

The Influence of the Permanent Officials of the Foreign
Office and of His Majesty's Ambassadors Abroad
on the Foreign Policy of Sir Edward Grey
1906-14.

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of the University of Manitoba in part fulfilment
of their requirements for the M. A. Degree

by

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Index of Persons Referred to in the Text.

- ARENTHAL ALO IS, BARON LEXA von (since 1909, Count), Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at St. Petersburg, 1899-1906; Minister for Foreign Affairs 1906-12.
- BENCKENDORFF, ALEXANDER, COUNT, Russian Ambassador at London, 1903-17.
- BERCHTOLD, LEOPOLD, COUNT von, Austro-Hungarian Ambassador at St. Petersburg, 1906-11; Minister for Foreign Affairs, February 19, 1912-5.
- BERTIE, SIR F. (since 1915, 1st. Baron; 1918, 1st. Viscount), British Ambassador at Rome, 1903-4; at Paris, 1905-18.
- BUCHANAN, SIR GEORGE W., British Agent and Consul-General in Bulgaria, 1903-9; Minister at The Hague, 1909-10; Ambassador at St. Petersburg, 1910-8; at Rome 1919-21.
- BUNSEN, MR. (later SIR) M. de, Secretary of British Embassy at Paris, 1902-5; British Minister at Lisbon, 1905-6; Ambassador at Madrid, 1906-13.
- GAMBON, M. PAUL, French Ambassador at London, 1898-1920.
- CAMPBELL, MR. (since 1906, SIR) F. A., British Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1902-11.
- CAMPBELL-BANNERMANN, SIR HENRY, British Prime Minister, 5 December, 1905-April 4, 1908.
- CARTWRIGHT, MR. (later SIR) FAIRFAX, British Councillor of Embassy at Madrid, 1905-6 (sometimes "Chargé d'Affaires"); Minister at Munich and Stuttgart, 1906-8; Ambassador at Vienna, 1908-13.
- CHURCHILL, MR. WINSTON L. A., British Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Colonies, 1906-8; President of Board of Trade, 1908-10; Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 1910-1; First Lord of Admiralty, 1911-5.
- CROWE, MR. (later SIR) EYRE, Senior Clerk, British Foreign Office, 1906-12; Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1912-20; Permanent Under-Secretary, 1920-5.
- GOSCHEN, SIR W. E., British Ambassador at Vienna, 1905-8; at Berlin 1908-14.
- GREY, SIR EDWARD (since 1916, 1st. VISCOUNT GREY OF FALLODON), Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 11 December, 1905-11 December, 1916.

- HALDANE, MR. R. B.** (since 1911, 1st. VISCOUNT), British Secretary of State for War, 1905-12.
- HARDINGE, SIR CHARLES** (since 1910, 1st. BARON HARDINGE OF PENSHURST), Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1903-4; Ambassador at St. Petersburg, 1904-6; Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1906-10; Minister in Attendance on King Edward at Friedrichshof, August, 1906.
- HOLSTEIN, HERR FRIEDRICH von**, German Foreign Office, 1880-1906.
- ISVOLSKY, M. ALEXANDER**, Russian Minister at Copenhagen, 1903-6; Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1906-10; Ambassador at Paris, 1910-17.
- LAMSDORFF, COUNT**, Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1901-6.
- LANGLEY, MR. W. L. F. G.**, Senior Clerk in British Foreign Office, 1902-7; Assistant Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, 1907-19.
- LANSDOWNE, THE 5th. MARQUESS OF**, Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 12 November, 1900-11 December, 1905.
- LASCELLES, SIR F. C.**, British Ambassador at Berlin, 1895-1908.
- LOWTHER, MR. (later SIR) G. A.**, British Minister at Tangier, 1905-8; Ambassador at Constantinople, 1908-13.
- MALLET, MR. (later SIR), LOUIS**, Assistant Clerk, British Foreign Office, 1902-5; Private Secretary to Sir E. Grey, 1905-6; Senior Clerk, 1906-7; Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, 1907-13.
- METTERNICH, PAUL COUNT von WOLFF**, German Ambassador at London, 1901-12.
- McKENNA, RT. HON. R.**, British First Lord of the Admiralty, 1908-11; Secretary of State for Home Affairs, 1911-15.
- NICOLSON, SIR ARTHUR** (since 1916, 1st. BARON CARNOCK), British Ambassador at Madrid, 1905-6; at St. Petersburg, 1906-10; British Representative at Conference at Algeciras, 1906.
- PARKER, MR. ALWYN**, Junior Clerk in British Foreign Office, 1906-12; Assistant Clerk 1912-7; Librarian 1918-9.
- POINCARÉ, M. RAYMOND**, French Minister for Finance, 1906, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs, 1912-3, 1922-4; President of the French Republic, 1913-20.

SAZONOV, M., Councillor of Russian Embassy at London (sometimes Charge d'Affaires), 1904-6; Agent to the Vatican, 1906-9; Subsequently (1910-6) Russian Minister for Foreign Affairs.

TRAUHMANSDORFF-WEINSBERG, KARL, COMTE ZU, Councillor of Austro-Hungarian Embassy at London, 1911-4.

TYRRELL, MR. (later SIR) W. G., British Foreign Office, Assistant Clerk, 1903-7; Senior Clerk, 1907-15; Private Secretary to Sir E. Grey, 1907-15 (later Permanent Under-Secretary).

WATSON, CAPT. H. D. R., British Naval "Attaché" at Berlin, 1910-3.

WHITEHEAD, MR. J. B., Secretary of British Legation at Berlin, Secretary and Councillor of Embassy at Berlin, 1903-6 (sometimes "Charge d'Affaires"); Minister at Belgrade, 1906-10.

List of Abbreviations used in the Text.

- G. & T. III. = British Documents on the Origins of the War
1898-1914 (edited by G. P. Gooch and Harold
Temperley)
Vol. III. The Testing of the Entente 1904-6
(London 1928).
- G. & T. IV. = ibid Vol. IV. The Anglo-Russian Rapprochement
1903-7 (London 1929).
- G. & T. V. = ibid Vol. V. The Near East - The Macedonian
Problem and the Annexation of Bosnia 1903-9.
(London 1928).
- G. & T. VI. = ibid Vol. VI. Anglo-German Tension -- Armaments
and Negotiation, 1907-12.
(London 1930).
- G. & T. VII. = ibid Vol. VII. The Agadir Crisis.
(London 1932).
- G. & T. IX. = ibid Vol. IX. The Balkan Wars Part I.
The Prelude; The Tripoli War
(London 1933).
- G. & T. XI. = ibid Vol. XI. The Outbreak of War - June 28th -
August 4th, 1914.
(London 1926).
- Grey = Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years
1892-1916.
(Toronto 1925).
- Lutz = Hermann Lutz, Lord Grey and the World War.
(London 1928).

I

Historical research into the international policies of Germany in the years preceding the Great War has thrown an ever-increasing light upon the activities of Herr Friedrich von Holstein. As a result Holstein has emerged as the real, though obscure, dictator of German foreign policy between 1890-1906. The epithets of "His Grey Eminence" and the "Father Joseph of the Foreign Office", sufficiently indicate the nature of the influence which this German bureaucrat is believed to have exercised over his nominal superiors. Since 1924 the publication of the "British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914" has revealed to us as the author of innumerable minutes and memoranda, the figure of Sir Eyre Crowe, Senior Clerk, British Foreign Office, 1906-1912, and Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs 1912-1920. Crowe's anti-German bias is only too apparent, and German writers have not been slow to see in him an English Holstein, indoctrinating both his permanent and his parliamentary chiefs with his own distrust of Germany.

