and may possibly succeed in acquiring, a strong position at Tehran; and that, if she wins the confidence of whatever authority may eventually obtain the reins of power in that distracted country, she may become the recipient of many favours and privileges, and play at Tehran the part which she has assumed at Constantinople. Furthermore, the Bagdad Railway affords cause for much uneasiness at St. Petersburg; but this question will be treated under a separate heading. It may also be mentioned that the St. Petersburg Chancellerie has shrewd suspicions that the action of Turkey on the Turco-Persian frontier is, if not directly inspired, at least benevolently regarded by the German Government. In regard to the Near East, the aspirations of Russia for a free exit from and entry into the Black Sea, though perhaps they are not so actual as they were some years back, still naturally exist in the minds of Russian statesmen, and they are well aware that if ever the time should arrive when the realization of these hopes was near completion the opposition of Turkey would receive support from Germany. In the question of Macedonia, in which it may be said that Russia is more liberally inclined and readier to take an active line than her colleague Austria-Hungary, it is considered that it will probably be Germany who will introduce a rift into the European concert when the time comes for exercising the necessary pressure on the Sublime Porte.

98. The above in brief are some of the points on which the policy and aims of the two Governments are divergent. But the situation is other when the survey is transferred to the European field. In this direction there is a desire on the part of the Russian Government to live on the best possible terms with Germany. In the first place it is considered that the value of France as an ally has largely diminished of recent years. There is a generally received opinion that both her naval and military forces are much weakened by sedition and insubordination, and that they would be of no great value in case of war. On the other hand, the power of Germany both on land and on sea is regarded with perhaps an exaggerated admiration, and it is therefore considered prudent to live on friendly relations with so powerful a neighbour. Moreover, the present tendency of those directing or influencing the foreign affairs of Russia is to do what is possible to avoid offending the susceptibilities of Germany, and it should be noted that with this object there is a wish to offer some solatium to Germany as compensation for the conclusion of the Anglo-Russian Convention. The impression exists in the Russian Foreign Office that the Convention was not agreeable to Germany, and that, though she had no

plausible grounds for objecting to it, she still views it with disfavour, whatever may be the public utterances of her statesmen in regard to it. In fact, the Russian Foreign Minister has on more than one occasion stated that Germany will cause as much trouble as she safely can in disturbing the relations between Russia and Great Britain and in hampering the smooth execution of the Convention. The reported action of German Agents in Persia and the interpretation which was given by M. de Schön to what is asserted here were merely preparatory discussions as to the Bagdad Railway are cited as but the prelude to what may be expected later. It is in order to anticipate and to prevent, as far as possible, a development of an obstructive or inconvenient action on the part of Germany in the Middle and Near East that M. Isvolsky seeks to placate her elsewhere in matters which are not of vital importance to Russian interests. He is credited with having adopted a friendly, some say a subservient, attitude to Germany at the Peace Conference, and he is discussing with her *tête-à-tête* how matters may be arranged with Sweden as to the Baltic. He was strenuously opposed, as has been already mentioned, to extending, in however so small a degree, the scope of certain portions of the Anglo-Russian Convention; and, both as regards Crete and in a certain measure with respect to Macedonia, he has been anxious to adapt himself, as far as possible, with the views and wishes of Austria-Hungary, which action, he is aware, would produce an agreeable impression in Berlin. The line which probably the Russian Government are endeavouring to follow is, while maintaining the alliance with France, and promoting and developing the friendly relations with Great Britain, to sail in company with Germany and to render her such friendly services as are possible. Such a line would require some skill and adroitness to pursue for any length of time, and it is doubtful if it will be found a feasible one. It is possible that events will occur in the Near and Middle East which will accentuate the divergencies between Russian and German policy, and that gradually Russia will be brought to see that the Power which will cross her path in those quarters of the globe will not be Great Britain as of yore. It would, in these circumstances, be difficult to follow a double policy—on the one hand cordial intercourse in Europe, and on the other rivalry and opposition in Asia. This would be an impossible situation; and it is possible that the trend of events will lead to more and more intimate relations with Great Britain rather than to an increase of cordiality with Germany. When Russia has strengthened herself and has reorganized her forces, and has, in general, resumed that place in the European council to which she is entitled, her solicitude for the good favour of her western neighbour will not perhaps be so anxious and so marked. It would not be fair to assume that the present Russian Foreign Minister is dependent upon, and chiefly guided by, the inspiration which he may receive from Berlin. At one time this appeared to be the case, and in many quarters the impression existed that the Foreign Office on the Neva was as much influenced from Berlin as is the Ministry in Vienna. It would seem to be juster to state that M. Isvolsky is simply striving to keep on the best possible terms with Germany. The circumstances of the moment almost compel him to adopt this course; but he has shown on more than one occasion that this desire does not necessarily lead him to cede any of the independence which a Russian Foreign Minister should properly retain. If the case should ever arise in which it would be necessary for him to choose between subserviency to Germany and an assertion of the maintenance of Russian interests, there is little doubt that he would choose the latter, and in this he would be cordially supported by his compatriots.

