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The purpose of this thesis is to examine one instance of the creation of British foreign policy in the period before the First World War in order to determine who created and maintained the pro-Russian policy that culminated in the making of the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907. A careful examination of the Cabinet Papers, the British Documents on the Origin of the War, the memoirs and diaries of the participants, and other primary and secondary sources shows that a number of forces and personalities were involved in this instance of British policy formulation. The Foreign Secretary, the King, the Indian Government, the Foreign Office staff, and the India Office, as well as the Committee of Imperial Defence, interacted in the context of the often turbulent period, 1904-1907, to gradually produce a consistent and coherent policy that favored making an agreement with Russia. Needless to say, this was a complex tale to tell, and some attention had to be paid to the background of this Anglo-Russian entente. Other issues, such as the significance of the Anglo-Russian Convention, the effect of German policy upon the state of Anglo-Russian relations, and the implications of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, arise, and are also dealt with in this study. The main point of this thesis, however, is that it was a small group of determined Liberal Imperialists, building on a Conservative Government base, who secured the important posts, silenced opposition within Britain, and patiently negotiated

with the Russians until they had signed the Convention in August, 1907.

The Formulation of British Foreign Policy: Britain, Russia, and Central Asia, 1904-1907

by

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I. Introduction

Anglo-Russian relations in the last decades of the nineteenth century had been characterized by tension and occasional war scares, usually prompted by some action on the part of one of the two Powers in Central Asia. Yet within the first decade of the twentieth century these two nations had solved the major source of their conflict. At the same time, many contemporaries saw the understanding between the two as a dramatic diplomatic maneuver, aimed at encircling Germany, or at least altering the balance of power in Europe. This change in policy came about in part by a change in the Russian attitude toward the problem, but more because of the British desire for an agreement and persistence in seeking that agreement. This study will examine the formulation and maintenance of British foreign policy toward Russia in the first decade of the twentieth century to determine who creates foreign policy, how they create it, and how they maintain their policy as the established one, even in times of adverse conditions.

The elements involved in creating a British policy of reconciliation and understanding toward Russia are several. Public opinion in Britain was, by and large, suspicious of, if not hostile to, Russia even in the best of times,[1] and difficulties of any nature usually raised storms of protest,

especially Liberal Party protest, against the last European autocratic state. As will be seen, the Cabinet officers, particularly the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs, determined the nation's foreign policy to a large extent. As British policy toward Russia was greatly concerned with India and Central Asia, as well as naval and military considerations, the India Office, the Admiralty, and the War Office were also called upon to aid in the planning and execution of foreign policy. The Government of India, headed by the British Viceroy at Simla, also contributed to the drafting of policy with its advice from the scene of many of the Anglo-Russian confrontations. The King's attitudes and sentiments also had to be taken into consideration, for the other rulers of Europe gauged British intentions to some extent by what the King said and did.[2] A last and not unimportant, element was the bureaucracy of the Foreign Office. The sentiments of the ambassadors and the staff colored the reporting of events, thus indirectly shaping the course of future policy. These elements are intertwined, and discovering the part that each played in the creation and maintenance of British policy toward Russia is an interesting task.

The Anglo-Russian Entente has been viewed as a significant change of course in European diplomatic history by most historians, though the nature and ramifications of the change are debatable. The point of controversy, in general terms, is whether or not the Convention of 1907 marked the division

of Europe into two armed camps, the British, the French, the Russians on the one hand, and the Germans and the Austro-Hungarians on the other. The men who worked to make the agreement did not feel that their efforts were aimed at dividing Europe,[3] though journalists of the time wisely noted that Britain was settling her "outstanding differences with the rest of the world" in part as a result of the German naval challenge,[4] and that Russia and Britain must come to terms in Asia "if they desire to act together in Europe."[5] A.J.P. Taylor, the noted diplomatic historian, sees the Convention as being "confined" to Asia, and comments that it was a settlement of differences, not a "disguised alliance," and that only later German actions made the Convention one link in the Triple Entente.[6] L.C.B. Seaman, re-evaluating the problem, believes that an Anglo-Russian agreement would only be relevant in Europe, and that an Asian settlement "was the necessary price to be paid for keeping Russia on the side of the French and the English in Europe."[7] Regardless of the interpretation attached to the Anglo-Russian Convention, it marked a decided change in the European diplomatic picture, and was one more step in the flow of events that led to the First World War.