An extreme view of Crowe's activities and influence is taken by the German publicist, Hermann Lutz. "We can only conjecture", he wrote, "the extent of the influence exerted by Foreign Office officials over Sir Edward Grey. I have no doubt that it was considerable". Lutz describes Crowe as "one of the most poisonous enemies of Germany", an enemy who "played as influential and as little known a part as

Holstein at the Wilhelmstrasse". Together with Crowe he names Sir William Tyrrell, Grey's private secretary, Sir Charles Hardinge, the official companion of Edward VII on many continental visits, and Sir Arthur Nicolson, whom he singled out for his notorious pro-Russian sympathies, as having all played a major part in directing British foreign policy in the critical years prior to the Great War. (1)

A vital question follows: "Were foreign ministers then mere puppets in the hands of their subordinates?"

The object of this thesis is to attempt to answer this question insofar as it refers to Sir E. Grey; to determine, that is, to what extent in his conduct of foreign policy he was a "mere puppet" in the hands of permanent Foreign Office officials at home, or of professional diplomats abroad.

(1) Lutz pp. 145-46.

II

The material upon which this study is based is to be found in "British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914" (edited by G. P. Gooch and H. Temperley). The papers reproduced in this collection are: official and confidential despatches and telegrams which passed between the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs and British representatives abroad; private letters exchanged between permanent officials in the Foreign Office and the same representatives; memoranda upon foreign affairs prepared by the permanent officials of the Foreign Office for the consideration either of their official superiors or of the Secretary of State; the annual reports sent by British official representatives abroad upon the political affairs of the respective countries to which they were accredited; parliamentary questions touching foreign policy and Sir E. Grey's replies thereto; and special reports made to the Foreign Office either by ministers entrusted with special "ad hoc" missions abroad, or by representatives of the Foreign Office delegated to accompany the Sovereign upon State visits of a quasi-diplomatic nature.

Frequent reference will be made in this thesis to minutes appended both by the permanent officials of the Foreign Office and by the Secretary of State himself, to any or all of the foregoing types of communications. After 1905 the Foreign Office adopted the practice of inviting its officials to "minute" their opinions upon such despatches, memoranda, etc., as passed through their hands. Too much importance must not be attached to these minutes. They were simply

expressions of opinion submitted for consideration by superiors, and implied no finality of judgment in the maker of the minute or of decision in those who received it. On the other hand the presence of these expressions of opinion by the permanent officials does enable us to reach very definite conclusions as to the direction of the influence of these officials, and rather more tentative conclusions as to the extent of that influence.

The whole question of these minutes, indeed, gives rise to interesting speculation. Obviously it was impossible for Sir Edward Grey to read all the communications which came to the Foreign Office. How then did he decide which to read? Did the decision lie with members of the permanent staff? Did they exercise a species of censorship in deciding which papers should be seen by the Secretary of State? If so, they were then in a favourable position in which to "play up" by means of their minutes those despatches which were in accordance with their own views, or to "play down" those not consonant with their opinions. Again, in the preparation of a "Confidential Print", or of summaries of special questions made by the permanent officials to facilitate decision by the Foreign Secretary or the Cabinet, was there not a possibility of biased selection? It may be noted that Grey's initials seldom appear on documents save those on which his subordinates had already minuted their opinions. Are we then to infer that he read only such papers? We are not yet in a position to answer these questions, but they will be kept in mind by those who see in Grey a Responsible Departmental Head unduly subjected to influence and direction from his

subordinates.

A large majority of the questions which form the subject matter of the "British Documents" are cases in which Grey's minutes or memoranda show him to have been ultimately in agreement with the opinions of his chief advisers, but in which there is no conclusive evidence to show what his attitude or predisposition had been in the matter prior to receiving their advice. The remaining questions --- and those to which this thesis will necessarily direct attention --- fall into three chief categories:-

1. Questions the authority to deal with which, Grey had delegated to an official within the Foreign Office, or had left to the discretion of an Ambassador or other official abroad, such official or ambassador being particularly well acquainted with the question at issue.

2. Questions upon which Grey's minutes show that he disagreed with the opinions or suggestions of his subordinates, or in which his subsequent action indicates that he disregarded their advice.

3. Finally, questions in which there is apparently sufficient reason to believe that Grey was markedly influenced by the opinion of permanent officials at home or by ambassadors abroad.

III

At the outset we should perhaps be familiar with Grey's initial disposition towards France, Russia, and Germany, at the time of his taking office in December, 1905, in order that we may be in a position to enquire to what extent this original disposition came to be modified. A study of such modifications and the reasons for them would form a legitimate part of our enquiry.

Grey's attitude to France when he took office, can be briefly summarized by saying that he accepted to the full the policies initiated by his predecessor, and which had led to the conclusion of the Anglo-French Agreements of April, 1904. The tenor of these Agreements is sufficiently well known. In the first place they had effected the settlement of outstanding disputes. Secondly they had recognized the special position enjoyed by Great Britain in Egypt and by France in Morocco. Thirdly they had pledged each country to give its diplomatic support to the other for the execution of those clauses of the Agreement in which those special positions were defined, (i.e. especially Article IX).

This mutual pledge of British diplomatic support for France in Morocco and of French diplomatic support for Britain in Egypt, represented the full extent of the commitments of the two Powers under the Agreements. These last did not in any sense constitute a formal alliance between the two countries, and the British negotiators, at least, had been at pains to define and limit the extent of their commitments.

This, then, was the legacy which Grey inherited and developed. Thus when the Moroccan question became a matter of European concern at the Conference of Algeiras in 1906, Grey wired to Nicolson that, "Our policy at the Conference will be to give the fullest support to the French delegate, under the terms of Article IX". (2).

He was careful, however, to define closely the limits of British support for France in Morocco. Thus on January 10, 1906, he told M. Paul Cambon, " I could only state as my personal opinion that if France were to be attacked by Germany in consequence of a question arising out of the Agreement which our predecessors had recently concluded with the French Government public opinion in England would be strongly moved in favour of France". (3).

Similarly in the case of Russia, Grey inherited that attempt on the part of Lord Lansdowne to improve Anglo-Russian relations which had only been temporarily interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War. Two days after accepting his seal of office from the King, the Foreign Secretary expressed to Count Benckendorff his hope, "that an Agreement might be reached between Great Britain and Russia with regard to outstanding questions in which both countries were interested". (4).

(2) G. & T. III. No. 199.

(3) G. & T. III. No. 210 (a).

(4) G. & T. IV. No. 204.

To Nicolson he wrote in February, 1906, "I am in hopes that when Russia recovers we may get and keep on good terms with her; if so this also will count on the side of France". (5). See also (6).

Finally, what initial attitude did Grey adopt towards Germany? If we may believe the evidence contained in our present material, he began without any anti-German bias. To Mr. Whitehead he wrote on December 20, 1905, "I might say generally that we should go into the Conference (i.e. of Algeiras) with no desire or intention whatever of acting in any way hostile to Germany " (7).

Similarly in a letter of January, 1906, to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, he reported that he had told the German Ambassador, "that we shall not use the Anglo-French Entente against German policy or interests; we shall not egg on France against Germany Also that we wish to improve relations between France and Germany". (8).