(D.)—*Austria-Hungary.*

89. The relations between Russia and Austria-Hungary are harmonious and friendly, and though there were occasionally slight divergencies of opinion over certain points in the Macedonian programme, they have not been permitted to introduce any discord between the two Governments. M. Isvolsky has had audiences of the Emperor Francis Joseph and interviews with Baron d'Aehrenthal,

and the two Governments appear to have decided to steer clear of any questions on which they do not see eye to eye. These questions exist, and in all probability will continue to exist, but for the present they are by tacit mutual consent permitted to lie dormant unless circumstances over which neither Government practically has control brings them to the surface. In the Macedonian question M. Isvolsky was not in favour of the joint note to the Balkan States, which chiefly concerned itself with the activity of the bands. He thought that its effect might be contrary to what was hoped, and his anticipation and fears seem to have been justified. He, however, gave way to the wishes of his Austrian colleague, as he also did on several points, it is surmised, in the question of reforms. In short, M. Isvolsky's inner views are, it may be gathered, rather in harmony with those of the London Cabinet than with those prevailing in Vienna. He, however, considers it prudent and safer to go as far as possible in conjunction with Vienna, and to endeavour to preserve an identity of action. This was doubtless a statesmanlike view, but if the occasion should arise for putting pressure on the Sublime Porte in order to induce the Ottoman Government to carry into execution the reforms on which the Powers have decided, it may be expected that Russia will willingly associate herself in any measures which the more liberal Powers may consider to be necessary. At the same time, as in the case of Germany, so in the case of Austria-Hungary, M. Isvolsky is desirous generally to be in close relations with the Government at Vienna. In less essential matters, such as Crete, in which Russian interests are comparatively slight, M. Isvolsky would be willing to lend a ready ear to Austrian wishes. It has occasionally been rumoured that there has been a desire to revive a three Emperors' alliance, and some have gone so far as to assume that some steps have been taken in that direction. So serious a departure in the foreign policy of Russia is not probable, in any case for the present, and it may be said that so long as M. Isvolsky remains at the head of foreign affairs it will not be accomplished or even premeditated. He is perfectly well aware that in the first place it would be an unpopular event among the great bulk of Russian public opinion, and that in the second place the present is not the moment for Russia to embark on any engagements of such a nature which would lead to a complete reversal of her existing political relations. The project may be dismissed as visionary.

No. 549.

Memorandum respecting the Anglo-Russian Convention.⁽¹⁾

Persia.

Confidential. (9180.)

Foreign Office, January 29, 1908.

The limits of the British sphere of influence in Persia as defined by Article II⁽²⁾ were inspired by the desire of His Majesty's Government to secure their really vital interest in the safeguarding of the strategical position on the Indian frontier. This was indicated by the late Government in 1903 as a triangle of territory including Seistan, Kerman, and Bunder Abbas so as to render it impossible to construct a Russian railway to Bunder Abbas or any port east of that place, the Admiralty considering that, with our practical possession of the Mussendim promontory, all danger from a Russian port in the Persian Gulf would be obviated. It was held that, if the Government of India could obtain this and nothing more by the payment of 500,000*l.* to the Persian Government, a good bargain would have been made, as it might save India from largely increased naval contributions and military expenditure in the future. This view was accepted by the Viceroy, Lord Curzon.

⁽¹⁾ [This memorandum was prepared in the Foreign Office, but the writer cannot be traced.]

⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 503, No. 456, *encl.*]

The recognition by Persia of the British sphere of influence in South-East Persia would have had no binding effect upon Russia, but the Russian Government have now formally recognized this sphere of influence, and no payment in money has been made for it.