This example of the process of British policy formulation is a particularly valuable one, for it occurs at a time when British defense policy was undergoing a complete revision, and the Government changed from Conservative to Liberal in the

election of 1906. British policy toward Russia demonstrated a high degree of continuity, for an understanding with the Russians about Central Asia was sought by both the Liberals and the Conservatives from 1900 until 1907. The Foreign Office, and key ministers in both Governments pushed for an agreement, despite difficulties and setbacks, for they felt that such an understanding was necessary in light of the changing diplomatic scene in Europe. Both Governments worked persistently for a settlement, approaching the problem pragmatically. In the final analysis the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was the product of the efforts of a small group of men in key positions within the British Government, who were able to silence or override their opposition in order to achieve a goal they deemed necessary for the good of Britain. Therefore, the main emphasis of this study will be upon the creation of British foreign policy; the motives and intentions of Russian policy will not be examined in depth, though they will be presented to show the differences between the Russian motives and the British perception of them.

Footnotes

[1]Harold Nicolson, Sir Arthur Nicolson (London, 1930), 206.

[2]George Monger, The End of Isolation (London, 1963), 264.

[3]See R.P. Churchill, The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1939), 126; Nicolson, 234-35; and Chapter III below.

[4]Calchas, "The Anglo-Russian Agreement," Fortnightly Review, LXXXVIII (October, 1907), 544.

[5]"The Political Situation in Asia," The Edinburgh Review, CCIV (July, 1906), 245.

[6]A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for the Mastery in Europe, 1848-1918 (Oxford, 1957), 441-446.

[7]L.C.B. Seaman, From Vienna to Versailles (New York, 1963), 154.

II. Britain, Russia, and Japan, 1900-1904

In the last quarter of the nineteenth century British statesmen and diplomats guided Britain through the maze of international politics by pursuing a policy that became known as "Splendid Isolation". The policy worked out well for the British during that period. The Empire expanded, British trade boomed, and England did not become involved in continental wars or alliance systems. By 1901, however, the policy of isolation was less than splendid, and attempts were made by the British diplomats to settle some of the old quarrels that Britain had with her European neighbors. The policy of Russian expansion in Central and Eastern Asia had brought that Power into conflict with English interests in China and Central Asia. The Russian threat to Persia, Afghanistan, and Tibet created much unrest in the minds of British diplomats and military men, for these areas were adjacent to the great and vital British holdings in India. The Conservative Government, headed by Lord Salisbury and later Sir Arthur Balfour, realized that a Central Asian settlement with Russia would relieve the greatest source of Russian diplomatic pressure on Britain. Overtures were made to the Russians, but to no avail; Russian imperialism was reaching its high-water mark, and the British, operating partly in fear of the Russians, had little to offer in making a settlement.

As events on the diplomatic scene became increasingly complex, and the threat of a Russo-Japanese War began to loom large, the situation began to look better for the British, but the first three years of the new century saw no great surface change in Anglo-Russian relations.

Britain's emergence from her "Splendid Isolation" was done gradually and reluctantly. Events in Europe had preoccupied the other Powers from the 1850's until the 1870's, and the competition for empire that began in the 1870's further diverted attention from Britain itself. During this time Britain had gone her own way, by and large, and had established her "Second Empire". Increasingly, however, the French, Germans, and Russians had begun to intrude into areas that the British claimed as their own. Russian expansion aimed at Central Asia and the Far East, threatened India and British trade and loans with China. Germany was also a powerful commercial threat in China, and her rapidly expanding industry and commerce were beginning to undercut British goods at home and abroad by 1900. Though the Fashoda Crisis of 1898 had thrown cold water on French colonial aspirations in Central Africa, there was still considerable friction between France and England in both North Africa and the Far East in 1900. Thus, beset from almost all sides, Britain's days as an isolated Power appeared to be numbered as the twentieth century began.

The Boer War produced a further deterioration in the

British situation. While British manpower and money were absorbed in South Africa, the French seized some territory on the contested Moroccan-Algerian border, and the Russians advanced their interests in Persia by making the government of that nation a loan on the condition that Persia borrow only from Russia for the next ten years.[1] At the same time the Russians occupied Manchuria as a result of the Boxer Rebellion, thus threatening the integrity of the feeble Chinese Empire. If these assaults upon the Empire and British predominance were not enough, the war against the Boer Republics revealed that the Regular Army was too small for British imperial commitments, and sorely lacking both training and equipment. Still more startling was the Admiralty pronouncement early in 1901, that the British Mediterranean Fleet was no longer strong enough to oppose the combination of the Russian Black Sea Fleet and the French Mediterranean Fleet.[2] A re-examination of military and naval planning and procedure was certainly in order, but even more important, though perhaps less obvious, was the need to formulate a new foreign policy that would provide Britain with allies, so that she would not have to arm herself against all Europe.