Such in brief were Grey's moderate and pacific predispositions when he accepted office. To what extent and by what means were those predispositions confirmed or altered?

(5) G. & T. III. No. 278.

(6) See also G. & T. III. No. 299, Grey's memorandum of February, 1906, touching a prospective "rapprochement" with Russia in which he already stated that, "An "entente" between Russia, France and ourselves would be absolutely secure."

(7) G. & T. III. No. 198.

(8) Grey I. p114-15.

IV

Since Herr Lutz has referred to Sir Eyre Crowe as "one of the most poisonous enemies of Germany", it would, perhaps, be useful to examine first Crowe's minutes and memoranda in order to determine the magnitude of his influence over Grey.

It would appear that Crowe made Anglo-German relations his peculiar field of study. (9). On this topic he was prolific of minutes and memoranda, and his memorandum of January, 1907, upon the subject may be ranked as a State Paper of the first order. (10). A large part of this material revealed in Crowe an inveterate distrust of German aims and German methods. The following are typical examples of his caustic comments in this kind:

"Past history has shown us that a friendly Germany has usually been a Germany asking for something". (11).

"When the German armaments have reached the size which satisfies Germany, then she may be willing to enter into an agreement The danger is that they may endeavour to take us by false and non-binding assurances". (12).

"Germany may now be counted upon to continue her well-trying policy of blackmailing". (13).

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(9) It is noteworthy that where matters of immediate Anglo-German concern are not at issue, his minutes are either entirely absent, as in G. & T. IV, which deals with the Anglo-Russian "Rapprochement", or are very rare as in G. & T. V & IX, which deal with the Balkans.

(10) G. & T. III. Appendix A. pp. 397-420.

(11) G. & T. III. No. 416, Min. May 28, 1906.

(12) G. & T. VI. No. 158, Min. March 25, 1909.

(13) G. & T. VII. No. 369, Min. July 12, 1911.

Similarly in his memorandum of January, 1907, he attributes to the Germans such maxims as: "Necessity has no law. The world belongs to the strong. A vigorous nation cannot allow its growth to be hampered by blind adherence to the "status quo"...." (14).

In spite, however, of accumulated evidence of Crowe's distrust of Germany, it by no means follows that he succeeded in indoctrinating Grey with this distrust. On the contrary many cases may be cited in which major suggestions made by Crowe would seem to have been ignored by Grey.

During the last week of July, 1914, when Sir Edward Grey was doing his utmost to preserve the peace of Europe and to prevent a world-wide conflagration, he had a choice of two alternatives. He might seek to preserve the peace by warning Germany that in the event of war England would certainly align herself with France and Russia, or he might seek to restrain chauvinist feeling in the two latter countries by declining to give them a categorical promise of support. Crowe was a strong advocate of the first method.

"There is still the chance", he had written on July 25, "that she (Germany) can be made to hesitate, if she can be induced to apprehend that the war will find England by the side of France and Russia.... Whatever therefore our ultimate decision, I consider that we should decide now to mobilize the fleet as soon as any other Great Power mobilizes, and that we should announce this decision without delay to the French and Russian Governments". (15).

(14) G. & T. III. Appendix A. p. 405.
(15) G. & T. XI. No. 101, Min..

In answer to this, Grey minuted, "Mr. Churchill told me today that the fleet can be mobilized in twenty-four hours, but I think it is premature to make any statement to France and Russia yet." (16).

Two days later, on July 27, Grey telegraphed to Buchanan to the effect that he had pointed out to Count Benckendorff that although the First Fleet had been ordered not to disperse for manoeuvre leave, he, the Russian Ambassador, "must not take my reference to it as meaning that we promised anything more than diplomatic action." (17).

On July 31, six days after Crowe's urgent minute, Grey's telegram to Bertie said in part, "I have told French Ambassador that we cannot undertake a definite pledge to intervene in a war." (18).

On August 1, Grey still had not given a definite pledge, which by this time was urgently desired by M. Paul Cambon on behalf of France. The furthest he would go was to state that if the German fleet came through the Straits to attack the undefended coasts of France, "that might alter public feeling here, and so might a violation of the neutrality of Belgium." (19).

It would appear, then, that Crowe did not succeed in persuading Grey upon this vital point, to make a public declaration of his unconditional support of France and Russia in the last days of July, 1914. Here, if at all, there might have been expected, with some justification,

- (16) G. & T. XI. No. 101, Min..
- (17) G. & T. XI. No. 177.
- (18) G. & T. XI. No. 352.
- (19) G. & T. XI. No. 426.

a definite shaping of immediate policy by the writer of the 1907 Memorandum, who, Lutz would have us believe "greatly impressed not only Grey but the Cabinet, in regard to the orientation of British foreign policy during the critical years which preceded the Great War.." (20).

It is true that there were instances when Crowe's suggestions appear to have been accepted.

An example of this kind occurred in October, 1910. At that time Captain Watson had taken the initiative in agreeing with the German naval authorities in Berlin, that their Naval Attaché in London should approach the First Lord of the Admiralty in connection with the negotiations then pending for naval disarmament. Crowe was quick to point out that:

"It is not desirable that negotiations of this kind should be conducted by the German Naval Attaché here with the First Lord. Either the communications he has to make relate to purely technical matters, in which case he can talk to the Director of Naval Intelligence or some officer in the Admiralty conversant with the subject, or the question touches on political consideration, in which case they should be discussed by Count Metternich with Sir Edward Grey." (21).

(20) Lutz pp. 145-46.

See also G. & T. III. No. 308, Min. of Feb. 24, 1906, where Crowe suggested warning the Sultan of Morocco against Germany, but where Grey said that no move should then be taken.

See also G. & T. VII. No. 437, Min. of July 29, 1911, where Crowe was anxious lest a cession of islands in the Pacific by France to Germany should jeopardize our naval position and alarm the Australian and New Zealand Governments, but was overridden by Grey. G. & T. VII. No. 443 of July 30, 1911.

(21) G. & T. VI. No. 398, Min..

In the same month, and again with respect to the proposed naval understanding, Crowe minuted:

"I have suggested that we should now invite the Admiralty to draw up, in the form of draft clauses of an agreement, the precise stipulations by which they consider effect can be given satisfactorily to the plan of a mutual reduction of armaments." (22).

Both these suggestions from Crowe were apparently acted upon by means of a communication made to the Admiralty on October 24, 1910, (23), and answered on December 3 of the same year. (24). With both suggestions Nicolson was in accord (25), and to the first of them Grey appended the remark, "This will do send by private letter to Mr. McKenna." (26).

(22) G. & T. VI. No. 400, Min. of Oct. 20.

(23) G. & T. VI. Note bottom p. 519.

(24) G. & T. VI. No. 418.

(25) G. & T. VI. No. 398, Min. & No. 400, Min..

(26) G. & T. VI. No. 398, Min.

See also G. & T. III. No. 322 Min. of March 3, 1906, where Crowe approved of the French proposal to fall back on the idea of a purely native police in Morocco, paid by the Moroccan State Bank, on the grounds that this proposal "might yet succeed in averting a breakdown of the discussions on the police question," and he suggested that it would be well to give early notice of the intentions of the French Government to Nicolson. The telegram in which this was done on March 5, was undoubtedly based on Crowe's draft.

See also G. & T. VII. No. 233, Min. of May 1, 1911.