The creation of a Russian and British sphere of influence is in reality only a self-denying Ordinance, by which each Government pledge themselves not to seek for concessions in the other's sphere. Other Powers are at liberty, as formerly, to seek concessions all over Persia, and British trade will be carried on in the Russian and neutral zones on the same terms as hitherto and as the trade of other foreign countries, the sole restriction on British enterprise being that British concessions cannot be sought in the Russian zone.

It may be observed that although Great Britain has occupied a predominant position in Southern Persia for more than 100 years, British trade and enterprise have so far failed to obtain any permanent results beyond a concession for the navigation of the Karun, the construction of a road from Ahwaz to Ispahan and Tehran, and certain telegraph lines. The continuance of these concessions is guaranteed by the Treaty.

As regards the trade routes in Persia, an all-British route exists from Ahwaz to Tehran, and British trade on the Bushire-Tehran and Khanikin-Tehran routes will be subjected in the future to the same treatment as hitherto.

The limits of the Russian zone were defined by the Russian Government, and there are no British concessions within those limits which have not been safeguarded.

The line of the British zone from Birjand was not drawn to the intersection of the Russian and Afghan frontiers, since it was realized that such a line could have no possible effect on a possible Russian movement towards Afghanistan, but care was taken, during the negotiations, that none of the western frontier of Afghanistan should come within the Russian zone.

The Imperial Bank of Persia have informed the Foreign Office of their great satisfaction at the terms of the Agreement relating to Persia.

Afghanistan.

We have now for the first time obtained from Russia, in writing and in the form of a definite Treaty engagement,^(*) assurances on the following three points, which had hitherto been only verbal and, as the Russian Government stated, not binding indefinitely upon them:—

1. That the Russian Government consider Afghanistan as outside the sphere of Russian influence.
2. That all their political relations with Afghanistan shall be conducted through the intermediary of His Majesty's Government.
3. That they will not send any Agents into Afghanistan.

The absence in Article II of a corresponding engagement on the part of Russia not to annex or occupy any portion of Afghanistan is covered by the declaration in Article I on the part of the Russian Government that Afghanistan is outside the sphere of Russian influence.

The principle of direct relations to be established between the Russian and Afghan authorities for the settlement of local questions of a non-political character was conceded by the late Government in 1903, and the Russian Ambassador was so informed. It was also included in the draft proposals for an Anglo-Russian Agreement submitted by Lord Lansdowne to the Russian Ambassador in November 1903.

(*) [The text of the Afghan Convention is printed, *supra*, pp. 541-4, No. 493, and *infra*, p. 619, Appendix I.]

Commercial agents cannot be appointed in Afghanistan without previous agreement between the British and Russian Governments, and without due regard to the Ameer's sovereign rights.

The [need of the] consent of the Ameer to an Agreement relating to Afghanistan was recognized by the late Government, since in the proposals submitted, by Lord Lansdowne to the Russian Ambassador the following sentence occurs :—

“It will be necessary that His Majesty's Government should obtain the approval of the Ameer of Afghanistan before any Arrangement dealing with this question is concluded.”

Moreover, the Ameer is bound to follow our advice in his foreign relations. To have consulted him about the questions of direct communication and commercial arrangements before signing the Agreement with Russia would have made him a third party to the negotiations. To have omitted Article V would have involved allowing the Russian Government at once to give effect to the arrangements as to frontier communications and trade, but this would have been impossible without the Ameer's consent.

The dilemma was to get the Ameer's consent before or after signature. It was decided for the above reasons to get it after signature. We have no reason to doubt that the Ameer will give his consent. He was on tour when the Treaty was signed. He wrote on the 29th September that he could not deal with so important a subject until he was back at his capital. This attitude was reasonable. He returned to Cabul on the 25th November. In view of the time which Orientals take over correspondence, and the importance of the subject, which necessitated consultation with his advisers, it is no matter of surprise that he has not yet replied.

Thibet.

The provisions of the Agreement relating to Thibet⁽⁴⁾ do not go beyond the assurances given in 1904 by Lord Lansdowne to the Russian Ambassador.

The position is that, in return for agreeing to embody the assurances of the late Government in a formal document, we have obtained similar assurances from Russia; and that in addition, we actually get formal Russian consent to the maintenance of a preferential position for Great Britain in Thibet over all other foreign countries in regard to frontier and commercial matters.