The British Foreign Office moved slowly, almost casually, toward some type of alliance and understanding that would solve at least some of her problems. Despite the desire to make some kind of settlement with Russia, the British were unable to make any gains with that Power. Anglo-German talks resulted in the China Agreement of 1900, by

which Britain and Germany agreed to maintain the integrity of China. The Agreement amounted to little, as it broke down in 1901 in the face of Russian and Japanese pressure on China and Manchuria. The Germans did not wish to enforce the Agreement for fear of alienating Russia, while Britain was not about to support the Triple Alliance against Russia, because, as Salisbury had said in 1886, "we are fish" - the British Navy could do precious little for Austria-Hungary or East Prussia.[3] Anglo-German talks continued until the end of 1901, but, despite their best efforts, the Anglophiles in Germany and the Germanophiles in England could not come to terms. German suspicion and reluctance drove the British into the arms of the Japanese.

Seeking some resolution to the Far Eastern problem, the British replied to Japanese overtures made late in 1901. The British Foreign Office, headed by Lord Lansdowne, knew that the Japanese were seeking an alliance or understanding in St. Petersburg as much as in London. Lansdowne had been rebuffed in his attempt to deal directly with the Russians, and feared that if he did not quickly come to terms with the Japanese, he would have to face a Russo-Japanese coalition in China. German enthusiasm over the China Agreement had long ago waned, so Lansdowne felt that he had a free hand to deal with the Japanese. An Anglo-Japanese Alliance would negate the need for a German understanding, or so Lansdowne felt, and thus the British vigorously pursued the Japanese offer. A mutu-

al assistance pact, stating that help would be given if either party were attacked in the Far East by two other Powers, resulted after three months of negotiation. Sir Arthur Balfour, the new Prime Minister, had feared that "We may find ourselves fighting for our own existence in every part of the globe against Russia and France because France has joined forces with her ally over some obscure Russo-Japanese quarrel in Corea."[4] The old idea of isolation did not die easily, and even Lansdowne had some qualms about the new alliance. There was no better alternative at the time, however, and, as 1902 passed quietly in China, the British came to feel that they had found their Far Eastern soldier, and gotten it at what seemed to be an inexpensive price.[5]

Britain might not have become directly involved in continental affairs by the Japanese Alliance, but the agreement did have a pronounced effect upon the course of European diplomacy, for a Russo-Japanese War could place the French in a bad position. Russia the French needed for security against Germany, yet a peaceful and friendly Great Britain was also necessary. Throughout 1902 Delcassé, the French Foreign Minister, tinkered with his problem to little effect; there seemed no way to approach Britain without alienating Russia, who always came first with the French. In the meantime events worked in the French minister's favor.

Late in 1902 many members of the British Foreign Office came to feel that Germany was not necessary to British policy

in many instances, and that the German Government and military organization even harbored a certain malevolence against them. When the Straits question arose in regard to Russia sending torpedo boats into the Black Sea, the Foreign Office and the Committee of Imperial Defence surveyed the situation, and decided that consultations with Germany were not necessary to decide this issue. Further, in October, 1902, the Admiralty came to the realization that the German Navy was designed for use against Britain, and Britain alone. The "risk fleet" then being created by Admiral Tirpitz through the Naval Law of 1898 was not meant to face a concentrated British Navy, but rather was to serve as a diplomatic weapon with which the Germans could threaten Britain. This factor, combined with a growing German commercial and industrial rivalry, turned British interests away from Germany. A growing anti-German element in the Foreign Office and the Admiralty began to direct British attention toward the benefits of understandings with France and Russia.

Unable to deal with Russia, and by 1902, unwilling to deal with Germany, the Foreign Office sought an understanding with France. As the Asian situation became increasingly tense in 1903, the British realized that their position was quite similar to that of the French, and to prevent problems from arising, the two Powers would have to act together then. Once conversations began, both nations saw the chance to end their colonial problems, not only in North Africa, but in

Siam and Newfoundland as well. Negotiations began in July, 1903, and proceeded quickly and smoothly. Though only colonial matters were discussed in concrete terms, both parties had other considerations in mind, and a steadily deteriorating Far Eastern situation kept the discussions moving apace. In the end France accepted control of Morocco, while conceding control of Egypt to the British. Other colonial and commercial matters were also resolved, and the Entente Cordiale was signed April 8, 1904.

