

Baron von Richthofen said that it would be found out that the Commercial Treaty was not so favourable to Germany as had been supposed, and that under present circumstances Mr. de Witte was certainly not the person to whom negotiations of a political character would be confided.

I observed that it was not suggested that Mr. de Witte had been the negotiator, but merely that the secret arrangement had coincided in date with the conclusion of the Commercial Treaty.

Baron von Richthofen repeated that no secret agreement of any kind existed, and he regretted the publication in the "Times" which could not fail to create a very bad impression in Germany.

I said that I shared his regret and presumed that we must be prepared for a polemical discussion in the newspapers in which hard words had been used on both sides. I had noticed in one of the German Papers a statement which gave the impression that the "Daily Graphic" was officially inspired by His Majesty's Government, and I thought it a pity that such an idea which was entirely at variance with fact should be suggested.

At a subsequent interview with Baron von Richthofen at the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, His Excellency said that he had not yet had time to read the "Times" Articles himself but that he would certainly do so, and that then he might perhaps ask me to forward to Your Lordship a statement of his views on the subject.

I replied that I should always be at his disposal for such a purpose, but up till now I have heard nothing more from him on the subject.

I have, &c.

FRANK C. LASCELLES.

[*ED. NOTE.*—Sir Charles Hardinge's despatches dealing with the internal situation are omitted as having no special bearing on the international situation. They generally record the unrest in Russia as a result of the war and depict the consequent weakness of the Government. The first manifesto suggesting internal reform, published by the Emperor Nicholas II on December 28, 1904, was reported by Sir Charles Hardinge the next day to have been "unfavourably received."]

II.—THE DOGGER BANK INCIDENT (THE ATTACK ON HULL FISHING BOATS BY THE RUSSIAN BALTIC FLEET), OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1904.

[*ED. NOTE.*—*v. G.P.* XIX, I, ch. 184, and ch. 185 for Russo-German negotiations relating to the coaling of the Baltic Fleet, and *Kaiser's Letters to the Tsar* (1920), p. 123 *sqq.*]

No. 5.

Messrs. Jackson and Co. to the Marquess of Lansdowne.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

Tel.

Hull, October 23, 1904.

We act (for) Kelsall Brothers and Beeching Ltd. owners Gamecock steam fishing-fleet comprising about 50 steam fishing vessels. Shortly after midnight Friday 21st inst[ant] Russian Baltic Fleet fell in with them whilst fishing in the North Sea. First portion Russian passed safely, major portion Russian fleet after turning search-lights on British fishing vessels for some time opened fire; steam-trawler "Crane" sunk, decapitated bodies skipper and mate landed here, other members crew more or

(1) [Published with a slight alteration in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), p. 377.1

less dangerously injured: steam-tractors "Moulmein" and "Minnow" arrived seriously damaged by shot: steam-tractor "Wren" reported sunk with all hands: our doctor Jackson accompanied by Mr. Beeching and informants coming London to-nights mail arriving Great Northern Hotel about 8 o'clock Mon[day]: will call upon you to-morrow morning.

Sending similar tel[egrams] F[oreign] O[ffice] and Admiralty.
(Tel[egram]s: Lex. Hull.)

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

A most dastardly outrage.

E.R.

No. 6.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.
Tel. (No. 174.)

Foreign Office, October 24, 1904.
D. 6'35 P.M.

Information has just reached us to the effect that on the night of the 21st instant the "Gamecock" steam fishing fleet of Hull while engaged in fishing off the Dogger Bank in the North Sea were suddenly and without the slightest warning fired upon by the Russian Baltic Fleet. At least one vessel was sunk, two persons are known to have been killed besides a number seriously wounded but several vessels belonging to the fishing fleet are reported missing and it is impossible at present to ascertain the total number of casualties.

It is stated that fire was opened after a change of fleet formation which was apparently ordered by signal and that this fire was maintained for a considerable time. The whole action would seem to have been of the most deliberate character.

After the firing ceased the Russian Fleet continued their voyage without making the least attempt to save life or to ascertain what damage had been done.

One small vessel remained on the scene of the occurrence for about six hours and then steamed after the fleet also without making any effort to save life. The fishing vessels had all their distinguishing lights burning, in accordance with international regulations, presumably well known to Russian Naval Authorities. They were lit up by the search lights of the Russian Squadron and nothing but the most culpable negligence could have led to their being mistaken for anything but what they were, a peaceful fishing fleet engaged in their ordinary occupations.

Inform Count Lamsdorff of what has occurred and say that it is impossible to exaggerate the indignation which has been provoked. It is aggravated by the callousness of the Russian Commanding Officer, who must have known before resuming the voyage that his fleet had fired upon and seriously injured innocent and defenceless people.

It will be the duty of His Majesty's Government to require (ample apology)⁽²⁾ and complete and prompt reparation as well as security against the recurrence of such intolerable incidents. They prefer however not to formulate their demands until they have received the explanations which the Russian Government will no doubt hasten to lay before them. The matter is one which admits of no delay.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

App[rove]d.—E.R.

⁽¹⁾ [Paraphrased in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), pp. 377-8.]

⁽²⁾ [The words in round brackets were added by King Edward and are initialled "E.R."]

No. 7.

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.⁽¹⁾

St. Petersburg, October 24, 1904.

F.O. Russia 1729.

D. 7.30 P.M.

Tel. (No. 146.)

R. 10 P.M.

Telegrams reporting a dastardly attack on British fishing-vessels in the North Sea reached here this morning, but have been suppressed by the Censor.

I called this afternoon on Count Lamsdorff, and asked if he could give me any explanation of what had happened. He replied that he knew nothing beyond what had appeared in the press telegrams, but that he had already addressed inquiries to the Ministry of Marine.

I pointed out to his Excellency the extreme gravity of the situation, and that, if it was proved that circumstances had occurred as reported in the telegrams, the action of the squadron could only be regarded as an unqualified and brutal outrage. Public opinion in England would in that case be very justly incensed, and, although I had so far received no instructions from your Lordship, I urged him as a friend, and not as His Majesty's Ambassador, with a view to maintaining friendly relations between the two countries, to make a prompt declaration that if on inquiry the Commander of the fleet was proved to have been at fault, he would be severely punished, and full reparation made.

Count Lamsdorff said, in reply, that the news had filled him with horror; that at present the only information in his hands was that given by panic-stricken fishermen. He could not admit that their depositions were correct, and he was waiting for explanations from the Commander of the squadron. He could assure me, however, that the Government would not tolerate for a moment any action on the part of their naval officers such as had been suggested, that a full inquiry would be made, and that such action would meet with prompt punishment and full reparation to those who had suffered by it. He felt confident that some terrible misunderstanding had arisen, which could not be solved until an inquiry had been made.

I reminded his Excellency that we had had an unfortunate example of the difficulty experienced by the Russian Government in communicating with their ships, and that it would be impossible to let the situation created by this deplorable incident drag on indefinitely, and I remarked that it seemed to me very strange that the fleet, having committed their work of destruction, should have continued their voyage without regard for the sufferers, and without reporting the occurrence from the telegraph stations on either side of the Channel.

Count Lamsdorff made the extraordinary statement that perhaps a report had been received and had not been communicated to him by the Ministry of Marine, but that he expected to have full details shortly from the Admiralty.

MINUTE.

Sir C. Hardinge acted with great promptitude and his language was well chosen. Approve it.
L.

⁽¹⁾ [Paraphrased with some omissions in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), p. 878.]

No. 8.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 374.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 24, 1904.

I asked the Russian Chargé d'Affaires to call upon me this afternoon, and enquired of him whether he had any information to give me with regard to the attack

made on the 21st instant by the Russian Baltic Fleet upon a part of the North Sea fishing fleet. M. Sazonow said that he had not yet received any information on the subject. He could only himself conjecture that the incident, which he deeply deplored, was due to an unfortunate mistake. The Russian Government had received numerous reports to the effect that Japanese agents were visiting this country for the purpose of organising attacks on the Baltic Fleet, and in these circumstances it was perhaps not unnatural that the captains of the Russian ships should have been alarmed at finding these vessels in close proximity to their men of war. I asked M. Sazonow whether there was the slightest evidence to show that the Japanese had really been making preparations in this country or elsewhere for an attack of the kind, and whether, if the vessels had really been Japanese Torpedo Boats, they would have displayed the lights which, as we knew, were exhibited by the trawlers at the time when they were fired upon. M. Sazonow said that he imagined that if any attempt of the kind had been made by Japanese vessels they would have endeavoured to simulate innocent fishing-boats.⁽¹⁾ I recapitulated to him the facts as stated in my telegram to you No. 174,⁽²⁾ of this day's date, dwelling particularly upon the fact that fire was opened by the ships of war after a change of formation, apparently ordered by signal, and that the whole attack seemed to have been of the most deliberate character. I also said that the prevalent feeling of indignation had been greatly strengthened by the callousness which the Russian Naval Commanders had exhibited in leaving these wretched fishermen to their fate. It was, to my mind, inconceivable that the officers commanding the Fleet should not have discovered their mistake before proceeding on their voyage. M. Sazonow said that it was useless for him to offer conjectures as to the circumstances, and that he imagined that the Russian Government would desire to be supplied with a report from the Fleet before attempting to address any observations to His Majesty's Government upon the subject. I replied that, although there might be some doubt in regard to matters of detail, the main facts were established beyond dispute. The bodies of the dead sailors had arrived in port. The case was one calling for prompt and adequate reparation, and I earnestly hoped that such reparation would be spontaneously offered by the Russian Government. Of this I felt sure, that if an attempt were made to fence with the question, public feeling here would become uncontrollable. Mr. Sazonow promised to telegraph to St. Petersburg the substance of my observations, and he also told me that the Ambassador was to return to this country tonight and would, no doubt, be glad to call upon me tomorrow.

Although unwilling to make any damaging admissions, M. Sazonow was evidently much distressed.⁽³⁾

I am, &c.

L[ANSDOWNE].

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

App[rove]d.—E.R.

⁽¹⁾ [It was subsequently ascertained that there were no Japanese, British, French, German or Scandinavian torpedo boats anywhere near.]

⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 6, No. 6.]

⁽³⁾ [This sentence is omitted in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2850), p. 379.]

No. 9.

Sir E. Monson to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 551.)

My Lord;

Paris, D. October 24, 1904.

R. October 25, 1904.

I have thought it useful to resume briefly the opinions expressed and the attitudes adopted by the various sections of the French Press with regard to the

sinking of British Fishing vessels in the North Sea by the Russian Baltic Fleet. . . .⁽¹⁾

To sum up: The Paris Press, with one or two unimportant exceptions, would seem to have determined that the best way of burying other people's hatchets is to shut its own eyes.

Its silence *may* be due to stupefaction, or—less probably—to discretion. But, as a rule, when journals of all shades of opinion refuse to work a mine so rich in "copy," it is because they do not *want* to do so.

I have, &c.

EDMUND MONSON.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

The attitude of the French Press is most unsatisfactory.

E.R.

⁽¹⁾ [It has been thought unnecessary to reproduce the quotations, which are typical of the French press at the time.]

No. 10.

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

St. Petersburg, October 25, 1904.

F.O. Russia 1729.

D. 1.7 A.M.

Tel. (No. 146.)

R. 7.30 A.M.

My immediately preceding telegrams.

Ministry for Foreign Affairs are giving out that they regret very much the incident which has occurred, of which they have no official information, but that if press information is correct, full reparation will be given.

Ministry of Marine, who are thoroughly alarmed as to possible results, are using the same language.

No. 11.

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.⁽¹⁾

St. Petersburg, October 25, 1904.

F.O. Russia 1729.

D. 6.46 P.M.

Tel. (No. 152.)

R. 7.45 P.M.

Count Lamsdorff has just been to Embassy charged with a message from the Emperor.

H[is] M[ajesty] having received no news from the Admiral in command of the Baltic Fleet can only attribute the unfortunate incident in the North Sea to a regrettable misunderstanding. In view however of the sad loss of life the Emperor wishes to (? express to) the King and H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernmen]t his sincere regrets and to state that as soon as the circumstances surrounding the incident have been cleared up H[is] M[ajesty] will take the necessary measures of reparation to those who have suffered.

⁽¹⁾ [Paraphrased, with the omission of the last three paragraphs, in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), p. 380.]

Count Lamsdorff wished me at the same time (? to express to) Y[our] L[ordship] his own sincere regrets for an incident which to him seems incomprehensible.

His Exc[ellenc]y further stated that the Emperor had given special orders to the C[ommander]-in-C[hief] to telegraph direct to His Majesty everything that happened together with arrivals and departures but that not a single telegram has been received by H[is] I[mperial] M[ajesty] or by Ministry of Marine. He added that he would not lose a moment in communicating to me any information which might arrive from the Admiral.