At the time of the French expedition to Fez, Bertie reported that the Spanish Government was taking a highly unfriendly attitude towards the expedition.

According to a minute by Mr. Parker; "Sir Eyre Crowe... was strongly of opinion that we should make an energetic representation at Madrid." On the same day, May 1, Grey apparently acted upon Crowe's suggestion by telegraphing to Sir M. de Bunsen: "You should inform Minister for Foreign Affairs that in my opinion it would be quite premature for Spain to act as if independence and integrity of Morocco was threatened by action, which French are taking....(continued as a footnote on the next page).

We have drawn attention to these cases in which Crowe's advice was apparently adopted. It will be noticed, however, that in all these cases his advice refers mainly to questions of procedure, and that there is no evidence to show that had Crowe not intervened, Grey would have adopted any other line of approach.

In a final attempt to discover whether or not Crowe exerted as deep and as mischievous an anti-German influence as has been attributed to him, the entire question of the proposed cession to Germany of a port on the west coast of Morocco may be considered. This question evoked free expressions of opinions from Bertie and Nicolson, as well as from the Senior Clerk, but to avoid duplication the complete case may be reviewed here.

As early as February 20, 1906, at the time of the Algeiras Conference, Grey recorded in a memorandum on Morocco:

"I should myself be in favour of allowing Germany a port or coaling station, if that would ensure peace; but it would be necessary to consult the Admiralty about this, and to find out whether the French would entertain the idea, and if so what port?" (27).

He reverted to the same idea five years later during the Agadir Crisis of 1911. On July 6, he wrote to Bertie, that "from our own point

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(26) (Footnote continued from previous page)... It would be most unwise for Spain to force partition of Morocco: the political consequences would be deplorable." G. & T. VII. No. 238.

(27) G. & T. III. No. 299.
See also Grey I. p. 114 where in a private letter of Jan. 9, 1906, to Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, Grey had stated that such a port, if granted, should be "on the west Atlantic coast of Morocco."

of view..... it was not impossible to find something for her (Germany) in Morocco. An open port, for instance, would not be irreconcilable with our interests" (28).

In a telegram sent by post July 9, and received in the Foreign Office July 10, Bertie pointed out that the French Government could not agree to the establishment of Germany on the Moroccan coast, "not even in the form of a so-called free port." (29).

On July 11, in a long telegraphic communication received 8.20 A.M. July 12, the Ambassador at Paris again expressed the objections of the French Government to the cession of a Moroccan port to Germany, and went on to add that he had informed the French Minister for Foreign Affairs that "the British Government would never consent to it for it would be contrary to vital interests of England." (30).

To this document were appended minutes by Crowe and Nicolson.

Crowe noted on July 12:

"Germany may now be counted upon to continue her well-trying policy of blackmailing.....If we had consented to a German port in Morocco, we should have had to be prepared for further demands presented in the same manner."

Nicolson added: "I entirely agree with Sir. Eyre Crowe's observations." (31).

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(28) G. & T. VII. No. 363.

See also G. & T. VII. No. 368 of July 10, in which Grey recorded a similar view that he had expressed to M. Paul Cambon that day. He had assured the latter that Germany would find it physically difficult to convert such a port into a naval base.

(29) G. & T. VII. No. 366.

(30) G. & T. VII. No. 369.

(31) G. & T. VII. No. 369, Mins..

In a despatch sent on July 12, and received in the Foreign Office July 13, Bertie answered Grey's communication of July 6, the contents of which we have previously noted. The Ambassador expressed his surprise that His Majesty's Government should think of being a party to the establishment of Germany on the coast of Morocco in view of the British experience with Russia over Batoum in 1878. As for Grey's suggested stipulation that the port to be conceded to Germany should not be fortified, Bertie questioned the likelihood of the Germans carrying out any assurances of this kind which they might give "beyond such period as they might consider necessary in their own interests." (32).

Another Crowe minute to this communication drew attention to the case of the French occupation of Bizerta, which was even more to the point than was Bertie's reference to Batoum, and suggested that a "considered, written, statement" should be received from the Board of Admiralty on the question.

To this Grey assented. "I quite agree," he wrote, "as to having the opinion of the Admiralty recorded and I have already stipulated for that." None the less he continued, "it would I imagine be more easy for us to control German action at Agadir ... than it was to do the same as regards France at Bizerta." (33).

In a private letter to Bertie, however, of July 12, he indicated that although the Admiralty officials were not opposed to his proposal,

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(32) G. & T. VII. No. 372.

(33) G. & T. VII. No. 372, Mins..

"I think it undesirable to let Germany in " (34).

More specific was his telegram of the following day to Bertie, with reference to Germany obtaining a political or territorial footing in Morocco. It concluded: "I understand from French Ambassador that it would be in highest degree objectionable to France and if that is so it seems unnecessary to discuss question of bringing it into negotiations." (35).

In view of the material at our disposal what conclusion may be reached? It seems highly probable that more than one factor or opinion induced Grey to withdraw his suggestion of allowing Germany to secure a port in Morocco. While it is true that Crowe, Nicolson, and Bertie all viewed the proposal with alarm (36), it is also true that before Grey abandoned it, the Foreign Office received late on the evening of July 10, a telegram from Berlin indicating that there was a prospect of a Franco-German settlement based on the Congo, (37), and that he had already learned "from the French Ambassador that it (his proposal)

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(34) G. & T. VII. No. 375.

(35) G. & T. VII. No. 377.

(36) See also G. & T. VII. No. 386 of July 16. Bertie expressed privately to Nicolson his fears and doubts about giving Germany a port in Morocco. See also G. & T. VII. No. 395 of July 18. Nicolson wrote privately to Goschen and mentioned particularly his hope that the British Government would keep the Germans off the Atlantic coast of Morocco.

(37) G. & T. VII. No. 367.

See also G. & T. VII. No. 393 of July 18. Grey intimated to Bertie that as Franco-German "conversations were proceeding on the basis of a Congo settlement it seemed unnecessary "to further discuss the question of a port in Morocco.

would be in highest degree objectionable to France." (38). In other words news from Berlin and Paris may have had as large a share in determining Grey's decision as had the suggestions of Crowe and others.

The question is therefore by no means clear-cut nor is Crowe's part in it entirely plain, and it is perhaps significant that the investigator in search of signs of Crowe's influence upon Grey is unable to produce evidence of a more tangible nature than is provided by episodes of this sort.

What conclusion may we reach with respect to Sir Eyre Crowe's influence? His anti-German bias is undeniable, but did he, as German writers believe, really indoctrinate his superiors with his personal distrust of Germany and of her intentions? There is little evidence to support such an affirmation. Certainly his memorandum of January, 1907, did not prevent in the years which followed, Anglo-German attempts at "rapprochement", exchanges of royal visits, negotiations for a naval holiday and for a peaceful settlement of the Bagdad Railway question. Assuredly, we may admit that Crowe was always in the background consistently and pointedly displaying his suspicion of Germany; but it is by no means clear that Grey shaped and directed his policy in the light of that suspicion. Emphasis has already been laid upon Crowe's failure to persuade the Secretary of State to announce openly his support of France and Russia against Germany in the critical last week of July 1914. A

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(38) G. & T. VII. No. 377.

minute examination of the further typical references previously alluded to, will reveal that Crowe's advice was at times entirely disregarded, while his attempts to anticipate German hostility received slight encouragement from Grey's tendency to wait upon events.