The Entente was not the long-term goal of either Power nor was it even the product of a concerted plan; rather, it was a product of the times, reflecting the changing diplomatic problems that each nation faced. Both sides gained from the colonial settlements, and, hopefully, reduced the chance of extending the Russo-Japanese War, begun in February, 1904, to Europe. "The entente was essential for France,"[6] for if a second party entered the war against Russia, the French felt obligated to come to Russia's aid. The British were obligated to come into action if a second Power attacked Japan, and being on good terms with France was insurance against spreading the war. The Entente by no means solved all the French problems, but it helped considerably. By 1904, the British had ended their isolation, solved some of their colonial problems and protected their Far Eastern interests with the Japanese Alliance, all without choosing sides in Europe. An anti-

German attitude was growing in the Foreign Office, and with this came an increasing desire to improve relations with Russia.

Anglo-Russian relations in the last quarter of the nineteenth century were influenced to a large extent by the course of Russian expansion in central Asia. Problems with Turkey, the Balkans, the Straits, Manchuria, China and Korea all affected the diplomacy of the two Powers, but it was in Central Asia that the Russians made the greatest gains at the least cost, and it was from this area that the most direct threat to the British Empire was posed, or so the Governments of India and Whitehall felt. The Balkans cooled down after the 1880's when the Russian attention turned elsewhere. British diplomats could protest Russian Far Eastern adventures, but it was difficult to get too excited about them, as only commercial, not territorial, claims were at stake. India, however, was deemed vital to British interests, and any Russian move to dominate the neighboring territories was looked upon with suspicion and hostility.

The Russian policy of expansion into Central Asia was an ongoing one, begun in the mid-eighteenth century as the steppe country was brought under St. Petersburg's control. The process of conquest began in earnest in the 1860's,

however, when the Russian government came to realize that gains in the region might profit them quite handily. Not only were markets for Russian manufactured goods opened, and sources of raw cotton obtained, but certain diplomatic advantages were gained as well, for the military came to feel that their presence in Central Asia put them in the gateway to India, thus giving Russian diplomats a significant lever against the British. Aided by the Russian government's inability to control the generals in the field, new territory was added to the Empire with increasing frequency. The first inroads were made in 1864 with joining of the West Siberian and Syr-Daria lines of fortresses on the borders of the Moslem khanates.[7] The fall of Tashkent committed the Russians to absorb the oases, and Samarkand fell in 1868. The khanates of Bukhara and Khiva were under Russian control by 1873, and Kokand was annexed in 1876. These additions to Russian territory did not go unnoticed in Britain, but no protest was lodged. Later annexations, closer to India, drew hot responses from the British, and the taking of Merv, on the Persian border, in 1884 produced a major crisis and a serious threat of war the next year. Occupation of these lands made the British nervous enough; the threat, or supposed threat, created by the building of railroads, such as the Transcaspian line, into these areas stimulated British military thinkers to new heights of hysteria. By the mid-1890's, British military thinking concerned itself almost exclusively with the problem

of defending ~~the~~ India, and the Northwest Frontier in particular.[8] Russian attempts to influence the governments of Afghanistan and Persia, or Russian intervention in China or Tibet furthered British distrust, and stimulated jingoistic talk by both Whitehall and the British government in India. Though there were few major crises after the mid-1890's, any move by either the Russians or the British to send a trade delegation or to influence the native governments created an instant, if minor, crisis, and the period is marked by scores of such events.[9] The Central Asian feud was one of the oldest and longest quarrels between the two nations, and the one with perhaps the least foundation in fact.

The Russian dream, and the British fear, of Russian armies invading India from Persia or Afghanistan was, and still is, a difficult, if not impossible, task. The terrain is quite rough, and in the early days of the twentieth century the necessary supply lines would have been too long to be practical. The British military planners ran into several logistical problems when they contemplated war on the Northwest Frontier, and it never seemed to occur to them that the Russians would face the same, if not worse, problems.[10] Thus, one of the greatest bones of contention between the two Powers was, at that time, little more than a figment of the imagination.