I took the opportunity of carrying out instructions contained in your tel[egram]s Nos. 174⁽²⁾ and 175⁽²⁾ of yesterday.

From what was told to Naval Attaché this morning by Chief of Naval Staff it appears that they have no information of whereabouts of Baltic Fleet and no means of communicating with the Admiral.

⁽²⁾ [v. *supra*, p. 6, No. 6.]

⁽²⁾ [This telegram was as follows: "My Tel. No. 174. Inform Russian Gov[ernmen]t that several trawlers from Milford Haven and Fleetwood are fishing off Finisterre, Oporto and Vigo." F.O. Russia 1729.]

No. 12.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 375.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 25, 1904.

The Russian Ambassador arrived in London last night and asked me to receive him this morning. He told me that he had not yet received any instructions from the Russian Government with regard to the North Sea incident. It was indeed almost impossible that he should have received such instructions, for he understood that, although the occurrence had taken place on the night of the 21st instant, we had not heard of it until yesterday,⁽²⁾ and the Russian Governm[en]t could scarcely have heard of it sooner. His Excellency added that he had already telegraphed to St. Petersburg, and that he felt sure that the deepest regret would be felt and expressed in Russia by the Emperor, the Government, and indeed everyone throughout the country. He would take upon himself to say that no difficulty would be experienced in regard to the question of compensation. The question of responsibility was more complicated. It would be difficult to establish without a full report from the naval authorities, and this might take time; but I might depend upon it that no pains would be spared to ascertain where the blame lay.

I told His Excellency that the Prime Minister had arrived from Scotland this morning, and that I was to confer with him immediately, and that it might, in the circumstances, be better that I should not at this moment present to him anything purporting to be a full and complete statement of our demands. It seemed to me however self-evident that they would fall under the following heads.—We should, in the first place, expect an ample apology and disclaimer from the Russian Government.

In the second place, I could not doubt that they would offer the fullest reparation to the sufferers. I assumed that upon these two points there could be no room for doubt.

Thirdly, it would be indispensable that a searching enquiry should be instituted with a view to ascertaining who was to blame for what, upon the most favourable construction, could only be regarded, not only as a blunder, but as a culpable blunder.

⁽¹⁾ [Published with a slight alteration in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), pp. 380-1.]

⁽²⁾ [The news of the incident reached the Foreign Office on October 23, v. *supra*, pp. 5-6, Nos. 5-6.]

As to this, I thought we should be justified in asking that we should be given an opportunity of satisfying ourselves that the case of the sufferers was properly put forward and taken into consideration by the Court. It followed that we should expect the adequate punishment of the persons, whoever they might be, who proved to be responsible. But besides this, it would no doubt be our duty to satisfy ourselves that security was given to us against a repetition of such incidents. The only defence as yet put forward, and indeed the only conceivable defence was that the Russian naval officers had *bonâ fide* believed that these innocent fishermen were Japanese agents in disguise. The Russian Fleet had acted upon this assumption in spite of the fact that the trawling fleet was upon ground which it habitually frequented, and displayed all the signals required by the international regulations in force. If, in such circumstances, innocent people were fired upon, on the assumption that they were Japanese in disguise, who would be safe, and what was to prevent the Russian Fleet, during its long journey to the Far East, from carrying death and destruction with it throughout its course?

Count Benckendorff said that he felt sure that no difficulty would arise, either as regards the question of apology or as to that of compensation. As he had already said, every effort would be made to place the responsibility for these acts upon the right shoulders, and he saw no reason why we should not be given a full opportunity of bringing forward such evidence as seemed to us material. With regard to the recurrence of such incidents, he could not himself believe that it was possible, but he felt sure that the Russian Government would be ready to take every precaution for this purpose, and to issue instructions that for the future any suspicious cases should be dealt with with the greatest circumspection.

I again impressed upon His Excellency the need of prompt action. Unless it were taken by the Russian Government, we should certainly be obliged to take our own measures for guarding against a repetition of these acts. His Excellency promised to telegraph the substance of my observations to the Russian Government.

I am, &c.

L[ANSLOWNE].

No. 13.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 377.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 26, 1904.

Shortly before midnight last night I received from the Russian Ambassador a note, of which a copy is attached to this despatch. I addressed to him a reply at eight o'clock this morning, of which a copy is also enclosed. At eleven o'clock His Excellency called upon me and explained that Count Lamsdorff's telegram quoted in his note was not an answer to a long telegram which he had despatched yesterday after his interview with me. The latter did not leave London till nine P.M. yesterday. This no doubt, said H[is] E[xcellency], explained why some of the points upon which I had so much insisted were not referred to by Count Lamsdorff. I might indeed regard both his telegram and that which the Emperor had addressed to the King as spontaneous expressions of regret. His Excellency then discussed with me some of the points dealt with in my letter of this morning, upon which he proposed to found a further telegram to the Russian Government. He was however prepared to take upon himself to say that measures had already been undertaken for the purpose of intercepting the Russian Fleet—whether at Vigo or elsewhere he could

⁽¹⁾ [This despatch and annexes are published, with some omissions, in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), pp. 382-4.]

not say. He was also prepared to authorise me to express at once the profound regret of the Russian Government for this deplorable incident, which they attributed to a disastrous mistake due to the apprehension of an attack by Japanese vessels in disguise. He might also say that an enquiry into the facts had been at once opened by the Russian Government and is being proceeded with. He took some exception to my stipulation that we should be given an opportunity of satisfying ourselves that the investigation is full and complete, saying that he thought these words might be interpreted as giving us "control" over the proceedings, but he saw no objection to the presence of legal repr[esentative]s of H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment]. He preferred to await further instructions before authorising me to say that the enquiry would deal with the question of responsibility with a view to the punishment of the guilty persons, but he felt himself no doubt that this was the case. He also felt sure that the necessary instructions would be issued, warning the officers of the Fleet to use the utmost circumspection in dealing with suspicious cases—instructions which would be of a kind which would render impossible any repetition of the North Sea incident. I begged His Excellency to telegraph at once upon these latter points. I said that it seemed to me absolutely necessary that an official statement should appear in the newspapers to-morrow, and that unless it was complete, and dealt with the whole of the points upon which I had insisted it would be worse than useless. I also dwelt upon the need of prompt measures to intercept the Fleet. If it were allowed to continue its journey without calling at Vigo, we might find ourselves at war before the week was over. I took the opportunity of calling H[is] E[xc]cellency's attention to the communiqué which appears in today's papers as to the concentration of the British Fleet at Gibraltar and elsewhere. His Excellency had not seen this statement.

Count Benckendorff called upon me again in the evening at my request. I told him that the telegram which I had received from you made me doubt whether the Russian Government was really taking effectual steps to intercept the Fleet at Vigo with the object of instituting an enquiry as to the responsibility for the North Sea incident. Count Benckendorff said that he felt sure that the intention of the Russian Government was to obtain full information upon this point from the Admiral. I said that I trusted there would be no misapprehension upon this point. We could not admit that the Russian Fleet should be allowed to proceed upon its voyage, carrying with it the persons who were responsible for the North Sea incident: their departure would not only enable them to elude justice but would also render it impossible to obtain conclusive results from the enquiry which the Russian Government had promised to undertake. It was my duty to tell him that unless our demands in this respect were complied with, it might be necessary for us to take measures for the purpose of enforcing them. I said that the Prime Minister was to make a most important speech on Friday evening, and would of course have to deal with this question. I trusted it would be possible for him to make a satisfactory announcement, and if he were able to do so the excitement which was now running high in this country would no doubt subside; but if, on the contrary, he were only able to say that we had received expressions of regret and promises of compensation, he would have to add that we adhered to our full demands and were determined not to abandon them. I was sure that he would prefer to avoid the use of language which could not be regarded as otherwise than menacing.

After a long discussion His Excellency drafted in my presence a telegram of which he has allowed me to make a note: it was to the following effect—

"My telegrams of yesterday and today are regarded by the British Government as implying that the Admiral in command of the fleet will designate the officer or officers responsible for the North Sea incident by means of a summary investigation, which would not take more than a few hours. These officers would subsequently have to be subject to a thorough investigation at St. Petersburg. Their immediate return to Russia is therefore involved. Their immediate trial is considered by the British Government as an absolute condition of the peaceable

termination of the incident (l'appaisement pacifique de l'incident), and the British Government objects to the officers responsible being allowed to continue their campaign before judgment. Lord Lansdowne assures me that in an analogous case the British Government would not hesitate to act in this manner. The situation here is complicated by the fact that the Prime Minister will make a ministerial statement on Friday next, and it will be impossible for him to avoid pronouncing himself definitely."

His Excellency told me that he had received from the Coroner at Hull an intimation that the inquest was to be held on the 2nd of November, but that it might be adjourned if the Russian Government desired that any of their officers should be examined as witnesses. I suggested that it might be desirable that the evidence of any officers who might be sent home from the fleet should be taken. I also said that His Majesty's Government would be glad to give facilities for a representative of the Russian Government to attend the proceedings in the Coroner's Court. We should, as I had already explained, expect to be allowed to send a British representative to watch the proceedings at St. Petersburg.

I am, &c.
L[ANSDOWNE].

Enclosure 1 in No. 18.

Count Benckendorff to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

Cher Lord Lansdowne,

Londres, 12/25 Octobre 1904.

Je reçois ce soir un télégramme du C[om]te Lamsdorff, qui me dit que le Ministre de la Marine, à son regret, n'a encore reçu aucune information directe au sujet du malencontreux incident parvenu dans la Mer du Nord entre l'escadre Russe et la flotille de pêche Anglaise.

Il ajoute que les péripéties dont rendent compte les télégrammes des agences ne peuvent trouver d'autre explication que celle d'un déplorable malentendu, et qu'à peine les faits se trouveront élucidés (les mesures à cet effet sont déjà prises par l'Amirauté Imp[éria]le) une indemnité la plus complète possible est garantie aux victimes.

Le C[om]te Lamsdorff termine en me chargeant de Vous exprimer sans plus de retard, le plus profond regret du Gou[vernemen]t Impérial du néfaste incident dont ces pêcheurs anglais ont été la victime.

Veuillez, &c.
BENCKENDORFF.

Enclosure 2 in No. 18.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Count Benckendorff.

Foreign Office, October 26, 1904.

My dear Ambassador,

D. 8 A.M.

I am much obliged to you for your note which reached me last night.

It justifies me in announcing that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t have expressed their profound regret for the attack perpetrated by the Russian fleet on the British trawlers, that measures have already been taken to institute an enquiry into the facts, and that as soon as these have been elucidated ample compensation will be made to the sufferers.

You will however pardon me for saying that this is not enough. As I mentioned to you yesterday it is absolutely necessary that the Russian Gov[ernmen]t should ascertain who are the persons responsible for this unprovoked attack on British fishermen and that we should be able to say that the Gov[ernmen]t enquiry will be directed to this object also, and that the guilty persons will receive exemplary punishment. We shall also expect to be given every facility for bringing forward

evidence in support of our case and satisfying ourselves that the investigation is full and complete.

It is not less necessary that we should be able to announce that measures have been taken by the Russian Gov[ernmen]t to render impossible the recurrence of such incidents.

The only defence which has been advanced is that the panic stricken officers who ordered the attack considered, and presumably still consider, that they are justified in treating as an enemy any innocent craft which they may meet on their voyage to the Far East, on the mere suspicion that it may be a Japanese vessel in disguise.

I need not dwell upon the kind of results which such a condition of mind might produce.

I hope you will telegraph to your Government at once and ask them to authorize you to reassure us on both these points.

It seems to me, I must say absolutely incomprehensible that the officers of the fleet should have left your Minister of Marine without information as to so grave an event, that the fleet should be pursuing its way to the East carrying with it all those who are able to give an account from your point of view of occurrences which surely call for prompt and searching investigation, and that the Minister should apparently be without the means of communicating with it expeditiously. I presume that an effort is being made to intercept it with a view to at least obtaining from the authors of the attack such explanations and such evidence as they may be able to furnish. I shall be glad if you will enable me to say that I am right as to this.

[I have, &c.]

L[ANSLOWNE].

No. 14.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

Foreign Office, October 27, 1904.

Tel. (No. 183.)

D. 6 P.M.

My telegram No. 181 (of to-day).