V

Let us turn next to the other permanent officials and to the ambassadors, to some of whom reference has already been made, and consider the most noticeable instances in which there may be grounds for the assumption that the Foreign Secretary was influenced in his policy by tendentious suggestions put forward by his subordinates.

We will consider first questions in which Grey delegated authority.

At the conclusion of the Algeciras Conference in April, 1906, Nicolson wired to Grey: "Would you like me to telegraph text of principal Articles of Convention as they are drawn up, or would you trust to me to see they are satisfactory?" (39).

To this the Foreign Secretary immediately replied, "If you are satisfied that convention clearly safeguards British interests I leave the matter with confidence in your hands. You need not telegraph the text of the Treaty." (40).

During the period August-October, 1912, Grey was absent from the Foreign Office on vacation and it fell to Sir Louis Mallet to receive members of the various foreign embassies, and to draft despatches which were submitted to Grey in Scotland for approval. At that time Balkan matters were much to the fore and on August 20, the Austrian "Charge'

(39) G. & T. III. No. 388.

(40) G. & T. III. No. 389.

See also G. & T. V. No. 771 of March 26, 1909, where Grey left Sir F. Cartwright at Vienna to agree with Baron Aehrenthal upon the final wording of the Serbian note to Austria-Hungary, which was to bring the Bosnian crisis to a close.

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d'Affaires" had communicated to Mallet Count Berchtold's opinion that the Porte should be encouraged by the Powers to grant the necessary reforms to those provinces which were not asking for autonomy. Mallet suggested - and Grey agreed - "that we had better ascertain the views of France and Russia before answering."

This was done. (41).

It may be noted also that while on September 9, Mallet made a verbal communication to Count Trauttmansdorff, in which he expressed Grey's "sympathy with the main objects of the policy of the Austro-Hungarian Minister for Foreign Affairs," he only made this communication after he had submitted the draft to the Secretary of State, and after the latter had made considerable alterations in it. (42).

The cases considered in the category are therefore entirely inconclusive insofar as they concern this thesis. They suggest nothing more than that Grey had an intelligent appreciation of the value of delegating authority where authority could be delegated with safety. He had trained and able assistants of whose services he was not slow to avail himself, but there is nothing to suggest that he ever allowed them to transact important business without his full cognizance.

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(41) G. & T. IX. No. 640 and Editor's Note.

(42) G. & T. IX. No. 707.

See also G. & T. IX. No. 713 of Sept. 10, which is a reproduction of a long despatch to Sir F. Cartwright based upon Mallet's minute of September 3. It deals with a communication from the Austro-Hungarian "Chargé d'Affaires" respecting the Balkan question, and contains numerous minutes by Grey which show that he was being kept fully informed.

VI

The next investigation concerns our second category, i. e. questions upon which Grey obviously disagreed with, or disregarded suggestions tendered by his subordinates. In this connection attention has already been drawn to the abortive attempt made by Sir Eyre Crowe on July 25, 1914. (supra p. 10). Did other permanent officials or embassy members submit "opinions", "warnings", etc., dealing with important points of foreign policy, only to have them rejected, disregarded or acknowledged only by Grey's laconic, "Wait"?

There are many signs that Bertie at Paris was sensitive to the frequent alarms of French opinion. Thus when Lascelles reported from Berlin in January, 1906:

"Herr von Holstein fears that, if results of Conference are unfavourable to France, she may, relying on support of England, attempt to create a "fait accompli" by invading Morocco. He is convinced that this danger would be averted if His Majesty's Government could give a hint to France that in such a contingency there is some doubt as to whether public opinion in England would admit of the support of France by force of arms." (43).

Bertie promptly assured Grey that:

"....Any communication to the French Government by His Majesty's Government such as the Baron suggests would shake the confidence of the French Government in His Majesty's present Government resulting from their assurances as to policy of England (and) might lead France either to make concessions to Germany in Morocco injurious to us or bring her out of Morocco by concessions elsewhere detrimental to our interests but not greatly to those of France.....If any communication is to be

(43) G. & P. III. No. 241.

made to French Government I recommend that it should be limited to a friendly warning that the German Government impute to them a design of invading Morocco in the event of initial discussions in the Conference being unfavourable to France, a design which we are convinced they do not entertain." (44).

On the larger question of the French anxiety to be fully assured of British support in event of war with Germany, Bertie wrote to Grey on January 13, 1906:

"I consider it my duty to warn His Majesty's Government that in the event of the answer to be given to the enquiries of the French Ambassador not assuring to France more than a continuance of diplomatic support, or of neutrality in the event of a war provoked by Germany, there is serious danger of a complete revulsion of feeling, on the part of the French Government and of public opinion in France." (45).

How did Grey react to this "warning"? In a final, carefully-considered answer to M. Paul Cambon, given on January 31, 1906, the Foreign Secretary declined the French proposals to convert the "entente" between the two countries into a formal alliance.

"I said," he wrote to Bertie, "that it might be that the pressure of circumstances -- the activity of Germany, for instance -- might eventually transform the "entente" into a defensive alliance between ourselves and France, but I did not think that the pressure of circumstances was so great as to demonstrate the necessity of such a change yet." (46).

The attitude towards proposals of a formal Anglo-French alliance which Grey here laid down, he was to maintain right down to the outbreak of war in 1914, and it is clear that it was an attitude which by no means

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(44) G. & T. III. No. 242.

(45) G. & T. III. No. 213.

(46) G. & T. III. No. 219.

recommended itself to some of his advisers. Thus Bertie wrote privately to Nicolson on May 14, 1911:

"I quite understand and appreciate the difficulty for His Majesty's Government to anticipate events by a formal and binding agreement in furtherance of the "Entente" with France, but everything military and naval ought to be arranged unofficially to meet the contingency of British and French forces having to act together." (47).

Nicolson replied to this communication in a private letter to Bertie of May 17:

"I have my doubts," he wrote, "whether it will be found possible to go as far as the French apparently desire us to do. You can quite understand that there is considerable hesitation here to binding ourselves to any definite course of action in view of possible eventualities. Personally I should wish that some arrangement in the nature which you indicate could be made. I gather that there has been a certain amount of desultory talk between our military authorities and the French military authorities but nothing definite seems to have been laid down, and I have my doubts whether a concerted plan of action will ever be settled. To my mind this is unfortunate and I quite agree with you that if a crisis does arise it will be sudden and probably unexpected." (48).

After considering those Anglo-French relations which were so vital in Grey's policy, let us examine the question of the Anglo-Russian "entente". Were there ever any serious suggestions made to the Foreign Secretary relative to the conversion of this "entente" into an alliance?

In March, 1909, immediately after the Russian surrender to Austro-German pressure in the Bosnian Crisis, Nicolson took a very pessimistic

(47) G. & T. VII. No. 269.
(48) G. & T. VII. No. 275.

view of the entire situation. In a private letter to Grey, the Ambassador in St. Petersburg expressed his fear that the Triple Entente would break up and be followed by the establishment of an hegemony of the Central Powers in Europe.

"If we could keep France and Russia on our side," he continued, "It would be well; and if we could contract some kind of an alliance with Russia we should probably also steady France and prevent her from deserting to the Central Powers." (49).

At this particular time Grey was trying hard to bring the whole Crisis to a peaceful end by discovering a formula which would be acceptable both to Austria and to Serbia, but he seems to have given little welcome to Nicolson's suggestions.