However, it was this tender Central Asian situation that eventually brought an accord between Britain and Russia. Britain,

no longer expansionist in Asia, and seeking to end her diplomatic isolation, undertook to achieve some understanding with Russia, beginning in 1899 under Salisbury's ministry. At this time, however, Russian foreign policy was working well in the Far East, and a Central Asian settlement would be of little use to the Russian government, as it would only preclude or hinder future Russian actions in the area. The Russian situation with regard to Persia was quite good at the turn of the century; so good in fact, that Baron Curzon, the Viceroy to India, feared a Russian advance into that state at any moment.[11] In 1900 the Russians loaned the Persian government a sum of money on the condition that the Persians borrow only from Russia for the next ten years. At the height of the Boer War, in 1901, Russian pressure on the government of Afghanistan was increased, and a Russian subsidy was granted to a steamboat company in the Persian gulf. These acts created a stir not only in Simla, but Whitehall as well. Members of the British government felt that moves into Persia were designed to open the easier western invasion route to India, and that the establishment of a Russian naval base on the Persian gulf would threaten the communications between India and England.[12] Tentative Russian commercial and diplomatic overtures to Afghanistan and Tibet, made late in 1901, upset Simla further, for even if no invasion followed the Russian penetration of those regions, they were areas from which Russians agents could work to upset the Indian borderlands or start local wars.[13] By late 1901,

many British diplomats felt the same way about Russia that the Viceroy did: that Russian ambition knew no bounds, and that Britain must "defend that which she has won, and ... resist the minor encroachments which are only a part of the larger plan."[14] Furthermore, many British officials realized the strength of the Russian position, and the weakness of Britain's. The Russians were on the offensive in Asia, and the British could make no good offer for a settlement that would placate the Russians. Thus, all talks in 1900-1901 proved abortive.

The year 1902 opened with a British coup against the Russians in the form of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The Russians quite rightly interpreted this agreement as a diplomatic victory for the British, and were quick to see that it was aimed directly at them. A Franco-Russian note, which for all intents and purposes extended the Dual Alliance to cover any Asian situation, quickly followed the announcement of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. In the summer of that year, Russian pressure was again applied to Persia, and it appeared that the Russians had regained their lost momentum. Lord Hamilton, the Secretary of State for India, wrote that "in this Office and the Foreign Office I think Persia is the one question which more constantly occupies the official mind than any other subject connected with foreign politics."[16] Afghanistan, too, seemed to be slipping under Russian domination, and it was felt that

the ruler, the Ameer, was dealing with the Russians on the sly.[17] The Committee of Imperial Defence (CID), in one of the last meetings of the year, added yet more gloom to the picture, noting that the completion of the Orenburg-Tashkent railroad was expected by 1905, thus adding more danger to the already precarious situation in Central Asia.[18] It had been hoped that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance would check the Russians in the Far East, and give them pause in Central Asia. As 1902 closed the Russians were still pushing in China, Manchuria, and Korea, and the Central Asian pause had been short indeed. Clearly, some settlement was needed, especially in Central Asia where British interests appeared most threatened, to halt any Anglo-Russian dispute before it evolved into a major crisis.

The Conservative Cabinet, headed by Balfour, was very cautious with regard to any forward policy toward Russia. The British had little to offer the Russians, and did not wish a confrontation or war. The Russian matter troubled the Cabinet, but no solution appeared to be forthcoming. Caution and care were the words of the hour, so much so that the aggressive Hamilton wrote Curzon that "if it [the Cabinet] was put to the vote, there would be a disposition to abandon all our present obligations, and to substitute nothing in their place except an attempt to come to an understanding with Russia."[19]

The renewed British attempt to deal with Russia in 1903 appeared to meet with little success. The Tsar and a small clique of aggressive imperialists, including Alexander Bezobrazov, the Privy Councillor, Plehve, the Minister of the Interior, and two high-ranking navy men,[20] controlled foreign policy, and pushed for expansion not only in Central Asia, but in the Far East as well. Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary, issued strong warnings to Benckendorff, the Russian ambassador in London, concerning the Persian situation. The activities of Russian agents in Tibet did not escape Lansdowne's notice either, and this matter called for another conversation with the ambassador.[21] A strong speech in Parliament, aimed against the Russian idea of creating a Russian port on the Persian Gulf, was also intended to warn the Russians against further advances.[22] The CID also examined the Indian situation, and decided that, though the Russians would probably make no overt moves until their rail lines extended to the frontier, the army in India was by no means large enough or well enough equipped to defend the area.[23] Despite all the warnings and injunctions to the Russians, Lansdowne was talking privately to Benckendorff in different terms and in a different tone.