I have told Russian Ambassador officially that we are wholly unable to accept Admiral's explanation, and that it will certainly not carry conviction in this country. I have informed him of our demands which are as follows:—

1. Before Russian Fleet leaves Vigo enquiry to be made by Russian authorities as to persons responsible for attack on fishing fleet. All these to be left behind, as well as any others whose testimony is essential to elucidation of facts.
2. A full enquiry to be held at once as to the facts by an independent Court with an international character. Procedure might be that laid down in Articles IX to XIV of Hague Convention, and Commission might be formed of naval officers of high rank representing the two Powers concerned and, say, three other Powers.
3. Russian Government to undertake to punish adequately any persons found guilty by Commission.

In reply to a question by him I said that if those demands were conceded, acute character of crisis would disappear, as Russian Government had already expressed its deep regret promised liberal compensation and undertaken to prevent recurrence of similar incidents.

⁽¹⁾ [Published with slight alteration in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), pp. 386-7.]

No. 15.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.**St. Petersburg, October 27, 1904.*

F.O. Russia 1729.

D. 8.40 P.M.

Tel. (No. 160.) Confidential.

R. 10 P.M.

Count Lamsdorff mentioned to me this morning that he had received Count Benckendorff's telegram contained in your telegram No. 180.⁽¹⁾ I gathered that he considered the general purport to be humiliating and unacceptable to a Great Power. It must be that the Russian Government are excessively sensitive at the present moment of their dignity as a Great Power after the reverses they have suffered.

After the explanation given by the Russian Admiral the matter has entered upon a new phase and the punishment of responsible officer has now become practically impossible. I venture to suggest that a solution of the difficulty might be found by the immediate proposal (of joint) enquiries to be made at both Vigo and Hull.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced. It was expanded in despatch No. 377, which is printed above, pp. 11-13, No. 13.]

No. 16.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 378.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 27, 1904.

The Russian Ambassador asked me to see him this morning at 11 o'clock.

He told me that he had a remarkable and important communication to make to me. Captain Boström, the Naval Attaché to the Russian Embassy, had sent a private telegram yesterday morning to Admiral Rozdjestwensky informing him of the events alleged to have taken place in the North Sea on the night of the 21st instant. Captain Boström had received this morning a telegram from the Admiral, despatched from Vigo at 9.50 p.m., running as follows:—

“The North Sea incident was occasioned by the action of two torpedo boats which steamed at full speed under cover of the night, and shewing no lights, towards the ship which was leading our detachment. It was only after our search-lights had been turned on that it was remarked that a few small steam craft bearing a resemblance to trawlers were present.

“The detachment made every effort to spare these craft, and ceased firing as soon as the torpedo boats had disappeared from sight.

“The Russian detachment did not include any torpedo destroyers, and no Russian vessel of any kind was left behind upon the scene of the incident. It follows that the vessel which is declared to have remained in the neighbourhood of the small fishing boats until daylight must have been one of the two enemy's torpedo boats, which had only sustained some injuries, the other one having been sunk.

“Our ships refrained from giving assistance to the trawlers on account of their apparent complicity, which they manifested by their persistence in attempting to pass through our line.

“Some of these trawlers did not show their navigation lights for a long time, and others not at all.”

⁽¹⁾ [Published with some alterations and omissions in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2850). pp. 387-9.]

His Excellency said that he had asked, but not yet obtained permission from Count Lamsdorff to communicate this telegram to me officially. In the meantime he could only do so on his own responsibility.

After reading the telegram, I told Count Benckendorff that the version given by the Admiral was one which would not carry the slightest conviction with it in this country. The statement seemed to me to bristle with improbabilities. How was it possible that these Japanese Torpedo Boats should have been found in the middle of the North Sea? Where had they come from? What evidence was there to show that they existed? Captain Boström, who was present at our interview, said that it was scarcely possible for the Russian officers to have made a mistake. The steam trawlers were slow-going craft, whose appearance left no doubt as to their character. The two Torpedo Boats had, on the contrary, been seen going at a great speed. I replied that I had no expert knowledge of these matters, but that it was well known that the trawling fleet had attached to it a certain number of swift steamers which ply between the fleet and our ports, carrying from the former to the latter the daily catch of the trawlers. It seemed to me at least possible that these Carriers should have been mistaken by panic-stricken officers for Torpedo Boats.

Count Benckendorff laid much stress upon the statement that the detachment of the Russian Fleet did not include any Torpedo Boats, and that no Russian vessel of any kind had remained behind upon the scene of the incident. I asked whether it was not the case that the Russian Fleet consisted of fifty or sixty vessels of different sorts, and whether it was possible for the Russian Admiral to be sure that one of these had not lagged behind. Was he in a position to answer for every ship in the Squadron? Captain Boström interposed the important statement that, in his belief, the Admiral himself was not there, and had derived his information from other officers who were.

Count Benckendorff asked me whether I did not think that the Admiral's statement entirely altered the situation. I replied that I did not think so. We still demanded a thorough investigation with the view to ascertaining where the responsibility lay and obtaining the punishment of the culprits.

Count Benckendorff replied that it was evident that an investigation had already taken place. The Admiral had arrived at Vigo early yesterday, and had no doubt already instituted an enquiry to supplement any information which he had been able to collect during his voyage.

I replied that the enquiry, if there had been one, must obviously have been of a very hurried description, and that it was idle to suppose that we could regard it as disposing of the facts of the case. The situation was this—We had made representations founded upon evidence which we believed to be in the main trustworthy, although there might be room for doubt in regard to points of detail. There was no doubt that these unfortunate men had been killed and their vessels sunk or injured, and that they were absolutely innocent. The Russian Government had now put in the counter-statement which he had just handed to me, and which, as I had already said, we could obviously not accept as conclusive. In such a case there was only one course which could properly be followed. The whole case must form the subject of a complete and searching investigation, and such an investigation could not take place without the presence of the persons who were responsible for the attack upon the fishing fleet and thoroughly aware of the circ[umstance]s under which it took place. We adhered to our demand that those persons should be recalled and placed upon their trial.

I begged His Excellency to telegraph at once in this sense to the Russian Government, and he said that he would do so.

His Excellency called upon me again in the afternoon. I told him that I had communicated to the Prime Minister and some of my colleagues the telegram which he had allowed me to see in the morning, and that I had repeated to them the observations which I had made to His Excellency during our interview. They had approved my language, and regarded Admiral Rojdestvensky's explanation as one which it was out of the question for us to accept, and which would not be taken

seriously in this country. I was now in a position to tell His Excellency that in our view it was absolutely necessary that before the Russian Fleet leaves Vigo steps should be taken by the Russian authorities to ascertain who were the persons responsible for the attack upon the fishing fleet. All these persons should be left behind, as well as any others whose testimony was regarded by the Russian Naval Authorities as essential to the elucidation of the facts. An enquiry would then be held as to these, and in our view such an enquiry could best be entrusted to an independent Court possessing an international character. Articles IX to XIV of the Hague Convention on International Commissions of Enquiry seemed to us to provide for such an enquiry. We were inclined to think that the Commission might in this instance be formed of naval officers of high rank representing the two Powers concerned, and, say, three of the other Great Powers; but these were details which might be hereafter discussed. It would of course be a *sine qua non* that we should receive an assurance from the Russian Government that they would punish adequately the persons, if any, who might be found by the international Commission to have been guilty. His Excellency said at once that such an assurance would certainly be forthcoming. He told me that he had already telegraphed, as the impression which he had derived from a conversation with me, the substance of what I had said to him in the morning. He would now confirm this telegram officially. He had made it quite clear that we insisted upon a trial, and that this involved the appearance ("confrontation") of the persons interested and therefore their withdrawal from the Fleet—"débarquement". He asked me whether he might add that if this demand were conceded the crisis would no longer remain acute. I said that as the Russian Government were ready to express its deep regret, to promise liberal compensation, and also to assure us that precautions would be taken to prevent a recurrence of such incidents, it seemed to me that the further demand which we had been discussing was, in effect, the only obstacle to an arrangement which would certainly deprive the situation of its present acute character.

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

No. 17.

Admiralty to Foreign Office.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

Immediate.

Sir,

Admiralty, October 27, 1904.

With reference to the North Sea incident, I am commanded by my Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty to request that you will inform the Marquess of Lansdowne that, from enquiries which have been made, it has been ascertained that there were no torpedo boat Destroyers belonging to H[is] M[ajesty's] Fleet in the North Sea between Friday afternoon (21st instant) and Monday (24th instant).

I am, &c.

EVAN MACGREGOR.

⁽¹⁾ [Published in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2850), p. 389.]

No. 18.

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.⁽¹⁾

St. Petersburg, October 28, 1904.

F.O. Russia 1729.

D. 3·46 [P.M.]

Tel. (No. 164.)

R. 3·20 [P.M.]

Count Lamsdorff has just communicated to me following telegram which has been sent to Russian Ambassador at London.

“Desiring to throw as much light as possible on what has passed in North Sea our august Master considers it useful to submit the scrupulous examination of this question to an international commission of enquiry as foreshadowed by the Convention of the Hague. By supreme order Your Excellency is invited to propose this mode of solution to the British Government.”

Count Lamsdorff adds in his note the hope that this proposal will meet with the best reception in London.

(¹) [Paraphrased in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), p. 389.]

No. 19.

Admiralty to Foreign Office.

F.O. Russia 1729.

Immediate and Confidential.

Sir,

Admiralty, October 28, 1904.

I have to transmit herewith, for the information of the Secretary of State, deciphers of telegrams which have been sent to the Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean, Home fleet and Vice-Admiral, Channel fleet, in consequence of the outrage committed by the Baltic fleet in the North Sea.

I am, &c.

EVAN MACGREGOR.

Enclosure 1 in No. 19.

*Decipher of Telegram No. 361 sent to Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean,
25th October, 1904.*

Tel. (No. 361.)

Admiralty, October 25, 1904.

Send 6 Battleships and all Armoured Cruisers and all available Destroyers immediately to Gibraltar to wait orders.

Enclosure 2 in No. 19.

*Decipher of Telegram No. 69 sent to Vice-Admiral, Channel Fleet, Gibraltar,
27th October, 1904.*

Tel. (No. 69.)

Admiralty, October 27, 1904.

In consequence of the outrage in the North Sea, H[is] M[ajesty's] Government have informed the Russian Government that an immediate and ample apology, full reparation, punishment of the responsible Officers, and security against a repetition of the offence are expected.

It will obviously be necessary for the Russian Government to detain the Baltic fleet at Vigo or in the vicinity for a sufficient time to obtain full information and ascertain who is responsible.

We hope that the Russian Government will do this without hesitation, for we could not allow the Baltic Fleet to get out of our reach without any attempt having been made to satisfy our demands. This is not a case where diplomatic delays can be tolerated.

It may become necessary for you to stop the Baltic Fleet, by persuasion if possible, but by force if necessary.

In order to make your force such that there could be no dishonour to the Russians in yielding to it we are sending you six battleships, four armoured cruisers, and all available destroyers from the Mediterranean, but the ships from the Mediterranean except the cruisers already detained at Gibraltar, can hardly reach you before Tuesday next.

In another telegram you will receive full particulars of Baltic Fleet and what we know of its movements. Full instructions will be sent you later without which you are not to act, but meanwhile keep touch with the movements of the Baltic Fleet by means of your cruisers, so far as you can.

Enclosure 3 in No. 19.

Decipher of Telegram sent to Commander-in-Chief, Home Fleet, 27th October, 1904.

Tel. Admiralty, October 27, 1904.

Proceed at once to Portland. Report when you can leave.

Enclosure 4 in No. 19.

Decipher of Telegram sent to Captain (D), "Halcyon," 27th October, 1904.

Tel. Admiralty, October 27, 1904.

Assemble the three flotillas at Portland at once.

Enclosure 5 in No. 19.

Decipher of Telegram sent to Commander-in-Chief, Mediterranean (to Pola), No. 368, 27th October, 1904.

Tel. (No. 368.) Admiralty, October 27, 1904.

Assemble at once all the ships under your command at Malta, except those ordered to Gibraltar. Fill up with coal and stores and await further orders. Arrange to mask if necessary the Russian Vessels in Eastern Mediterranean.

No. 20.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 379.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 28, 1904.

The Russian Ambassador called on me this morning at eleven o'clock.

His Excellency informed me that he had just received a telegram from Count Lamsdorff to the effect that telegraphic instructions had been sent to Admiral Rojdestvensky to remain at Vigo until he received further instructions, with the vessels in the presence of which the North Sea incident had taken place, with a view to the necessary elucidation of the facts.

⁽¹⁾ [Published with slight alterations in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), pp. 391-3.]

The Russian Government were convinced that in these circumstances the Spanish Government would not raise any objection to the prolongation of the stay of part of the Fleet at Vigo. His Excellency expressed a hope that His Majesty's Government would intimate to the Spanish Government that they would raise no objection to the Russian ships remaining at Vigo for this purpose. I replied that I would instruct Sir E. Egerton to this effect.