"I am not surprised," he replied on April 2, "at the reflection in your letter to me of the 24th. I do not think that it is practicable to change our agreements into alliances: the feeling here about definite commitment to a Continental war on unforeseeable conditions would be too dubious to permit us to make an alliance. Russia too must make her internal Government less reactionary -- till she does, liberal sentiment here will remain very cool and even those who are not sentimental will not believe that Russia can purge her administration sufficiently to become a strong and reliable Power." (50).

Three other cases may be noted in which Grey turned down suggestions of major importance from his subordinates.

Finally, in the course of the Anglo-Russian negotiations as to Persia, Nicolson had proposed, in November, 1906, that both parties should mutually engage to exclude third Powers from their respective spheres of

(49) G. & T. V. No. 764.

(50) G. & T. VII. No. 823.

influence. Grey considered that such an engagement was not necessary, and it did not appear in the final draft. (51).

Secondly, when in July, 1911, Germany precipitated a European crisis by sending the gunboat "Panther" to the closed Moroccan port of Agadir, the question arose as to whether Britain should also despatch a warship to Morocco. Nicolson favoured the proposal as is shown by his private note to Grey on July 4:

"In case I do not see you before the Cabinet meeting," he wrote, "I write a line to say that M. Cambon looked in on me after his visit to you and expressed the strong hope that we would send a vessel to Agadir. I sincerely trust that we shall do so if only to ascertain what the Germans are doing there." (52).

Grey was clearly against this proposal. ".... I deprecated," he wrote, "the sending of British and French ships to lie alongside the German ship at Agadir, or even to occupy other Moroccan ports as a counter-stroke"; (53) and in an official despatch to Bertie of July 4, (the day upon which Nicolson had written to him) he said, "I told M. Cambon to-day that we had decided not to send a ship to Agadir at present, because if we sent one at all it must be with instructions to remain as long as the Germans remained: we could not send a ship, and then remove it before the German ship went." (54).

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- (51) G. & T. IV. No. 370 and App. A.
- (52) G. & T. VII. No. 354.
- (53) Grey I. p. 212.
- (54) G. & T. VII. No. 355.

Thirdly, in September, 1911, when a Franco-German settlement of the Agadir Crisis was proceeding on the basis of compensation for Germany in the Congo, Bertie submitted from Paris certain French proposals to round out the agreement by mutual exchanges of African territory between France and England. These proposals involved a British cession to France of territory in Nigeria in return for the dropping of French claims to such places as Sheikh Said and Muscat. In the opinion of Mr. A. Parker and of Sir F. A. Campbell, these proposals contained the elements of a satisfactory bargain, but Grey minuted: "These proposals will not do at all." (55).

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(55) G. & T. VII. No. 558, Encl. and Mins..

VII

Finally, let us turn to an examination of the very few cases, upon the records of which, critics may have based their assertions that Grey was markedly influenced in his foreign policy by permanent officials and ambassadors.

Consideration may first be given to the question of the Anglo-Russian "Rapprochement" of 1907, in the making of which, Hardinge and Nicolson played prominent parts.

We have already said that Grey inherited Lord Lansdowne's attempt to improve Anglo-Russian relations. This improvement was clearly a favourite project with Hardinge. When he left the St. Petersburg Embassy in order to become Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office in January, 1906, he reported the Czar's reflection that "he was consoled by the thought that Russia would gain at the Foreign Office a warm advocate of friendly relations between the two countries." (56). Nicolson who succeeded Hardinge at St. Petersburg, was always in the closest relations with him, and clearly regarded himself as continuing Hardinge's work.

When this work had been crowned by the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention on August 31, 1907, Hardinge wrote to congratulate his successor. After stating his agreement with Nicolson's view of the importance of the new departure, he continued:

"It has been the greatest pleasure to me to co-operate with such an old friend as you in a matter of which the realization has been my dream for the last four years. I have been so imbued with the importance of an agreement with

(56) G. & T. IV. No. 206.

Russia that it was one of the reasons which induced me to give up the Embassy at St. Petersburg since I felt that I could do more by impressing my people at home, and I promised both Lamsdorff and the Emperor that I would do my level best to bring it about." (57).

With this may be compared Grey's private letter to Nicolson of February 24, 1908. After expressing his satisfaction with the manner in which the Anglo-Russian Agreement had been received at home, he added:

"I am quite pleased, from the point of view of general policy, that events are bringing Russia and us togetherevents will probably make it more and more clear that it is to the interest of Russia and us to work together; but we must go slowly." (58).

If, however, Hardinge and Nicolson were the chief architects of the Anglo-Russian "Entente", Grey was never a merely passive spectator of their work. In June, 1907, when the negotiations were nearing completion, the work of Nicolson and Hardinge was nearly wrecked by Grey's insistence on inserting a clause to safeguard the "status quo" in the Persian Gulf.

In a despatch to Nicolson of June 6, 1907, the Foreign Secretary enclosed a revised draft of the Convention in which were embodied certain modifications which he said His Majesty's Government desired to include in the Agreement respecting Persia. He indicated to the Ambassador, but ".... it has been thought well to insert a reference to the special interest of Great Britain in the maintenance of the "status quo" in the Persian Gulf. This clause has been added in view of the strong and explicit declarations

(57) G. & T. IV. No. 520.

(58) G. & T. IV. No. 550.

of my predecessor on this subject which is evidently one of paramount importance to Great Britain." (59).

Nicolson was as surprised and perturbed as was M. Isvolsky. The latter saw in Grey's proposal something which might imperil the whole arrangement, and Nicolson in reporting the Russian Minister's objections added, "I would submit that due weight should be given to his observations, as they were made very seriously.....I think...that we might... leave out the "status quo" clause." (60).

In minutes appended to Nicolson's telegram, Mallet and Hardinge appeared to be at one in favouring the retention of the proposed clause touching the Gulf, but Hardinge did suggest that if Russian opposition to this clause proved to be implacable, it might be omitted, and that Sir E. Grey might remedy the omission by making "a declaration in the House of Commons on the lines of that made by Lord Lansdowne."

Grey initialled this suggestion but made no comment upon it. (61).

Three days later, on June 27, he telegraphed to inform Nicolson that should the Russians decline to accept the clause touching the Gulf, he would of necessity, repeat in Parliament, Lord Lansdowne's declaration.(61a). He still expressed the hope that the Russians would accept his view, but was not willing to imperil the conclusion of the whole agreement by pressing it. (62).

(59) G. & T. IV. No. 417.

(60) G. & T. IV. No. 428.

(61) G. & T. IV. No. 428, Mins..

(61a) May 5, 1903.

(62) G. & T. IV. No. 430.

Nicolson, in spite of his personal hope that Grey would not press the point, had already made one more attempt to persuade Isvolsky to accept the clause touching the Gulf, but without success. (63).

He now received Grey's alternative proposal for the inclusion in the agreement, of a clause stating that "Great Britain has special interests in the Persian Gulf." (64). Upon receipt of this proposal the Ambassador communicated it by private letter to Isvolsky, but in his official report to London of July 1, (received July 8), he persisted in warning Grey that "If I find that His Excellency still maintains his objections, I consider that it would be better to drop the question, as a continued persistent pressure would, I am convinced, serve no useful purpose, and might indeed create serious difficulties." (65).