The surface appearance of little success in the Anglo-Russian talks was misleading, for Lansdowne and Benckendorff had made some significant steps toward real conversations and an agreement. Retrenchment was the Cabinet policy in 1903, and

in the face of rising naval spending, the Army estimates were cut. The Cabinet, thus gave its blessing to any Anglo-Russian overtures of peace in hopes of preventing a costly war or having to spend more on the Indian Army.[24] The quiet settlement of a Tibetan problem in April, 1903, and a change in the Straits policy on the part of the CID both helped friendly relations.[25] The failure of the Baghdad Railway talks introduced the fear of German intervention in Persia, and spurred on the informal talks. The Russians were open and attentive in these low-key negotiations in the first half of 1903, though they were not ready to enter full-scale conversations yet.[26] Just when it appeared that some gains might be made, the situation in the Far East came to a head, and all but wiped out the slender gains made in three years of attempted negotiations.

The Far Eastern crisis was precipitated by the failure of the Russians to withdraw their troops from Manchuria, as they had earlier promised, and the Russian advance into Korea through the Yalu River timber concessions. The forward Russian policy had pushed the Japanese hard, and these two events aroused the Japanese government's anger. The Japanese felt that the Russian presence in Manchuria and Korea was a threat to their sphere of influence. Russo-Japanese negotiations to settle the matter proved futile, and the Japanese soon approached the British, asking what the British were prepared to do for

their ally.[27] The British Foreign Office was in quite a strain, and to try to ease the situation Lansdowne approached the French. The British did not wish to renig on their ally, yet they did not want to sacrifice their Russian talks or have to go to war in Europe because of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. A settlement with France would hopefully preclude any chance of a European war, and smooth over Anglo-Russian relations as well. Thus, in October, 1903, Lansdowne called upon Delcasse to pave the way for further Anglo-Russian talks.[28] The French were amenable, but the Russians, now feeling that Britain would go to Japan's aid, were having no part of the British overtures.[29] Reluctantly Lansdowne aided the Japanese in the fall of 1903, in order "to convince Russia that she could not safely continue to flout us ...."[30] Though Anglo-Russian talks were not broken off, no progress of any kind was made in the final months of the year. The British effort to dissuade the two Powers from going to war never got started, and in February, 1904, the Japanese attacked the Russian Far Eastern bases, opening the Russo-Japanese War.

The British government and Foreign Office realized in the first years of the twentieth century that some alterations were needed in the area of foreign policy, and that the old

policy of isolation was no longer feasible at all. Russia was the one Power with whom England had had almost constant trouble since the mid-1800's, and it was here that the Foreign Office first tried to make some agreement. The talks begun by Salisbury in 1899 bore no real fruit in the first years of the century, however. The Russian policy was one of expansion in both the Far East and Central Asia. The British Cabinet feared Russian aggressiveness in Central Asia, but could find no way to combat it. Naval building programs took the lion's share of the defense budget after the Boer War, leaving few funds to increase or improve the Indian Army. At the same time, the Foreign Office and the India Office could find nothing to use to strike a bargain with the Russians. The British did make some progress in ending their isolation. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance of 1902 theoretically checked the Russians in the Far East and protected British interests there, while permitting the Admiralty to strengthen the Home and Mediterranean Fleets with withdrawals from the Pacific Fleet. The British did not intend to give up hope of an Anglo-Russian agreement though, and continued talks throughout 1902 and 1903. As tensions in the Far East increased in the latter year, the British found it much to their advantage to cultivate the French, and did so with much vigor, until they had signed an entente with her.

The Anglo-Russian negotiations, if they may be called

such, of the period 1900-1903 characterize the persistence and patience with which the British Foreign Office pursued the Russians in the following years, as well as demonstrating the pragmatic attitude of the British diplomats. An understanding with Russia about Central Asia would have been a great boon to the military men by eliminating one of their greatest fears. Military spending could be cut, and, as the German naval threat emerged, this consideration became even more important. Further, an understanding with Russia would help end the old policy of isolation, which was proving to be increasingly expensive and dangerous. Few of the British ministers at first favored an agreement with Russia, for though it might be necessary, Britain had little to offer the Russians in any sort of settlement. The Russian position at the beginning of the century was a strong one. Though Balfour and Lansdowne reluctantly favored a settlement of some type, the majority of the Cabinet and concerned officials, such as Hamilton and Curzon favored arming against Russia rather than making a settlement. The years 1900 to 1903 saw the British position grow stronger with the alliance with Japan, and the beginnings of Anglo-French talks. The Russian situation deteriorated somewhat during the same period, as the Japanese began to move to check Russian expansion in the Far East. Furthermore, the increasing need for retrenchment by the British made the idea of an Anglo-Russian agreement more