His Excellency dwelt upon the great importance of a decision he had announced, which would have the effect of avoiding the difficulties which might have arisen had the whole Russian Fleet pursued its voyage immediately. His Excellency told me that he had also received telegrams from Count Lamsdorff in which he was instructed to ascertain the ideas of the British Government in regard to the manner in which any preliminary enquiry which might be held at Vigo should be conducted, and, secondly, how we proposed that the subsequent enquiry at St. Petersburg should be organised? Count Lamsdorff wished us to understand that he objected to any arrangement which would give the British Government "control" over the proceedings. His Excellency explained that these telegrams were none of them in reply to that which he had sent yesterday at my instance proposing an investigation of the facts by an independent tribunal. I replied that the enquiries which would be instituted at Vigo seemed to me to concern the Russian Authorities whose duty it would be to single out and detain any persons who were responsible for the attack on the fishing fleet or whose testimony was, in their opinion, necessary for the purposes of the subsequent proceedings. As for the Court of Enquiry at St. Petersburg, I had already explained that we only desired to be given an opportunity of watching the proceedings and seeing that the evidence for the British case was properly put forward. I pointed out however that under the proposal which we had lately been discussing the St. Petersburg Court could not sit until after the enquiry as to the facts had taken place.

His Excellency dwelt with much earnestness upon the necessity of treating this difficult question in a conciliatory spirit. He trusted that the Prime Minister, in the speech which he was to deliver this evening, would give the Russian Government credit for having with the utmost promptitude expressed its regret for the incident, and proposed compensation upon the most liberal scale for the sufferers. As for the rest, they merely asked to be allowed to wait for the Admiral's report. They had never repelled any of our suggestions ("n'avaient jamais rien repoussé"), and they had dealt as expeditiously as possible with our representations. A certain amount of delay was however inevitable. It seemed to him that if the Prime Minister was able to say something of this sort, and further, that the responsible section of the Fleet had been ordered to remain at Vigo pending an enquiry as to the persons who were responsible for the attack, that a full and searching enquiry would then be held as to the whole of the facts, and that any persons found guilty of misconduct would be placed upon their trial and adequately punished, public opinion in this country ought to be satisfied.

His Excellency read to me another telegram which reached him while he was in my room, from Count Lamsdorff, who said he was just going to see the Emperor, and that in his own opinion the idea of an International Commission under the Hague Convention was an excellent one.

I told His Excellency that I should not fail to report what he had said to the Prime Minister, who would, I felt sure, endeavour to avoid exasperating public opinion either here or abroad.

(²)His Excellency called upon me again this afternoon immediately after the sitting of the Cabinet, and brought with him a communication, of which he allowed me to take a copy, from Count Lamsdorff, which ran as follows:—

" Désirant jeter le plus de lumière possible sur tout ce qui s'est passé dans la Mer du Nord, l'Empereur trouverait utile de déferer l'examen scrupuleux de

(²) [The part of this despatch which follows was submitted to His Majesty King Edward, who marked it "App[rove]d.—E.R."]

cette question à une commission internationale d'enquête prévue par la Convention de la Haye. D'ordre de Sa Majesté, Votre Excellence est invitée à proposer ce mode de solution au Gouvernement de Sa Majesté Britannique."

I told His Excellency that the question had been carefully examined by the Cabinet, and that the proposal now made by Count Lamsdorff was in accord with that which I had yesterday expressed the willingness of His Majesty's Government to accept. It dealt however only with a part of the question before us, and it was necessary that there should be no misunderstanding with regard to the remaining points. I asked His Excellency whether I had his authority to authorise Mr. Balfour to make a statement, should he desire to do so, upon the following lines:—

"The Russian Government, on hearing of the North Sea incident, at once expressed its profound regrets. The Russian Emperor telegraphed to the King in the same sense.

"The Russian Government also promised the most liberal compensation.

"They have now ordered the detention at Vigo of that part of the Fleet which was concerned in the incident, in order that the Naval Authorities may ascertain what officers were responsible for the incident.

"These officers and any material witnesses will not proceed with the Fleet on its voyage to the Far East.

"An enquiry will be instituted into the facts. The Russian Government consider that for this purpose it would be useful to entrust this enquiry to an international commission of the kind provided for by the Hague Convention.

"Any persons found guilty by this tribunal will be tried by the Russian Government and punished adequately.

"The Russian Government undertake that precautions will be taken to guard against the recurrence of such incidents, and with this object special instructions will be issued to the whole Russian Fleet, so as to secure neutral commerce from all risk."

His Excellency said that I was at liberty so to inform the Prime Minister.

I may observe that I asked His Excellency at first whether the Russian Government would supply us with a list of the Russian vessels which were to be detained at Vigo. He expressed his reluctance to ask for this information, but observed that such a list would have to be furnished to the Spanish Government, from which we could no doubt obtain it. I informed him that in these circumstances I would not press for a nominal list of the vessels. I dwelt at some length upon the importance of issuing special instructions to the Russian Fleet with the object of avoiding a recurrence of such incidents as that which had occurred in the North Sea. I explained that I urged this demand in the interests not only of British, but of neutral commerce generally. I referred His Excellency particularly to the statement contained in your telegram No. 157 of the 27th inst[ant],⁽³⁾ from which we learned that the Russian Admiral had

⁽³⁾ [Sir C. Hardinge's Telegram No. 157 of October 27, 1904, D. 3.50 P.M., R. 6.15 P.M., quoted the text of a telegram sent by the Admiral in Command of the Baltic Fleet at Vigo to the Minister of Marine. It was communicated to Sir C. Hardinge by Count Lamsdorff on the 27th. The text was as follows:—

"Count Lamsdorff has invited me to take necessary steps for protection of English fishermen near Vigo.

The squadron has met many hundreds of fishermen and has treated them with every consideration except in the case when the fishermen were in company of foreign torpedo boats one of which has disappeared and the other, according to deposition of the fishermen themselves, remained near them till morning. They took it for a Russian ship and were indignant that it did not come to help the wounded, but it was of foreign nationality and remained till morning to find its consort or to repair its damages. It evidently feared to betray its origin to those who were not its accomplices. If there were also fishermen on the spot who were imprudently drawn into the enterprise I wish to express in the name of the whole squadron to the unfortunate victims their most sincere regrets. In the above-mentioned circumstances no warship could have acted otherwise even in time of profound peace."

reported to the Minister of Marine that "even in time of peace no warship could have acted otherwise" than the Russian vessels which had attacked our trawling fleet. I had noticed apparently authentic statements in the French press to the effect that Admiral Rojdestvensky claimed to have acted in conformity with the instructions given to him at the time of starting. It was stated that the officers in command of the Fleet knew when they left Libau that they had to fire upon every boat that came near their Squadron. If instructions of this kind had been issued, and remained in force, the presence of the Russian Fleet was a menace to neutral commerce in any seas through which it might pass. We considered it our duty to protest against this doctrine, and I was glad to understand from His Excellency that measures would be taken with the object of impressing upon the Russian Navy a very different view of their duties as belligerents.

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

No. 21.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir E. Monson.

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 554.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 28, 1904.

The French Ambassador, with whom I have been in constant communication during the last few days upon the subject of the North Sea incident, called upon me this morning. He had received private information from the Russian Ambassador that the Russian Government had consented to stop their Fleet, or a portion of it, at Vigo, and also that they took no exception to our proposal that an enquiry should be held as to the facts. His Excellency expressed to me the opinion that the first of these concessions was of great importance. He earnestly trusted that it would enable us to find a solution of the difficulty. The situation seemed to him very serious, but the difficulty of finding a solution ought not to be insuperable. The French Government, whom he had kept fully informed, naturally took an intense interest in the question. The French held a vast financial stake in Russia, and there was besides the well-known understanding between the two countries. His Excellency said that he did not himself know precisely what obligations France had undertaken in virtue of that understanding. He did not however believe that if there was a collision, France would join Russia against us, but if a collision occurred, and particularly if it were brought on by unreasonable demands on our part, there would be a *revirement* of public feeling, and the Anglo-French *entente* could not fail to suffer. It seemed to the French Government that, considering how slow were the methods usual in Russian diplomacy, the Russian Gov[ernmen]t had upon this occasion been prompt in apologizing and offering the promises of reparation. It was not altogether unnatural that they should have desired to await the report of their Admiral before saying more. That report had now been received, and seemed, His Excellency said, to him, to be absurd, although there certainly were some circumstances which seemed to require explanation: he earnestly trusted that the Prime Minister would deal with the question this evening in a conciliatory spirit, and would make the most of the progress which had already taken place in the direction of a satisfactory arrangement.

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

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

App[rove]d.—E.R.

No. 22.

*Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.**St. Petersburg, October 29, 1904.*

F.O. Russia 1729.

D. 12.54 A.M.

Tel. (No. 165.)

R. 8 A.M.

Your tel[egram] No. 183.⁽¹⁾ I have just had a long conversation with C[oun]t Lamsdorff. He said that he had not understood from Russian Ambassador's tel[egram] that Y[our] L[ordship] had made practically the same proposal for an international court of enquiry based on Hague Convention, but that he gladly accepts this proof of Y[our] L[ordship]'s readiness to accept proposal made by Emperor and as soon as he hears of its formal acceptance he will discuss details of its composition and procedure. He advocates that it should be simplified as much as possible.

Orders have been sent to detain squadron at Vigo and instr[uction]s will be sent to detach those officers who were in best position to judge what took place. Count Lamsdorff declined to discuss question of punishment as he could not admit until the results of enquiry were known that guilt attached to any Russian officers. At the conclusion of the enquiry it would be the moment to apportion responsibilities and their consequences in whatever direction they might lie. He expressed great satisfaction at the peaceful turn given to discussion of this question which he attributed to careful moderation of Y[our] L[ordship]'s language since any symptom of menace would have been deeply resented and could hardly have failed to produce a war which would have been a reproach to the civilization of this century. He complained bitterly of the menacing tone of the British press but I pointed out that it was intelligible.

(¹) [*v. supra*, p. 14, No. 14.]

No. 23.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1729.

(No. 388.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 29, 1904.

The Russian Ambassador called upon me today and told me that he had read the speech delivered by the Prime Minister last night at Southampton with much interest. Of what His Excellency termed the political part of the speech—that in which the attitude and conduct of the Russian Government were referred to—he had not a word of complaint to make. He thought, on the contrary, that it was better than he had ventured to expect; but he greatly deplored the passages in which Mr. Balfour referred to the Admiral's explanation of the North Sea incident. Mr. Balfour's tone seemed to him needlessly caustic and offensive. Statements solemnly made by high Russian Naval Authorities were described as mere romances. The speech would be regarded as an insult to the Russian naval uniform. Count Benckendorff greatly regretted that Mr. Balfour should have spoken in this manner, as he feared that the effect produced by the speech would render it more difficult hereafter to deal with any complications which might arise.

(¹) [On October 29 the Emperor Nicholas II unexpectedly summoned Sir C. Hardinge (*v. Tel. No. 167 to Lord Lansdowne of Oct. 30, F.O. Russia 1730*). This telegram is not given here as being more fully reported by a despatch of October 31, *v. immediately succeeding document.*]

I expressed my satisfaction at learning that His Excellency was pleased with Mr. Balfour's references to the Russian Government. I knew that the Prime Minister had taken great pains in order to do justice to their attitude. As for the references to the Admiral's explanation, it would, to my mind, have been impossible for Mr. Balfour to avoid making it quite clear that we were wholly unable to accept it. The Admiral's explanation was, in effect, an attack upon the manner in which we had conducted ourselves as neutrals, and we were bound to repel it and to show that it had no foundation. I drew a great distinction between a refusal to accept an explanation put forward by a Russian sailor of high rank and a refusal to accept the word of the Russian Government.

I then mentioned to H[is] E[xcellency] a subject which had been much in my thoughts. We had fortunately been able to dispose for the moment of the critical question which had caused us both so much anxiety during the last few days, and I did not see why there should be any difficulty in dealing with the further phases of the case.

I owned however that I lived in dread of new troubles arising. The Russian Government had undertaken to issue instructions to guard against the recurrence of such events as that of the 21st inst[ant] and I felt sure that they would know how to secure compliance with their orders. Count Lamsdorff no doubt realised as thoroughly as we did that it had not been without the greatest difficulty that we had avoided a conflict. In endeavouring to do so we had gone as far as we dared—further than many of our friends would have liked us to go. I would not, in these circumstances, dwell upon the results of a repetition of the North Sea incident.