On the 10th May, 1904,⁽⁵⁾ Lord Lansdowne informed Count Benckendorff that, in return for the adhesion of the Russian Government to the Khedivial Decrees, His Majesty's Government would be prepared to give to the Russian Government an assurance to the following effect :—

His Majesty's Government still adhere to the policy laid down in their telegram of the 6th November to the Government of India,⁽⁶⁾ i.e., that they do not contemplate any annexation of Thibetan territory, nor the establishment of a permanent Mission at Lhassa. At the same time His Majesty's Government cannot undertake not to depart in any eventuality from the policy which now commends itself to them.

On the 2nd June, 1904,⁽⁷⁾ the following written communication was made to Count Benckendorff :—

“Your Excellency has inquired, in the course of recent conversation, whether the opposition which has been offered to the British Mission to Thibet has in any way modified the policy of His Majesty's Government in regard to that country, as described in their telegram to the Government of India of the 6th November, 1903.

(4) [The text of the arrangement concerning Thibet is printed, *supra*, pp. 352-4, No. 817, and *infra*, p. 620.]

(5) [*v. supra*, pp. 307-9, No. 291.]

(6) [*v. supra*, p. 305, *Ed. note.*]

(7) [*v. supra*, p. 310, No. 293.]

His Majesty's Government announced in that telegram that, in sanctioning the advance of Colonel Younghusband's Mission to Gyantse, they were clearly of opinion that this step should not be allowed to lead to the occupation of Thibet, or to permanent intervention in Thibetan affairs. They stated that the advance was to be made for the sole purpose of obtaining satisfaction, and that, as soon as reparation had been obtained, withdrawal would be effected. *They added that they were not prepared to establish a permanent Mission in Thibet, and that the question of enforcing trade facilities in that country was to be considered in the light of the decision conveyed in the telegram.*

"I am now able to tell you that His Majesty's Government still adhere to the policy thus described, though it is obvious that their action must to some extent depend upon the conduct of the Thibetans themselves, and that His Majesty's Government cannot undertake that they will not depart in any eventuality from the policy which now commends itself to them. They desire, however, to state in the most emphatic terms that, *so long as no other Power endeavours to intervene in the affairs of Thibet, they will not attempt either to annex it, to establish a Protectorate over it, or in any way to control its internal administration.*"

To take one by one the Articles likely to be criticised.

Article II.—"It is clearly understood that Buddhists, subjects of Great Britain or of Russia, may enter into direct relations on strictly religious matters with the Dalai Lama and the other representatives of Buddhism in Thibet; the Governments of Great Britain and Russia engage, so far as they are concerned, not to allow those relations to infringe the stipulations of the present Agreement."

From time immemorial relations have existed between the Russian Buriats and the Buddhist authorities at Lhasa. During the negotiation of this Convention the Russian Government laid stress upon the importance of the spiritual relations between the Buriats and Lhasa being maintained and recognized. As it would have been impossible to prevent pilgrimages to Lhasa, and communications between the Buriats and the Representatives of Buddhism in Thibet, such relations have now been put on a recognized footing with every possible safeguard against their developing into political intrigues.

Article III.—"The British and Russian Governments respectively engage not to send Representatives to Lhasa."

In this His Majesty's Government have only embodied in a more formal document the engagement already taken towards Russia in June 1904 by their predecessors. In return for this we have obtained an engagement on the part of the Russian Government that they will not send a Representative to Lhasa.

His Majesty's Government, in a despatch to the Government of India dated December 1904, had already declared the right of access to Lhasa as inconsistent with their policy.

Article IV.—"The two High Contracting Parties engage neither to seek nor to obtain, whether for themselves or their subjects, any Concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, and mines, or other rights in Thibet."

By Article IX of the Anglo-Thibetan Convention of the 7th September, 1904,⁽⁸⁾ it stated that—

"The Government of Thibet engages that, without the previous consent of the British Government, no Concessions for railways, roads, telegraphs, mining, or other rights, shall be granted to any foreign Power, or to the subject of any foreign Power: In the event of consent to such Concessions being granted, similar or equivalent Concessions shall be granted to the British Government."