Two days later, when, as he had expected, he had failed to move Isvolsky, he reported, "I am afraid it would be to no purpose to continue to urge the question." (66).

Accordingly, Grey on July 5, telegraphed in reply:

"You should now inform him (Isvolsky) in writing that in deference to his views and to expedite the conclusion of Agreement we are willing to abandon the proposal for the insertion of the "status quo" clause in the preamble.... You should add that owing to public opinion in this country it will be incumbent on me to make a public declaration of our views on the situation in the Persian Gulf..." (67).

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- (63) G. & T. IV. No. 435.
 - (64) G. & T. IV. No. 434.
 - (65) G. & T. IV. No. 440.
 - (66) G. & T. IV. No. 442.
 - (67) G. & T. IV. No. 444.

To what, then, does Nicolson's influence in this matter amount? Is it to be interpreted as anything more than the legitimate advice offered by "the man on the spot"? Grey, in common with Nicolson and Hardinge, was by this time fully convinced of the need to accommodate British differences with Russia. The process of settling those difficulties involved prolonged bargaining, and in the course of that bargaining it became clear that a British demand, which had originally appeared highly necessary to Hardinge and Mallet, no less than to Grey, in London, could not be pressed in St. Petersburg without imperilling the whole negotiation. If on that point Grey had to accept Nicolson's judgment as to what was and what was not practicable, so also had Hardinge and Mallet.

Let us consider, lastly, the Anglo-German negotiations for mutual naval disarmament of March, 1911- July, 1912. By that time Nicolson had become Permanent Under-Secretary in place of Hardinge, who had become Viceroy of India. The private correspondence between the two men was continued, however, and its tenor suggests that they were both anxious lest Grey should be committed to any undertakings with Germany, which would impair Britain's ability to support France and Russia in resisting German aggression on the Continent. Thus on March 2, 1911, Nicolson told Hardinge that he was watching closely any instructions which might be given to Sir E. Goschen in Berlin and "continually impressing upon Grey that it is essential that we should not move too far from our original position." (68).

(68) G. & T. VI. No. 440. See also footnote on next page.

Six weeks later he again wrote to Hardinge, "... so far as my voice is heard it will always be in favour of a firm maintenance of an understanding with France and Russia." (69).

Finally, in July of the same year, when the Agadir Crisis interrupted the Anglo-German negotiations, Nicolson wrote to Hardinge:

"I am not at all sorry that the incident has occurred as I think it will open the eyes of all those who have been so clamorous of late for an understanding with Germany and I hope that it will postpone indefinitely any further negotiations for a political understanding with that country..." (70).

In 1911, then, Nicolson was definitely opposed to any political understanding with Germany. To certain members of the Cabinet, however, such an understanding appeared both possible and desirable, and Haldane's mission to Berlin of February, 1912, was the outcome of this feeling. When Haldane returned with a "Sketch of a Conceivable Formula" for a political understanding with Germany (71), Nicolson subjected it to a damaging annotation, clause by clause. (72).

A month later on March 14, Grey handed to Count Metternich a copy of a draft formula of two clauses of which the Cabinet had approved. The formula was as follows:

(68) continued. See also G. & T. VI. No. 442, Min. of March 6, in which Nicolson reveals his fear lest the negotiations should fail to produce anything tangible in the way of naval disarmament, but should end by entangling England in some political understanding from which her French and Russian friends would be excluded.

(69) G. & T. VI. No. 461.

(70) G. & T. VII. No. 359.

(71) G. & T. VI. No. 506; App. I.

(72) G. & T. VI. No. 507.

"England will make no unprovoked attack upon Germany and pursue no aggressive policy towards her. Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and forms no part of any Treaty understanding or combination to which England is now a part, nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object." (73).

That Nicolson had had some share in drafting this formula is suggested by a comparison between it and Haldane's "Sketch". Clause 2 of the latter had run:

"They will not, either of them, make any unprovoked attack upon the other or join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression, or become a party to any plan or naval or military combination alone, or in conjunction with any other Power directed to such an end."

Nicolson's note had suggested:

"2. Could be improved by omitting the words after "aggression" -- if we engage to abstain from entering into any naval or military combination involving a possible offensive line of action, we should be debarred from any arrangements which are "defensive" in policy but "offensive" in the strategical sense."

Nicolson was not alone among the professional diplomats in disliking the lines along which Anglo-German negotiations seemed to be moving. In a private communication to Nicolson of February, Bertie had written as follows:

"I think that the Haldane Mission, which it was absurd and of no use to surround with mystery, is a foolish move, intended I suppose to satisfy the Grey-must-go radicals. It certainly creates suspicion here, not with Poincare and perhaps not with those of the Ministry who are in his confidence, but with many political people..... It is evident that the German Government whatever they may pretend to us will not abate their intention to compete with us at sea. The more dignified course for us

(73) G. & T. VI. No. 537, Encl..

would be not to waste words, but to go on in increasing ratio to construct against the German building programmes. Any undertaking given to us by the German Government would not be observed in the spirit as would any engagements entered into by us. We have many examples of this..." (74).

When Grey's new draft appeared, Goschen wrote privately to Nicolson on March 22, saying that he considered this new offer to represent the limit to which his country could go and still remain on good terms with France and Russia. (75).

Bertie, on the other hand, considered that:

"The formula would tie our hands and consequently diminish our value to France. Attack is very often the best means of self defence. If Russia were occupied in such matters as prevented her from rendering useful military aid to France and the German Government were pressing some question on the French Government a question which though not one of importance to England was vital to France, the German Government might make every military preparation for war move troops towards the frontier with the evident intention of attack if the German demands were not conceded. If in such circumstances the French Government convinced that France was about to be attacked gave the order for the French troops to cross the frontier so as to gain a military advantage so essential to success, given the French temperament, who would be the real aggressor France or Germany? I say Germany, but if we join France in order to prevent her being wiped out it would have to be at the beginning of the contest,

(74) G. & T. VI. No. 509.

(75) G. & T. VI. No. 549.

See also G. & T. VI. No. 561: "Anyhow we are, I hope, not going to give them any neutrality formula -- so we need not discuss what might happen. What we offer them is quite sufficient to show friendliness -- and that should be quite enough for them if they have no designs upon other people...."

to be of good use, for it might be too late after one or two French defeats, and yet we should be considered as having been the aggressors on Germany and as having joined in an attack on her." (76).

That Bertie was accurately reporting French opinion appears from Grey's account of his interview with Cambon on March 29, which follows:

"M. Cambon told me to-day that he felt rather anxious, as he had been informed by Sir Arthur Nicolson that the Cabinet had not yet been consulted about the formula of neutrality proposed by Germany, and as he had heard to the same effect from you. If we were to promise Germany that we would remain neutral in the event of aggression against her, our hands might be tied when Germany was not really the victim of aggression. If, for instance, at a time when there was diplomatic tension between Germany and France, Germany concentrated troops upon Aix-la-Chapelle with the obvious intention of entering Belgium, France might be compelled to take the initiative. Germany was quite clever enough to make it appear that she was the victim, just as she was now making it appear that it was England who was intending to attack her, though it was absolutely true that neither England nor France was aggressive towards Germany, and their intentions were most pacific." (77).

On April 3, Bertie wrote officially to Grey to sound a warning that "the non-aggressive Declaration whether in the restricted or in the more amplified form contemplated by them would be a disagreeable surprise

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(76) G. & T. VI. No. 556.