There was however another peril against which it was our duty to guard. The Russian Fleet was, I understood, about to proceed on its way to the Far East, partly round the Cape and partly through the Suez Canal. If, during its long voyage, the Russian captains considered themselves justified in a wholesale seizure of vessels suspected of carrying contraband, public feeling in this country would become uncontrollable. Important questions of international law, connected with this subject, were at this moment being discussed in no unfriendly spirit between the two Governments. It would be deplorable if at such a time a multitude of British prizes, were seized upon the assumption that the Russian and not the British interpretation of the law was to prevail, and were sent up the Channel and past our shores for adjudication in Russian Prize Courts. I asked H[is] E[xcellency] to say a few words upon this subject to Count Lamsdorff if he thought fit. I was not making any complaint, or asking for any further pledges, but merely giving a friendly warning in the interest of those good relations which Count Lamsdorff was, I knew, as anxious to preserve as I was myself.

Count Benckendorff observed in reply that in his belief the instructions already issued by the Russian Naval Authorities rendered it highly improbable that numerous or arbitrary seizures would be made. His own impression was that the Fleet would proceed to its destination as rapidly as possible without troubling itself about searches for contraband. He promised to write to me upon this subject.

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

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Russia 1730.

(No. 548.) Confidential.

St. Petersburg, D. October 31, 1904.

My Lord,

R. November 8, 1904.

I have the honour to report to Your Lordship that I received at a late hour on the evening of the 29th instant a notification from Count Lamsdorff that His Majesty the Emperor desired to receive me the following day in private audience during the afternoon.

On my arrival at the Palace of Tsarskoe Selo I was immediately received by the Emperor in his private study in a most gracious manner.

His Majesty having told me to sit down on a chair placed close to him at his writing table, said that he had sent for me to have a good talk in a frank and open way, and begged me to be equally frank with him.

His Majesty began by expressing his deep regret and sorrow for the loss of life and the sufferings of the fishermen and their families owing to the most unfortunate and unexpected incident which had occurred in the North Sea. Although it had been anticipated that attacks on the Baltic fleet by paid Japanese Agents were not improbable, it had never occurred to anybody for an instant that the lives and safety of the English fishermen on the North Sea would be in any way compromised by the measures taken for the protection of the squadron from Japanese machinations. As for pecuniary compensation to the many sufferers he could assure me that it would be given on the most liberal scale, in fact anything that was asked would be given. He had noticed that Their Majesties the King and Queen had made gifts of money to the sufferers and their families, and he and the Empress were equally desirous of showing their sympathy and asked me if I thought that he could do so now.

I replied that although I felt sure that His Majesty's generous idea would be much appreciated in England, still I was of opinion that it would be wiser to defer its execution until a moment of greater calm, since it would present an opening for cynical allusions in the press which would naturally be resented here, and which would at the same time cause pain both to the King and to His Majesty's Government. His Majesty said that he quite understood, and begged me to let him know through Count Lamsdorff the proper moment for showing his and the Empress' sympathy with the sufferers.

His Majesty continued that he had two complaints to make.

Firstly, the attitude of the English press had been threatening and over hasty. They had at once accepted the statements of the fishermen, and without admitting the possibility of any explanations of the incident which had occurred, they had demanded the condemnation and punishment of officers of the fleet before they had had an opportunity of being heard.

Secondly, the extensive naval preparations which the actual circumstances of the case did not appear to warrant, and which were of a distinctly provocative character. "What," His Majesty asked, "would people in England have said if, in answer to these naval preparations, I had ordered the mobilization of the Black Sea fleet and of the Caucasian and Turkestan Army Corps, which I should have been quite justified in doing, and what would have been the present position of this question?" His Majesty added that, anxious as he had been to know what really had occurred in the North Sea, he knew that he would have to wait patiently until the arrival of the fleet at Vigo, since, owing to the difference in foreign codes and the consequent difficulty of communicating by wireless telegraphy, the Admiral had been unable to communicate with St. Petersburg from the different telegraph stations on the shores of the channel.

I told His Majesty that I believed the naval preparations were somewhat exaggerated by the press, and that although the attitude of some of the organs of

the English press had, I admitted, been somewhat unnecessarily defiant in tone, it must be remembered and taken into account that the whole of the British nation had been stirred from its very depths by the news of the tragedy in the North Sea. As His Majesty knew, any control of the English press was quite beyond the power of His Majesty's Government, and the press had reflected the feelings of the masses who recognized that no question of politics was involved, but that some of their brothers and fellow workmen while in pursuit of their innocent vocation had been killed and injured, and they called on the Government for protection and reparation. The Government who must naturally be influenced to a certain extent by public opinion had uttered no menaces, but after reporting what had occurred had asked for explanations of the action of the Baltic fleet, intimating at the same time that it was a matter of which the settlement did not admit of delay.

His Majesty assented as to the attitude of His Majesty's Government, but said that the press had now become a tyranny which in foreign politics was capable of great mischief and from which it was difficult to escape.

As to the statements telegraphed by Admiral Rojestvensky,⁽¹⁾ His Majesty expressed his absolute conviction of their sincerity, and that the facts stated by the Admiral would be borne out by the results of the enquiry which would be instituted shortly. The Admiral was in himself a bluff and honest sailor who thought of nothing but his ships and the work which he had been entrusted to carry out. On His Majesty's visit to the fleet at Reval the Admiral had expressed his fears as to the risks which he would run from Japanese attempts to destroy his fleet, and had informed His Majesty that in order to protect his ships from attack he would fire on all others which approached too near, and which he thought entertained hostile designs. I told His Majesty that such action would be entirely contrary to international usage, and would constitute a very grave and serious danger to commercial shipping, especially when the Baltic squadron was passing through narrow seas such as the Channel, which were always crowded with merchant shipping. His Majesty replied that when the fleet of a belligerent is on the high seas it carries with it a state of war, but that he felt confident that no more incidents such as had occurred in the North Sea would take place in the future. Admiral Rojestvensky was of opinion that the danger of secret attack would be greatly diminished as soon as the fleet had left European waters. That the danger was a very real one had been conclusively proved by many facts which had come to light and which had been brought to his notice. Amongst these was the visit of the Japanese Naval Attaché from Berlin to Copenhagen, and the recent arrival of twenty Japanese officers at Hull. I at once interposed that careful enquiry had been made as to the truth of the latter allegation, which had already been made to me by Count Lamsdorff, and that it had been shown to be without foundation.

On His Majesty's alluding to the Commission of Enquiry, I congratulated His Majesty on the happy conception of an idea which had at once put an end to the dangerous phase of the existing controversy. His Majesty replied that he could not take to himself entire credit for the idea since it had been suggested to him by Count Lamsdorff. (This is interesting as showing that Count Lamsdorff evidently took credit to himself for an idea which had been conveyed to Count Benckendorff by Your Lordship.) He considered that the presence of three foreign Admirals, to be associated with the English and Russian Admirals would form the best composition of the Court, and that the Hague would be as good a place as any for the meeting. His Majesty stated that four or five officers had been detached from the squadron at Vigo and would return immediately to St. Petersburg so as to be available for examination before the Court of Enquiry. The fleet itself would proceed at once upon its journey which was absolutely necessary, since any delay would disturb and upset the very complicated arrangements which had been made for coaling the warships at different points.

The Emperor then remarked that he particularly wished to speak to me on the

⁽¹⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 15, No. 16, and p. 21, No. 20, note ⁽²⁾.]

subject of the seizure and release of the "Malacca." His Majesty reminded me that after some negotiation it had been agreed that the "Malacca" should be released on the British Consul at Algiers making a formal declaration that the military stores on board were destined for British naval depôts at Hong Kong and Singapore, and the release of the ship had been granted on the completion of this formality. The further voyage of this vessel had been carefully watched by the Russian Consuls and he had since been informed that the military stores were not disembarked at English ports but that they were forwarded to Japan. I at once told His Majesty that the information on which his statement was based was absolutely false, that neither His Majesty's Government nor I would ever be parties to a fraud of that kind, and that I had actually given to Count Lamsdorff a list of the Admiralty stores which corresponded exactly with the number of cases which the Russian Consul at Malta had announced as being part of the cargo of the "Malacca." His Majesty accepted my statement and remarked that he was pleased to hear that his information was wrong. His Majesty added that some of the other ships which had been taken by the "Petersburg" and "Smolensk" and which had been released had undoubtedly contained contraband of war. I replied that this was quite possible, but that the question in dispute with His Majesty's Government had not been the nature of the cargoes, but the status of the cruiser which effected their capture. I pointed out to His Majesty that a little care and foresight on the part of the Russian Government might without difficulty have prevented the friction which arose in the Red Sea and which at one moment threatened serious developments, since what was illegal for volunteer steamers would have been perfectly legal if Imperial cruisers had been employed in their places. So also it might have been foreseen that the sinking of the "Knight Commander" would raise a storm in England, since His Majesty's Government would never admit the right of a belligerent to sink British ships without trial before a Prize Court. On His Majesty asking how this matter now stood, I explained that it would before long be brought before the Supreme Prize Court, and that it was to be hoped that the verdict of the Court of First Instance would be reversed, since otherwise His Majesty's Government would be compelled to press a claim on the Russian Government for the full value of the ship. His Majesty said that in that case he supposed it would not be settled before the end of the war.

On His Majesty alluding to the question of contraband I said that the Russian Government had published such an unusual list of contraband that it was difficult for any mixed cargo to escape condemnation. They had further carried out their rules in such a harsh manner as to cause considerable losses and intense irritation in British commercial and shipping circles. The advantages gained from such a policy had so far been entirely negative. I added that while His Majesty's Government were pleased that the rules had been relaxed in favour of provisions, I was still waiting for an answer to my representations on the subject of coal. His Majesty at once replied that he had long wanted to tell me that I made a great mistake in pressing for the removal of coal from the list of contraband articles, since it was manifestly to the special interest of Great Britain that coal should be contraband of war. I remarked that His Majesty's Government did not appear to be of that opinion.

I mentioned that Colonel Napier had just returned from Central Asia which he had visited with the assent of the Military Authorities, and that I was pleased to hear from him that there had been no excessive military preparations in Turkestan. His Majesty assured me that that was undoubtedly the case, and that although there had been a slight increase of the military forces to suit local requirements, the number of additional troops was very small. I said that that corresponded more or less with the information in the possession of His Majesty's Embassy. His Majesty added that he ought not to tell me, but that a fortnight ago the Military Authorities asked his permission to make an experimental movement of a full division of troops to Turkestan by the Orenburg-Tashkend line, and that he had refused his consent knowing what a stir such a movement would have made amongst the Military Authorities in England and India.

His Majesty remarked that he was sorry that I had had so many difficult questions to deal with during the few months that I had been here as His Majesty's Ambassador, but that he was very happy to think the critical moments caused by the incident in the North Sea were happily over, and that danger of war had been averted. War between two great Empires such as Russia and England would be an unheard of crime, without gain for either country, since they would be in the same position after the war as before it, only considerably weakened. His Majesty added that he had not forgotten what the King had written, nor the messages with which I had been charged by His Majesty on my arrival as Ambassador, and that although he feared that recent incidents had stirred up feelings which would require some time to subside, he had every confidence that the improvement which he had recently noticed in the mutual relations between England and Russia would be revived.

His Majesty was then pleased to dismiss me.

The Emperor, who had detained me for more than an hour, treated me throughout in a most gracious manner, and was particularly friendly. It is unfortunate that such an interview as that in which I had the honour to take part is a most rare and exceptional occurrence, and His Majesty has therefore to rely in matters relating to foreign affairs solely on the information and opinions of his Representatives and Minister for Foreign Affairs, and it is evident from some of His Majesty's remarks to me that they are not always in accordance with facts.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

An admirable and most interesting Dispatch.

E.R.

No. 25.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir C. Hardinge.⁽¹⁾

F.O. Russia 1730.

(No. 389.)

Sir,

Foreign Office, October 31, 1904.

The Russian Ambassador made to me to-day a statement to the following effect:—

His Excellency had been informed yesterday by the Russian Government that orders had been sent to Admiral Rojdestvensky that the officers who would have to be witnesses before the International Commission agreed upon by the British and Russian Governments should be landed at Vigo immediately. These officers should proceed to the place where the Commission was to meet, together with the Admiral appointed to sit as Russian Commissioner.

In these circumstances, there was no reason why a part of the squadron commanded by Admiral Rojdestvensky should remain any longer at Vigo, (and his Excellency hoped that I would authorize him to inform his Government without delay that His Majesty's Government had taken all necessary measures in order that no obstacles should be placed in its way when it quitted Vigo and proceeded to its destination.)

Among the motives which rendered this departure urgent was the desire of the Russian Government not to abuse the hospitality of Spain by violating her neutrality.)