In the subsequent Convention with China⁽⁹⁾ (Article III) it was expressly stated that no Concession was to be given to any foreigners (apart from Chinese). We have therefore only extended to Russia an undertaking to which we had already bound ourselves by an international instrument as well as by a verbal promise to Russia, for on 27th September, 1904,⁽¹⁰⁾ Lord Lansdowne, in the course of a

⁽⁸⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 314-7, No. 298.]

⁽⁹⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 324-5, No. 305, *encl.* 1.]

⁽¹⁰⁾ [v. *supra*, pp. 319-20, No. 301.]

conversation with the Russian Chargé d'Affaires, observed: "Article IX, as I understood it, was a kind of self-denying Ordinance which affected ourselves as well as other Powers. We had no desire to annex Thibetan territory or to intervene in Thibetan affairs, or to have political Representatives in the country, but it must be clearly understood that other Powers were to be placed under a similar disability."

With regard to the Anglo-Russian Convention as a whole, it may be generally stated that it has successfully removed causes of friction between Great Britain and Russia in Asia, and has enabled the two Powers to co-operate usefully together in Persia in maintaining a peaceful policy which it would quite recently have been difficult to secure had no such Convention existed. The removal of all causes of discord in Asia will no doubt contribute to more harmonious relations between the two Powers in Europe.

No. 550.

Sir Edward Grey to Sir A. Nicolson.

Private.⁽¹⁾

My dear Nicolson,

Foreign Office, February 24, 1908.

I am quite satisfied with the way in which our Russian Agreement has been received.

The official Opposition here, at any rate Lord Lansdowne and Brodrick, were perfectly fair, and I regarded their speeches as summing up in favour of the Convention, though they made criticisms. Balfour was more critical, but on the other hand he laid stress on what we had gained as regards Seistan.

It may not have been very wise, I did not feel it at all desirable, as regards Russian opinion to emphasise this point in public; but, after the attacks of Curzon and Percy, it was absolutely necessary to put the case for the Convention strongly.

The Russians ought, however, to understand that everything will depend upon the spirit which they show, and it is most important that public opinion here should be favourably impressed by the attitude of the Russians towards us during the next year or two.

People here do not think that the Convention, as an isolated bargain, is a good one; but they will be pleased if it leads to a generally friendly attitude of Russia towards us. Hoping and expecting this, they have cordially approved of the Convention, and Russia must be careful not to disappoint them.

I do not agree with that, even as an isolated bargain, the Convention is a bad one, because any one behind the scenes knows that what we have gained strategically is real, while the apparent sacrifices we have made commercially are not real.

I am concerned to hear that the Russians are going to refuse to go to Arbitration about the "Knight Commander."

If they do refuse, the effect will be very bad.

It is not as if we were asking them to concede our claims; all we are asking is that they should agree to refer our claims to Arbitration. A refusal to arbitrate would be taken here as showing a stiff and unfriendly spirit. And I really think that the Russians should allow all these shipping cases which are in dispute to go to Arbitration.

I have spoken to Benckendorff in this sense already.

We must go carefully in the Macedonian Question.

I am quite pleased, from the point of view of general policy, that events are bringing Russia and us together. But a combination of Britain, Russia, and France in the Concert must for the present be a weak one. France has her hands full in

(1) [Carnock MSS.]

Morocco, and is naturally reluctant to run the risk of even diplomatic friction in connection with any other matter which might re-act unfavourably on her in Morocco. Russia is weak after the war, and her internal affairs are anything but secure.

Ten years hence, a combination of Britain, Russia, and France may be able to dominate Near Eastern policy; and within that time events will probably make it more and more clear that it is to the interest of Russia and us to work together: but we must go slowly.

I am anxious about the reports that re-actionary policy may get the upper hand in Russia. If Finland is badly treated, or if there are any more "pogroms," public opinion here will be very adversely affected, and make it quite impossible for the King to arrange a meeting with Tsar, (a meeting which I should like, but which I hardly dare suggest while the prospects of Russian internal policy are so ominous).

Of course, I do not mean that the internal policy of Russia will affect the policy of the Foreign Office here; but if it adversely affects public opinion here, then unfavourable expressions will be uttered in Parliament and elsewhere; every sign that we and Russia are working together will lead to expressions of dissatisfaction instead of being welcomed, and such a state of things would necessarily re-act very badly upon the disposition of the Russian Government towards us.

Yours sincerely,
E. GRFY.