palatable to the Cabinet, if only for the savings in Indian Army expenses. The early lack of success did not deter British diplomats, for the subject was kept open to discussion at all times. The coming of the Russo-Japanese War created a suspicion of Britain in the minds of the Russians, but the war itself, and the problems that followed, caused a change in the Russian attitude toward Britain and Central Asia.

Footnotes

[1]Monger, 5.

[2]Ibid., 1.

[3]Seaman, 142.

[4]Cited in Monger, 58.

[5]The "Far Eastern Soldier" was a term first used by Delcasse, the French Minister of Foreign Affairs from 1898-1905, in February, 1901. See Documents Diplomatiques Francais, Second Series (Paris, 1931), Vol. I, no. 88. Hereafter cited as DDF.

[6]Taylor, 417.

[7]David MacKenzie, "Expansion in Central Asia: St. Petersburg vs. the Turkestan Generals, 1863-1866," Canadian Slavic Studies, III, no.2 (Summer, 1969), 291.

[8]Jay Luvaas, The Education of an Army (Chicago, 1964), 269.

[9]See Brinton Busch, Britain and the Persian Gulf, 1894-1914 (Berkeley, 1967); William Habberton, Anglo-Russian Relations Concerning Afghanistan, 1837-1907 (Urbana, 1937); and Alastair Lamb, Britain and Chinese Central Asia (London, 1960).

[10]For example, see Great Britain, Committee of Imperial Defence, Papers, 1888-1914 (London, 1888-1914), 38/2/22, 20 April, 1903; also 38/9/37, 6 May, 1905, which considers these problems of transport, and comments upon the difficulty of such campaigns. Hereafter cited as CID, with series, folio, and paper number.

[11]Lawrence Zetland, The Life of Lord Curzon (London, 1928), II, 100.

[12]Denis Judd, Balfour and the British Empire (London, 1968), 59; also Busch, 115.

[13]Monger, 6; Lamb, 259-60.

[14]Cited in Lamb, 239-40.

[15]Great Britain, Foreign Office, British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, edited by G.P. Gooch and Harold Temperley (London, 1928-29), II, no. 145. Hereafter cited as BD, with volume number and document number.

[16]Cited in Monger, 87.

[17]Zetland, II, 266-67.

[18]CID, 6/1/3, 30 December, 1902.

[19]Zetland, II, 268.

[20]Barbara Jelavich, A Century of Russian Foreign Policy, 1814-1914 (New York, 1964), 242; Ivo Lederer (ed.), Russian Foreign Policy (New Haven, Conn., 1962), 250.

[21]Lord Newton, Lord Lansdowne (London, 1929), 272.

[22]Great Britain, Hansard's Parliamentary Debates (4th Series), Vol. CXXI (1903), 1348.

[23]CID, 6/1/24D, 6 June, 1903; and CID, 6/2/58D, 27 October, 1903.

[24]See Monger, 110-111.

[25]For the former, see Lamb, 280ff; for the latter, which stated that the maintenance "of the 'status quo' as regards Constantinople is not one of the primary naval or military interests of this country," see CID, 6/1/1B, 14 February, 1903.

[26]Benckendorff was willing to discuss Central Asia "unofficially" with Lansdowne in May, 1903. Cited in Monger, 123.

[27]BD, II, 237.

[28]Ibid., II, 242 and 250.

[29]Ibid., II, 258 and 466.

[30]Cited in Monger, 140.

III. Britain, Russia, and Germany, 1904-1905

The Russo-Japanese War and the failure of the Germans to obtain a Russo-German Alliance at Bjorko in 1905 led to the making of the Anglo-Russian Convention in 1907. The British Foreign Office still wanted an understanding with Russia during the war, and kept the lines of communication open. Unfortunate incidents, such as the Younghusband Mission and the Dogger Bank Incident, had an adverse effect upon Anglo-Russian relations, but Lansdowne and the Foreign Office managed to keep the situation cool, so that relations were never broken off. It was during the period of the war that the British government debated the matter of Anglo-Russian relations, and by 1906 had decided, by and large, in favor of making some type of settlement with Russia. An anti-German and pro-French and Russian attitude came to pervade the Foreign Office, further accelerating the British efforts to achieve a settlement. By 1906 the only real opposition to a Russian convention came from Simla, and the Foreign Office saw the problem more in terms of working out the agreement than convincing the Cabinet and the public of the necessity of such an agreement.