I told his Excellency that the terms of his communication suggested comments, which I proceeded to make.

⁽¹⁾ [Published in *A. & P.* (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2350), pp. 402-4. The passages in round brackets were omitted, and the starred paragraphs somewhat altered.]

I observed, in the first place, that the orders transmitted to Admiral Rojdestvensky had reference only to those officers who would be required to give evidence before the proposed International Commission. I assumed, of course, that this description included not only the officers whose presence as witnesses would be necessary, but those who had been ascertained by the Russian naval authorities to have been responsible for the attack upon the fishing fleet.

I also assumed that the Admiral who was to be designated as Russian Commissioner, and who was to accompany the detained officers, would be an Admiral who had taken no part in the proceedings of the fleet. His Excellency said that there could be no doubt upon this point.

**With regard to the assurance which his Excellency had asked me to give him, I said that, before I could take upon myself to give it, it was necessary that we should be satisfied upon certain points:—

1. We had a right to ask the Russian Government to inform us officially that instructions had been actually issued by the Russian naval authorities to the whole of their fleet for the purpose of avoiding a recurrence of incidents such as that which had occurred in the North Sea. His Excellency would recollect that he had authorized me to inform the Prime Minister that this would be done, and we attached the greatest importance to the point.

2. We had been officially informed by the Russian Government that the Admiral was to remain at Vigo with a portion of the fleet for the express purpose of designating the officers who were responsible for the attack. I gathered from his Excellency's statement that this investigation must already have taken place, with the result that certain individuals had been thus designated, and I had received a telegram from our Ambassador at St. Petersburg informing me that His Imperial Majesty the Emperor, who had been pleased to accord an audience to Sir Charles Hardinge, had stated that four or five officers had been detached from the squadron, and would return at once to St. Petersburg. Although it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to assume any responsibility for the selection of the officers who might be designated, we felt sure that the Russian Government would understand our desire to have some information as to the rank and position of those officers. (If the firing upon the fishing-boats took place in consequence of general instructions authorizing such an act, it seemed to us that the list should include the persons who were responsible for the issue of such instructions. If, on the other hand, it was contended that the instructions had been misinterpreted or disobeyed, then the list should include the persons who had been guilty of such misinterpretation or disobedience. The point was of importance, because the Admiral was represented as having said that, in the circumstances, as he reported them, no war-ship could have acted otherwise.^(?) We should certainly be pressed for information as to the persons detained at Vigo, and I hoped it would not be denied to us. We could, of course, not be content with the selection merely of one or two officers of subordinate positions.)

3. H[is] M[ajesty's] G[overnment] considered that the terms of reference to the Int[ernationa]l Commission should be settled immediately and they suggested the enclosed draft which they were prepared to accept in principle.

We considered it essential that the Commission should be authorized to apportion responsibility and blame.

This was indeed a necessary condition, as we understood that the R[ussian] G[overnment] had promised to punish adequately any persons who might be found by the Comm[ission] to have been responsible for the disaster and to whom, in their opinion blame attached.

The Commission should be convened and should commence and complete its investigations as soon as possible. For this reason we considered that each side should use every effort in order to furnish the Commission with the necessary evidence. It

(?) [v. *supra*, p. 21, No. 20, note (2).]

would be most unfortunate if owing to the absence of important witnesses, the Commission were to find itself obliged to adjourn its proceedings.

(I handed to Count Benckendorff a Memorandum embodying the substance of this despatch.)

***The Russian Ambassador told me that the proposals which I had made to him filled him with apprehension. They would certainly be regarded by the Russian Government as impugning their good faith. (It had been extremely difficult to obtain from them the settlement which had been announced by Mr. Balfour. There was every reason for believing that they were loyally carrying it out at this moment, and an announcement that a part of their Fleet could not safely proceed upon its way to the Far East until further conditions had been complied with would be deeply resented.) H[is] E[xc]ellency was particularly sensitive in regard to the question of the punishment of the officers who were responsible for the incident. I explained to him that, in our view the punishment would have to be inflicted by the Russian G[overnmen]t but that it was indispensable that the Commission sh[ou]ld be authorized to deal with the question of blame. The stipulation was not one-sided, for the defence made by the Russian Admiral was an imputation on the manner in which our neutrality had been observed, as well as upon the conduct of the fishing fleet. (I made a great, but I fear fruitless effort to convince His Excellency of the reasonableness of our demands, and I subsequently addressed to him a letter of which a copy is enclosed.

His Excellency called upon me again in the evening, and told me that he had come to the conclusion that the best thing for him to do was to withdraw altogether his request for an assurance with regard to the safety of the Russian Fleet. He preferred to separate this question entirely from that of the steps to be taken for the purpose of giving effect to the Russian promises. I said that I had no objection to this mode of procedure, and that His Excellency could, if he preferred it, report that, sharing as I did Count Lamsdorff's desire for a speedy adjustment of the difficulties which had arisen, I had pressed for information as to the important points which I had mentioned to him earlier in the day.)

[I am, &c.
LANSDOWNE.]

Enclosure 1 in No. 25.

Draft of Proposed Agreement for reference to International Commission of Enquiry.

Whereas during the night of October 21-22 1904 a British steam fishing fleet, while engaged in fishing off the Dogger Bank in the North Sea was fired upon by vessels forming part of the Russian Baltic Fleet, and whereas this action has resulted in the total loss of one of the fishing boats and the death of two persons as well as damage to other vessels of the fleet and injuries to members of the crews of the said fleet, And whereas a difference of opinion has arisen between the Government of His Britannic Majesty and the Government of His Imperial Majesty the Emperor of Russia in connection with this incident :

The Undersigned being duly authorized thereto by their respective Governments agree that the elucidation of the questions in dispute shall be referred to an International Commission of Inquiry analogous to that provided for in Articles 9-14 of the Convention signed at The Hague on the 29th of July 1899.

It is also hereby agreed as follows :—

ARTICLE I.

The International Commission of Enquiry shall consist of five Commissioners and shall be constituted in the following manner. Two of the Commissioners shall be officers of high rank in the Navies of Great Britain and Russia respectively. The Governments of France and the United States shall each be requested to select one

Commissioner who shall be an officer of high rank in the French and United States' Navies respectively. The fifth Commissioner shall be selected by agreement between the four Commissioners above-mentioned and if they cannot agree the choice shall be entrusted to His Majesty the King of

ARTICLE II.

The Commission shall enquire into and report upon all the circumstances attending the disaster in the North Sea and particularly as to where the responsibility for the disaster lies and the degree of blame which attaches to those upon whom that responsibility is found to rest.

ARTICLE III.

The Commission shall settle in all respects the procedure to be adopted by them for carrying out the duties imposed upon them by this Agreement.

ARTICLE IV.

Each of the High Contracting Parties engage [*sic*] to supply the Commission in the fullest manner possible with all means and facilities necessary to enable it to perform its duties.

ARTICLE V.

The Commission shall meet at Paris as soon as possible after the signature of this Agreement.

ARTICLE VI.

The Commission shall communicate its report to each of the High Contracting Parties.

[*ED. NOTE.*—A subsequent attempt was made by the Russian Government to omit the "responsibility" article, *i.e.*, No. 2. On November 4, however, Count Lamsdorff communicated to Sir C. Hardinge the information that "by the Emperor's orders the six articles were accepted in their entirety" (Despatch No. 563 of November 8, 1904). News of this was sent to Lord Lansdowne in Tel. No. 182 of November 4. Subsequently some attempts to revise the wording of the articles were made by the Russian naval authorities. Further discussion, which ended on November 15, produced an addition to Article II (*v. infra*, pp. 36-7, *Ed. note*, and No. 28, *note* (2).)]

Enclosure 2 in No. 25.⁽³⁾

Substance of observations made by Lord Lansdowne to Count Benckendorff on October 31, with reference to the statement communicated by His Excellency on that day.

Lord Lansdowne observed, in the first place, that the orders transmitted to Admiral Rojhdestvensky had reference only to those officers who would be required to give evidence before the proposed International Commission. He assumed, as a matter of course, that this description included not only the officers whose presence as witnesses would be necessary, but those who had been ascertained by the Russian Naval Authorities to have been responsible for the attack upon the fishing fleet.

Lord Lansdowne also assumed that the Admiral who was to be designated as Russian Commissioner, and who was to accompany the detained officers, would be an Admiral who had taken no part in the proceedings of the Baltic Fleet.

With regard to the assurance which Count Benckendorff desired Lord Lansdowne to give him, respecting the departure of Admiral Rojhdestvensky's squadron from Vigo, Lord Lansdowne said that before he could take upon himself to give it, it seemed to him necessary that certain conditions should be fulfilled.

⁽³⁾ [This enclosure and the one following were omitted from the Parliamentary Paper, *v. supra*, p. 28, *note* (1).]

1. The Russian Government would, Lord Lansdowne presumed, have no difficulty in giving His Majesty's Government a specific assurance that instructions had been actually issued by the Russian Naval Authorities to the whole of their Fleet for the purpose of avoiding the recurrence of incidents such as that which had occurred in the North Sea. Count Benckendorff would recollect that he had authorised Lord Lansdowne to inform the Prime Minister that this would be done, and His Majesty's Government attached the greatest importance to the point.

2. His Majesty's Government had been officially informed by the Russian Government that the Admiral was to remain at Vigo with a portion of the Fleet for the express purpose of making an enquiry into the facts and designating the officers who were responsible for the attack. Lord Lansdowne gathered from His Excellency's statement that this investigation must already have taken place, with the result that certain individuals had been thus designated, and he had received a telegram from His Majesty's Ambassador at St. Petersburg informing him that His Imperial Majesty the Emperor, who had been pleased to accord an audience to Sir Charles Hardinge, had stated that four or five officers had been detached from the squadron and would return at once to St. Petersburg. Although it was impossible for His Majesty's Government to assume any responsibility for the selection of the officers who might be designated, they felt sure that the Russian Government would understand their desire to have some information as to the rank and position of those officers. If the firing upon the fishing vessels took place in consequence of general instructions authorising such an act, it seemed to His Majesty's Government that the list should include the persons who were responsible for the issue of such instructions. If, on the other hand, it was contended that the instructions had been misinterpreted or disobeyed, then the list should include the persons who had been guilty of such misinterpretation or disobedience. The point was of importance, because the Admiral was represented as having said that under the circumstances, as he reported them, no warship could have acted otherwise. In these circumstances His Majesty's Government would certainly be pressed for information as to the persons detained at Vigo, and Lord Lansdowne hoped that it would not be refused. His Majesty's Government could, of course, not be content with the selection merely of a few officers of subordinate positions.

Lord Lansdowne understood that the Russian Government had promised to punish adequately any persons who might be found by the Commission to have been responsible for the disaster, and to whom, in their opinion, blame attached.

It seemed to him necessary that, before going further, the terms of the reference to the International Commission which it had been virtually agreed to appoint should be decided upon, and Lord Lansdowne suggested the enclosed draft, which His Majesty's Government were in principle prepared to accept.

His Majesty's Government joined with the Russian Government in holding that the international Commission should be convoked and should commence and complete its investigations as soon as possible. For this reason they considered that each side should use every effort in order to furnish the Commission with the necessary evidence. It would be most unfortunate if, owing to the absence of important witnesses, the Commission were to find itself obliged to adjourn its proceedings.

Enclosure 3 in No. 25.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Count Benckendorff.

Private.

My dear Ambassador,

Foreign Office, October 31, 1904.

I have repeated to the Prime Minister and discussed carefully with him the observations which you made this evening upon the proposals which I then communicated to you. I can assure you that the last thing which we desire is to make the promises which the Russian Government has given us an occasion for embarrassing them. It must however be noted that these promises have been publicly

repeated by the Prime Minister, and it will be in your recollection that he went out of his way to recognise the promptitude with which the Russian Government dealt with the situation. Every delay therefore, from whatever cause, in giving effect to this arrangement, would be eminently regrettable. But a delay apparently due, in part at least, to the desire of the Russian Government to minimise or depart from its expressed intentions would be most disastrous. If it became known that delay had arisen from this cause, the revulsion of feeling in the country would be uncontrollable. Every effort will therefore be made to keep it secret, but such secrecy cannot be indefinitely maintained.

Nothing has been asked for which is not essential to the rapid completion of the policy to which on Friday last both Governments agreed.

It surely cannot be held that it reflects on the Russian Government to ask whether the orders which they have promised to issue have in fact been issued to the Russian Fleet. A portion of this Fleet seems already to have passed Vigo, and some ships have even entered the Mediterranean. If the views expressed by the Russian Admiral as to the duties of a ship of war really animate this portion of the Fleet, they are, in our opinion, a serious danger to neutrals. It is surely unreasonable to refuse to give us an assurance that new instructions have actually been issued to the Squadron, or to ask that the ships now at Vigo should leave it without such instructions.