(77) G. & T. VI. No. 559.

See also G. & T. VI. No. 559, Note as follows: "According to M. Poincaré (Au Service de la France, Paris 1926, Vol. 1, pp. 170-2), Sir F. Bertie visited him on March 27, and, asking him to forget for a moment that he was Ambassador, urged him to try to prevent the British Government from making a declaration of neutrality. M. Poincaré reported this conversation to M. Paul Cambon and instructed him at once to take up the subject with Sir Edward Grey, without referring to Sir F. Bertie. For the latter's report of the interview of March 27, v. infra. p. 737, No. 564."

to the French Public... and loosen the ties of friendship and confidence between France and England." (78).

What were Nicolson's impressions at this stage? In a private letter to Goschen of April 1, he indicated that he was well aware that the Germans were "endeavouring to entangle us in some engagement which would absolutely prevent us having full liberty of action in case of certain eventualities." He realized that any such arrangement would be one-sided and would weaken British relations with France and Russia, and added, "I think your arguments with the Chancellor were very much to the point, (79) and I am driving them home here with as much energy as I am able." (80).

In a minute of April 6, he wrote:

"to my mind it would be wise to drop formulas -- they are always "trappy" and it would be disastrous were we for the sake of having a formula to run the risk of alienating France and thereby probably Russia also. I need not specify the consequences of such a result." (81).

Grey's professional advisers, then, were all at one in being anxious to drop a negotiation which threatened to undermine British relations with France and Russia without securing any countervailing concession from Germany.

What was Grey's attitude towards the question at this time?

(78) G. & T. VI. No. 564.

(79) G. & T. VI. No. 560.

(80) G. & T. VI. No. 562.

(81) G. & T. VI. No. 564, Minm..

See also G. & T. VI. No. 566, Nicolson's minute of the same tenor, to Sir Edward Grey on April 4.

His comment upon Nicolson's statement that "formulas are always trappy", is worthy of full quotation:

"All this," he wrote, "is true and not to be disregarded but on the other hand it has to be borne in mind that Russia and France both deal separately with Germany and that it is not reasonable that tension should be permanently greater between England and Germany than between Germany and France or Germany and Russia." (82).

None the less by May 3, the negotiation was at an end and Grey could write to Bertie: "I took an opportunity of telling him (Cambon) today that we were not now discussing the question at all." (83).

The professionals could hasten to congratulate each other. As early as April 20, Goschen wrote privately to Nicolson:

"I need hardly tell you that I feel great relief at the idea that the Formula question is in the process of interment; it has always been my dream to be on cordial relations with Germany without any definite political understanding, and if, as I hope, the recent conversations have that result, no one will be more pleased than I. They have tried hard to bustle us into a hampering formula and I rejoice that they have failed. You have been foremost in this good work." (84).

It is clear, then, that Nicolson was nervous from the first about the repercussions of any Anglo-German political agreement upon English relations with France and Russia. It is equally clear that Crowe, (85) Bertie, and Goschen were at one with him in this respect, and that all four used every opportunity to press their views upon Grey. Must we

(82) G. & T. VI. No. 564, Min..

(83) G. & T. VI. No. 582.

(84) G. & T. VI. No. 579.

(85) G. & T. VI. No. 564, Min..

necessarily conclude, however, that their influence was decisive in preventing the conclusion of an agreement which Grey would otherwise have made? The actual course of the negotiations proved that Germany would make no real reduction of her naval strength save in return for a promise from Britain of unconditional neutrality on the continent. There is no evidence that Grey was ever any more prepared to give such a promise than were his permanent advisers. Did not the difference between Grey and Nicolson lie only in the fact that the former came rather more slowly to the latter's conclusion that no agreement was possibly with Germany save upon terms which neither of them ever thought it possible to grant? "What I desire," Grey wrote to Goschen, "is that France, Russia, and ourselves should all be on the best terms with Germany, without losing touch with each other or impairing the confidence which exists between us." (86). Such a delicate balance was not easy to achieve or maintain, and that Nicolson and his colleagues should have despaired of it sooner than did Grey, implies a difference of temper rather than of ultimate purpose.

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(86) G. & T. VI. No. 584.

VII

What, then, are to be our conclusions with respect to the nature and extent of the influence which was brought to bear upon Sir Edward Grey by his subordinates? Such conclusions must of necessity be only tentative, since we are concerned with influence, which cannot be mathematically measured, and which frequently is not a matter of record. This thesis was avowedly based upon the materials contained in the "British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914", and while those materials enable us to form a final judgment upon the purposes towards which men such as Crowe, Nicolson, Hardinge, and Bertie exercised that influence, they do not enable us to decide with equal finality the precise extent of that influence. Documents are at once the necessity and the snare of the historian, especially when those documents are of the nature of private or semi-private correspondence. In such cases, unless we have a sympathetic knowledge of the degree of intimacy existing between the writer and the recipient of a letter, a chance phrase may become the basis for a towering structure of misrepresentation. Grey, himself, stated formally to Dr. Gooch in February, 1929, that, "I did not..... regard anything except my own letters and official papers as deciding policy." (87). None the less Nicolson and Hardinge certainly, and others of the permanent officials probably, must have had personal access to Grey, and the extent and mutual interaction between the responsible Minister and his subordinates is necessarily an elusive

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(87) G. & T. VI. p. ix.

quantity. Even so, this thesis may claim to have established at least a negative conclusion. The writing of it has involved the reading of eleven volumes of diplomatic papers touching every aspect of British Foreign Policy between 1898 and 1914. Each of these volumes contains some seven hundred pages, and it is surely significant that in all this mass of material we have been unable to discover any conclusive evidence which would suggest that British Foreign Policy during Sir Edward Grey's occupancy of the Foreign Office, was ever exclusively determined or deflected upon the major issues by the permanent officials.

At the outset we defined Grey's initial attitude towards France, Russia and Germany, at the time when he took office in December, 1905. With respect to France he inherited the legacy of the Anglo-French Entente; with respect to Russia he inherited the attempt at an Anglo-Russian "Rapprochement"; with respect to Germany he intended that the improved relations of England with the Dual Alliance should not necessarily incur hostility to the Triple Alliance. What, then, were the respective relations of England with these Powers eight years later? The Anglo-French Entente remained only an "Entente", its informal nature carefully and repeatedly insisted on by Grey in spite of all the efforts of Bertie and Nicolson to convert it into a formal alliance. The improved relations with Russia had taken shape in the Anglo-Russian Entente, but here again Hardinge and Nicolson had failed to convert the "Entente" into an alliance, thanks to Grey. Finally, Anglo-German relations were, perhaps, in 1914 on a more friendly basis than they had been since 1900, despite Crowe's

deep-rooted distrust of German aims and German methods. "The relations between the two Governments," wrote Grey in 1912, "had very much improved, and we now discussed frankly and without friction everything which was of mutual interest." (88).

All extant criticism of Grey's policy has centred upon one or other of these three features: his insistence upon preserving the peculiarly informal nature of the Anglo-French Entente, his hesitation to convert the "Rapprochement" with Russia into any commitments of a more tangible kind, and his persistent attempts to improve Great Britain's relations with Germany. It is surely significant that the "British Documents" show beyond doubt that in all these cases he resisted over a period of years the insistent suggestions of the ablest and most trusted among his advisers.

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(88) G. & T. VI. No. 574.