The Russian Government have promised that they will themselves punish any persons who may be shown by the International Tribunal to have been worthy of blame. Is it unreasonable to require that in such circumstances the Commission shall, amongst its attributes, be given the duty of apportioning the responsibility for the disaster, and the degree of blame which attaches to those upon whom that responsibility may be found to rest?

• As regards the request that the rank and position of the officers retained in Europe shall be disclosed, His Majesty's Government are at a loss to understand why this should be regarded as excessive. They are anxious to co-operate with the Russian Government in the most open and conciliatory manner in order to arrive without delay at the truth, and it need not excite resentment or surprise that they should desire information with regard to so important an element in the forthcoming enquiry as the retention of those persons who were witnesses of what occurred or were responsible for it.

As regards the suggestion that a guarantee should be given that no difficulty shall arise between the Fleets of the two nations, how is it possible that this should be done so long as obstacles of so unexpected a kind arise the moment an attempt is made to carry out, in perfect good faith and with the most anxious desire to do nothing which might wound the susceptibilities of the Russian Government, an arrangement the principles of which have not merely been agreed on, but made public to all the world?

[Yours sincerely,
LANSDOWNE.]

No. 26.

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Russia 1780.

(No. 569.) Confidential.

My Lord,

St. Petersburg, D. November 7, 1904.

R. November 14, 1904.

On the 4th instant telegrams were received by the telegraphic Agencies in St. Petersburg announcing that Admiral Rojestvensky's detachment of battleships had been followed by a detachment of British Cruisers from Vigo to Tangier, a distance of five miles separating the two squadrons of which all the ships were cleared for action.

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In view of the fact that the negotiations of the terms of the Convention for the submission of the North Sea Incident to an International Commission of Enquiry were, as far as I should judge, proceeding satisfactorily, though somewhat slowly, the text of the six principal articles being accepted the same evening without modification, I could not but feel that, in the event of the contents of the telegrams being true, the naval measures in question, which could scarcely be considered of a friendly nature, were such as to create a very bad impression in Russia and, if repeated, might even constitute a serious danger to the maintenance of peace. As a matter of fact, this news was the subject of general comment in St. Petersburg and caused, I am informed, great irritation even amongst those who are not ordinarily ill disposed towards England.

In order to realize the effect of such measures it must be remembered that the mental equilibrium of public opinion in Russia has been much disturbed during the present year by a series of unexpected events which a year ago would have been thought impossible. That a small and despised country such as Japan, with a population described by the Russian press as "yellow monkeys" should be able to defeat by land and sea the military and naval forces of the greatest military power in Europe has been a blow from which the country is still reeling and from which it will with difficulty recover. That the Japanese should have been able to achieve these results alone is regarded by the majority of the population as absurd. The educated classes consider that, had there been no Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Japan would never have dared to go to war with Russia, while the lower classes are firmly convinced that the explanation of the Russian defeats is to be found in the fact that England is surreptitiously aiding the Japanese and that her officers are to be found fighting in their ranks. Consequently there is a very widespread feeling throughout this country that England is the real but secret enemy of Russia and that the simplest means of assuring future peace with a preponderating influence in the Far East would be to attack England in Afghanistan and India, a campaign which no Russian doubts for a moment could result in anything but a complete success for the Russian arms. Thus a war with England would at first be undoubtedly popular since not only is victory considered to be assured, but also territorial extension and a large war indemnity, while it is fully realized that there is nothing to be obtained even if after years of struggle Japan is eventually overcome.

The internal condition of Russia is at the same time in a critical state of effervescence. The elements of progress and reform have been captivated by Prince Mirsky's reported liberal ideas, and greater expectations have been raised than are likely to be realized. On the other hand the reactionary party headed by the Grand Dukes Serge and Alexander Michailovitch are greatly disturbed by the prospect of reforms and the propagation of liberal ideas, and a popular war with England would probably be welcomed by them as a means of distracting public attention. I shall have the honour of treating this subject more fully in a separate despatch.

At the same time discontent poverty and suffering are everywhere rife, and more especially in the districts where the reserves have been mobilized.

The war party, led by nearly all the Grand Dukes and fostered by society and the tchinovniks, is very powerful, and owing to greater opportunities they have more chance than others of influencing the Emperor in favour of their warlike views. They are waiting impatiently for a real Russian success, but they fully realize at last that the Russian army has no easy task before it in the Far East, and that the line of least resistance would be in Central Asia. In this way the prestige lost in the Far East might be recovered nearer home.

The navy on the other hand clearly understand the certainty of the destruction of the Baltic Fleet in the event of an outbreak of war with England. For that reason they, though bitterly hostile, would be ready to make any sacrifice to avoid war, and I have reason to believe that if Admiral Rojestvensky had given almost any other explanation of the action of his ships in the North Sea, he would have been relieved of his command. They also realize that in the event of war with England such ships

as remained of the Russian navy could only find safety within fortified harbours, and that in such a struggle the Russian naval forces could take no part. The public regard the departure of the Baltic Fleet as a forlorn hope, they are confident that it will be stopped on the way by our fleet, and are more or less indifferent to its fate. They do not believe in its arriving in the Far East in time to save the fall of Port Arthur, and they are reconciled to the loss of the fortress, the national honour being saved, by the very gallant defence made by the garrison. There is no doubt that in years to come the defence of Port Arthur will be celebrated as a national triumph in the same way that the siege of Sebastopol is now fêted.

These are some of the reasons which, apart from the excitement caused by the incident in the North Sea and the naval preparations made by His Majesty's Government, have for some time influenced the minds of the public, but it has only been during the last fortnight that these ideas have taken concrete form and I can assure Your Lordship without exaggeration that on the 27th and 28th of October an extremely bellicose feeling prevailed amongst all classes in St. Petersburg, who were firmly convinced of the truth of the Admiral's telegrams and of the connivance of England in the alleged attacks by Japanese torpedo boats on the Baltic fleet; I have also reason to believe that owing to the constant misrepresentation in the press of British aims and policy war with England would have been welcomed throughout Russia.

If such a war occurred, I feel convinced that the first opportunity would be seized by the Russian Government to patch up peace with Japan and to thus put an end to an extremely unpopular war, and so free the Russian Army to concentrate its entire energy and forces in a determined attack on India. The network of railways converging on Orenburg and the Caspian make the transport of troops and war material a task of small difficulty as compared with those experienced in Manchuria, and the *casus fœderis* upon which the Anglo-Japanese Alliance is based would not arise if the *casus belli* were found to exist in an incident similar to that which occurred in the North Sea.

Although the danger of our country being plunged into war appears for the moment to have been happily averted, it is, I regret to say, more than probable that some fresh incident may before long occur by which public opinion may become once more inflamed, and in drawing Your Lordship's attention to the very excitable frame of mind of Russian public opinion, I would venture to point out the great risk which may at any moment be incurred of a long and costly war by an action having the semblance of menace or humiliation, the Russian Government being at the present moment exceptionally sensitive as to their dignity as a Great Power owing to their reverses in the Far East and to their prescience of the possibly still more hopeless position in which they may find themselves before many weeks are over if a decisive victory is not achieved.

I have, &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

A very interesting dispatch and one that raises serious reflections for certain eventualities.

E.R.

No. 27.

The Marquess of Lansdowne to Sir E. Monson.

F.O. Russia 1731.
(No. 574.) Confidential.

Sir,

Foreign Office, November 15, 1904.

The French Ambassador called upon me today at my request, and I informed him of the difficulty which had arisen in consequence of Count Lamsdorff's intimation that he desired to recast the draft Convention (North Sea incident) and to make certain alterations in the text. I called His Excellency's attention to these alterations, and informed him of the substance of my telegram No. 208 of the 14th instant⁽¹⁾ to Sir Charles Hardinge. His Excellency expressed great concern at the hitch which had occurred. He had left Paris yesterday, and when he last saw M. Delcassé had found him firmly convinced that everything had been satisfactorily settled.

We had some conversation as to the proposed Russian amendments, and His Excellency made no secret of his opinion that exception might be taken to Article II of the British draft⁽²⁾ upon the ground that it imposed upon the International Commission duties which it could not properly perform consistently with the terms of the Hague Convention. I pointed out to him that we had made it clear that in our view the International Commission was to be analogous to the Commissions contemplated by the Convention and not identical with them, and that the Agreement accepted by the Russian Government was in fact worded in this sense. His Excellency thought that the word "blame" had for the Russian Government a different meaning to that which it possessed for us. "Blâme," in French, carried with it the idea of punishment, and its proper equivalent in English was probably "censure." He thought that the drafting of the Article might be altered in a way which would give effect to our meaning and at the same time be acceptable to the Russian Government. I replied that in our view it was out of the question now to alter the words of the Article, which I had read textually during the course of my recent speech at the Guildhall. His Excellency evidently realised the force of this argument. . . .⁽³⁾

I am, &c.

LANSDOWNE.

⁽¹⁾ [*v. infra*, Ed. note.]

⁽²⁾ [*v. supra*, p. 31, No. 25, encl. 1.]

⁽³⁾ [The rest of this despatch refers to the Russian Volunteer Fleet and is printed, *infra*, pp. 56-7, No. 54.]

[ED. NOTE.—On November 14, Lord Lansdowne telegraphed to Sir C. Hardinge (No. 208) that he regretted Count Lamsdorff's revival of the discussion as to the terms of the Agreement. "Even if we had no objection to alter the Articles in accordance with Count Lamsdorff's suggestions, it would be impossible for us to do so, in view of the fact that the most important Article, the language of which he now proposes to amend, was quoted by me textually at the Guildhall banquet." The article in question was the second.

Some further attempts were made by the Russian Government to alter the wording of the six articles and two additional ones, but these were all frustrated as the following telegram shows.]

No. 28.

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Russia 1731.

Tel. (No. 209.) P.⁽¹⁾

St. Petersburg, November 18, 1904.

Draft Convention.

The proposed Russian form of Article II which I sent in my immediately preceding telegram of this evening embodies as Your Lordship will observe, the original text of

⁽¹⁾ [The original of this paraphrase cannot be traced.]

our draft with the addition that the Commission will enquire as to the responsibility and degree of blame which should attach to any persons, whether subjects of Great Britain, Russia or of other countries.

The fact that subjects of Great Britain Russia and other countries have been mentioned has apparently removed the feeling underlying the opposition of the Russian Government that the word "blame" was aimed at Russian officers alone.

This addition to Article II which I trust will meet with the approval of His Majesty's Government was suggested in the summary of Your Lordship's telegrams which I handed to Count Lamsdorff yesterday afternoon, and copy of which I forwarded in my despatch No. 608 of to-day's date,⁽²⁾ and for which I accept entire responsibility.

I have reason to believe that Count Lamsdorff would raise no objection to the draft being made into a Convention or Agreement should His Majesty's Government agree to accept it; his object in calling it a Declaration being to save time by avoiding the necessity of giving full powers.

I think that it may now be said that Y[our] L[ordship]'s text has been integrally accepted and if there is no other serious objection to the Russian draft, I think that it might be as well to accept it.

(²) [Not reproduced. It describes Sir C. Hardinge's conversation with Count Lamsdorff of November 16, and encloses précis of Lord Lansdowne's telegrams, No. 208, *v. supra*, *Ed. note*, and Nos. 209 and 210 of November 15.]

No. 29.

Draft Convention.

(Enclosure in Despatch from Sir C. Hardinge, No. 606 of November 18, 1904.)

Projet.

F.O. Russia 1791.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[éria]l de Russie et le Gouv[ernemen]t de S[a] M[ajesté] Britannique, s'étant mis d'accord pour confier à une Commission Internationale d'enquête, réunie conformément aux Art[icle]s 9-14 de la Convention de La Haye du 17/29 juillet 1899, pour le règlement pacifique des conflits internationaux, le soin d'éclaircir par un examen impartial et consciencieux les questions de fait se rapportant à l'incident qui s'est produit durant la nuit du 8-9 (21-22) Octobre 1904 dans la Mer du Nord,—au cours duquel le tir des pièces de canon de la flotte russe occasionna la perte d'un bateau et la mort de deux personnes appartenant à une flotille de pêcheurs britanniques, ainsi que des dommages à d'autres bateaux de ladite flotille et des blessures aux équipages de quelques uns de ces bateaux les Soussignés, dûment autorisés à cet effet, sont convenus des dispositions suivantes.

ARTICLE 1.

La Commission internationale d'Enquête sera composée de cinq membres (Commissaires) dont deux seront des officiers de haut rang des Marines Imp[éria]le Russe et Britannique respectivement. Les Gouv[ernemen]ts de France et des États-Unis d'Amérique seront priés de choisir, chacun, un de leurs officiers de marine de haut rang comme membre de la Commission. Le cinquième membre sera élu d'accord par les quatre membres susmentionnés.

Dans le cas où il ne se produirait pas d'entente entre les quatre commissaires pour le choix du cinquième membre de la Commission, celui-ci sera choisi par S[a] M[ajesté] le

Chacune des deux Hautes Parties contractantes nommera également un jurisculte-asseesseur avec voix consultative et un agent, chargés à titre officiel de prendre part aux travaux de la Commission.

ARTICLE 2.

La Commission devra faire une enquête et dresser un rapport sur toutes les circonstances relatives à l'incident de la Mer du Nord, en particulier, sur la question où gît la responsabilité et sur le degré de blâme concernant les ressortissants des deux Hautes Parties contractantes ou d'autres pays, dans le cas où leur responsabilité se trouverait constatée par l'enquête.

ARTICLE 3.

La Commission fixera les détails de la procédure qui sera suivie par elle pour l'accomplissement de la tâche qui lui est dévolue.

ARTICLE 4.

Les deux Hautes Parties contractantes s'engagent à fournir à la Commission Internationale d'Enquête, dans la plus large mesure qu'Elles jugeront possible, tous les moyens et les facilités nécessaires pour la connaissance complète et l'appréciation exacte des faits en question.

ARTICLE 5.

La Commission se réunira à Paris aussitôt que faire se pourra, après la signature de cet arrangement.

ARTICLE 6.

La Commission présentera aux deux Hautes Parties contractantes son rapport signé par tous les membres de la Commission.

ARTICLE 7.

La Commission prendra toutes ses décisions à la majorité des voix des cinq Commissaires.

ARTICLE 8.

Le Gouv[ernemen]t Imp[éria]l de Russie garde à sa charge, par réciprocité, les frais de l'enquête faite par lui préalablement à la réunion de la Commission. Quant aux dépenses qui incomberont à la Commission Internationale d'Enquête à partir du moment de sa réunion pour l'installation de ses services et les investigations nécessaires, elles seront faites en commun par les deux Gouvernements.

En foi de quoi les Soussignés ont signé le présent arrangement et y ont apposé le sceau de leurs armes.

Fait en double à _____, le _____ Novembre, 1904.

[ED. NOTE.—There were a few verbal alterations in the instrument which was ultimately signed on November 12/25 at St. Petersburg by Sir Charles Hardinge and Count Lamsdorff, v. A. & P. (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2328), pp. 361-8. The Commission subsequently sat at Paris, consisting of a French President, with representatives of Russia, Great Britain and the United States already provided, and an Austro-Hungarian representative nominated for the occasion. The Report was presented on February 25, 1905, and made public. It was generally unfavourable to the Russian side, and £65,000 was paid by Russia to the British Government on March 9 "in full satisfaction of all claims for compensation to the sufferers from the incidents of the 21st October." The text of the Commissioners' Report is in A. & P. (1905), CIII, (Cd. 2382), pp. 487-45. For a Russian view of the Dogger Bank incident and ensuing discussions at Paris, v. Baron M. de Taube: *La Politique Russe d'avant-guerre et la Fin de l'Empire des Tsars*. Paris (1928). ch. I. s. also Agnes Fry: *A Memoir of Sir Edward Fry* (1922), pp. 280-92.]

Sir C. Hardinge to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Russia 1682.

(No. 689.)

My Lord,

St. Petersburg, D. December 17, 1904.

R. December 20, 1904.

I have the honour to report to your Lordship an incident which throws an interesting light on the origin of certain reports which have been circulated in the European press with a view to creating an unfavourable impression on foreign opinion towards Great Britain and Japan.

A certain notorious adventurer of the name of Notowitch, who has completed a sentence of imprisonment passed on him by the Russian Consular Court in Constantinople, and who, although resident in Paris, calls himself a secret Russian Agent in London, appears to have addressed to General Hesse, the Officer in Command of the Head-quarters Staff at St. Petersburg, and consequently occupying one of the most prominent positions at the Court, a communication containing grave accusations against Viscount Hayashi and the Japanese Government in the matter of the death of the German and French Naval Attachés near Port Arthur, and also a statement which appeared in the "Standard" of the 14th instant containing serious accusations against British subjects, and against the British Government by implication, in the matter of the Hull incident.

Similar information appears to have been sent to the editor of the "Novoe Vremya," by whom it was communicated to a French correspondent, who telegraphed it to the "Echo de Paris" and to the "Standard."

The communication in question was telegraphed back to St. Petersburg by Reuter's Agency, who, from the published text, appear to have dated the telegram from Copenhagen, the 13th December.

On the 15th instant—i.e., two days later—this telegram was communicated to the St. Petersburg press with the Copenhagen date, but without allusion to the source from which the information was derived. As your Lordship is aware, the telegraphic news which is published in this country is subject to the strictest censorship. The agency which published this telegram is the "Agence Russe," an agency of which the editor of the "Novoe Vremya" is one of the Directors, and of which the President is M. Sabarin, Counsellor of the Russian Foreign Office, and the First "Fonctionnaire attaché à la Chancellerie du Ministre des Affaires Étrangères," while the Principal Manager, M. Teploff, is in close connection with the "Novoe Vremya."

The censorship, so far as it concerns the Russian Foreign Office, is under the personal direction of M. Hartwig, Head of the First Department, who is responsible for all telegrams published in Russia relating to foreign affairs, which he personally supervises before publication.

As a further indication of the manner in which this obviously false information was brought to the notice of the Russian public it is interesting to note that M. Vesselitzky, the London correspondent of the "Novoe Vremya," stated in a telegram, published in that paper on the 15th instant, that news was received from Copenhagen confirming the rumour current in London as to four Japanese torpedo-boats, "of which two attacked our squadron in Danish waters, and two in English," no mention being made of the so-called confirmation having been published in the "Standard," nor of its having come from St. Petersburg. M. Vesselitzky thus continues to propagate a story originated by the notorious Notowitch, which was known not only by the "Novoe Vremya," but also by the "Russ," to be a gross forgery, and this information, in order to conceal its true origin, was communicated to the correspondent of the "Standard" as coming from Copenhagen, and M. Vesselitzky now alludes to the telegram of the "Standard" as independent corroboration of the story.

In this guise, and while its real origin was suppressed, Reuter's telegram passed the censorship of one of the highest officials of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, and was communicated to the Russian press.

I have considered it my duty to draw your Lordship's attention to this matter as an example of how charges are made and disseminated against England and His Majesty's Government in the Russian press with the tacit connivance of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs.

An extract in translation from the "Russ." giving the origin of this report, is herewith inclosed.⁽¹⁾

In this connection it is interesting to note that the same telegraphic agency, the "Agence Russe," published a telegram purporting to give the substance of your Lordship's Mansion House speech, which contained a gross mistranslation, and which was the origin of a press campaign against England of exceptional violence.

I have. &c.

CHARLES HARDINGE.

MINUTE BY KING EDWARD.

This is most disgraceful! Could not Count Benckendorff be informed of it?

E.R.

⁽¹⁾ [Not reproduced.]

No. 31.

Sir C. MacDonald to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Japan 579.

(No. 364.) Confidential.

My Lord,

Tôkiô, D. December 22, 1904.

R. January 26, 1905.

A few days ago I had the opportunity of an interesting conversation with Count Katsura, the Prime Minister, at which the Minister for Foreign Affairs was also present.

Speaking of the North Sea outrage, the Prime Minister said that, when the Japanese Government heard of the departure of the Russian Fleet from Vigo, they experienced a feeling of disappointment, in that the Admiral had not been detained, for they held that he was the responsible man, for, without his sanction, they deemed it impossible that a single shot could be fired; they, however, now understood that, owing to the friendly understanding that we had with France, we could hardly insist upon making this demand, which might have led to the gravest consequences, and, in addition, would have interfered with our friendly relations with that Power.

I said that doubtless His Majesty's Government had this in view during the negotiations with Russia, which immediately followed the North Sea incident, but I added that, according to latest advices from home, I understood that the Admiral and several officers of the Baltic squadron declared that they had fired on two torpedo boats, presumably Japanese, which had sallied forth from the fleet of trawlers, one of which had been sunk, and the other had taken refuge behind the trawlers. Both the Prime Minister and Baron Komura were much amused at this information, which, they said, they had seen in the newspapers, but had not treated seriously. Of course, if the Russian officers had so stated, a commission of enquiry was necessary. Count Katsura added that "the Baltic Fleet had most certainly not met any Japanese torpedo boats in the North Sea, but there was every likelihood of their so doing in the Indian Ocean"!

The conversation turned upon the state of public opinion in St. Petersburg, which, according to telegraphic news received from Europe, was becoming more friendly to Japan, some of the Russian newspapers openly advocating an alliance between Russia and Japan after the war. The Prime Minister said that in Japan there was no desire whatever of this kind,—indeed, it was hoped that, should the war end successfully for Japan, the present Anglo-Japanese Alliance might be strengthened and extended.

The Japanese people were most grateful for the many courteous and friendly acts which Great Britain had shewn them, and would never forget the great sympathy which the British people had evinced in many ways towards them in their hour of trial. Turning to me, the Prime Minister said, "I should like you to express to Your Government that Japan and the Japanese Government are entirely satisfied with the extremely correct manner in which England has carried out her obligations as a neutral, and the particularly friendly manner in which she has, without overstepping the bounds of neutrality, fulfilled her obligations as an ally."

I have, &c.

CLAUDE M. MACDONALD.

III.—THE STRAITS QUESTION AND THE RUSSIAN VOLUNTEER FLEET, 1903-1904.⁽¹⁾

[*ED. NOTE.*—The question of the passage of Russian Warships through the Dardanelles had already been raised early in 1903. In August, 1902, the Russian Government asked permission to send four torpedo-boats through the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus to join the Black Sea Fleet. On September 19, the Sultan granted the request on condition that the boats should not carry armaments or a war crew; that they should fly the commercial flag; that they should pass the Straits separately with an interval of twenty-four hours; and that they should comply with the rules applicable to merchantmen. These conditions were accepted. On January 6, 1903, Sir N. O'Connor presented to the Porte a British note dated January 1, complaining of a breach of treaty obligations, and announced that Great Britain would demand the same privilege if occasion arose. See, generally, Coleman Phillipson and Noel Buxton: *The Question of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles* (1917), pp. 167-70. For the bearing of the Treaty of 1856 on this question, v. Sir Charles Hardinge's memorandum, pp. 58-60, *Ed. note*. It seemed necessary to collect the material here, though the passage of the Straits by the Russian Volunteer Fleet during the war naturally accentuated matters. For the Straits question (1899-1903), v. *G.P. XVIII*, I, ch. 119, and for these incidents, *XIX*, I, ch. 132. v. also S. A. Adamov: *Constantinople i prolivi*. Moscow (1925). 2 vols.]

No. 92.

Sir R. Rodd to the Marquess of Lansdowne.

F.O. Turkey 5448.

(No. 9.) Confidential.

Rome, D. January 9, 1903.

My Lord,

R. January 15, 1903.

I have the honour to report that, on receipt of Your Lordship's telegram No. 12, of the 7th instant,⁽²⁾ I lost no time in seeing the Minister for Foreign Affairs and conveyed to him the substance of Your Lordship's message, urging, in view of the

⁽¹⁾ [The Volunteer Fleet was created during the war with Turkey in 1877-8, when Great Britain was expected to intervene. The ships carried the mercantile flag in times of peace, though they were usually employed as transport between the Black Sea and the Far East. Their crews were subject to naval training and discipline, and the two chief officers of each vessel were commissioned by the Government.]

⁽²⁾ [Not reproduced. It was sent to Sir R. Rodd as No. 12, and to Sir F. Plunkett as No. 3. It contained the following message for the Ministers for Foreign Affairs at Rome and Vienna.

"You should speak at once to Minister for Foreign Affairs and say that while H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernment] have deferred to objections raised by Austrian Gov[ernment] to an identic or simultaneous communication they feel strongly that the effect of entire absence or long postponement of Austrian and Italian support will be deplorable.

H[is] M[ajesty's] Gov[ernment] have been led to believe that both Austria and Italy attached great importance to the maintenance of the rule of the Straits, and were anxious for the discussion of a joint policy in the Mediterranean based on the maintenance of the *status quo*. If on this occasion they leave us unsupported it will be necessary for us to reconsider our position in regard to the whole question.

It will be impossible to refuse information to Parliament as to the cooperation which we were encouraged to expect, and the impression produced by a retreat from the assurance we received will be most unfortunate."