The coming of the Russo-Japanese War in February, 1904, had a dampening effect upon the casual talks that Benckendorff and Lansdowne had been having. Lansdowne was quite pleased

that the Russians were willing to talk about the Asian situation,[1] and was encouraged by Benckendorff's claim that "the moment was riper now for a friendly understanding than at any time during the past twenty years."[2] Such statements, however, could have little effect when it was realized that the ambassador had no authority to make specific proposals at that time,[3] and it appeared that the Russians were waiting to see what Japan's next move might be. Thus, though talks about Central Asia continued, and Lansdowne circulated a Cabinet memorandum on Anglo-Russian relations, which called for criticism,[4] little of importance was accomplished early in 1904.

The immediate Foreign Office and Cabinet reaction to the war, as far as Russian relations were concerned, was one of relief. The prevalent idea was that a Russian war with Japan might bring the Russians around to the point of considering some serious talks with the British.[5] Anglo-Russian relations did not improve immediately, however, because the Russians felt that the British had pushed Japan into a war.[6] The Cabinet became uneasy about the Russian situation when it learned that more Russian troops were appearing on the Central Asian borders as the result of Russian mobilization, and that a concerted effort had completed the Orenburg-Tashkent railway almost a year ahead of the CID estimate.[7] Anglo-French negotiations for the Entente were progressing well, and Delcassé aided, to some extent, in reconciling the Russians and the British.[8] The Russians were still quite bitter toward the British in March,

1904, though, and the Cabinet realized that some effort would have to be made to soothe the Russian anger, if talks were to continue on even the earlier modest scale.

It was at this point, in April and May, 1904, that the confusion, division, and indecision about British policy toward Russia manifested itself. On April 14, King Edward VII, who at this time favored a rapprochement with Russia, met in Copenhagen with Alexander Izvolsky, the Russian ambassador to Denmark. A lengthy discussion on the relations of the two countries marked a first step toward better relations. The King declared that he wanted an entente with Russia, similar to the one just concluded with France, for that "had always been and continues to be the object of my most sincere desires."[9] The debate within the Cabinet and the Foreign Office continued as before, however. On April 22, Balfour circulated a confidential memorandum that examined the Russian influence in Persia, noting that Russia did not want the annexation of Persia, only ascendency in that region. Again the fear that Russian agents in Persia might make British India "scarcely tenable" was expressed, and the paper concluded that a Russian advance could be halted only by the British building railroads and ports in the country.[10] The same day though, Charles Hardinge, King Edward's choice as the new ambassador to Russia, wrote Edward that if Britain wished to be on Russia's good side, some gesture, such as "an unopposed passage" of the

Straits by the Black Sea Fleet "might prove a very useful asset in the event of the general negotiations for an arrangement with Russia being resumed."[11] Lord Kitchener, the commander of the Indian Army, continued to espouse an aggressive policy against Russia in Central Asia, and opposed any talks with that Power. Lansdowne had found a temporary ally in the King, who, having decided upon a friendly policy, was firm with Kitchener, stating that only one policy would come from Whitehall. Further, a letter to the Tsar, dated May 12, 1904, stated the King's desire to make a "satisfactory settlement" and a "lasting agreement" with Russia.[12]

By late spring, 1904, Anglo-Russian relations were in a state of some confusion. The Russians, heavily engaged in the war against Japan, distrusted the British, and did not appear at all anxious to begin talks. The British, for their part, took an ambivalent stand. On the one hand, the King, Lansdowne, the new ambassador to Russia, Sir Charles Hardinge, and some of the Foreign Office men, desired a settlement, and worked for some type of rapprochement. At the same time a deep-seated fear and distrust of Russia prompted the Indian government, under Curzon, many military men, such as Kitchener, and the CID to plan for war on the Northwest Frontier, and to call for more military spending. Balfour, typified the indecision by his actions in 1904. In January he had circulated a memorandum favoring an agreement with Russia; in April he

proposed moving into south and central Persia before the Russians did, as mentioned above; later, in August he would change tack again, stating that a Russian invasion of India was "a scare of the most foolish description."[13] The French entente had little effect on Anglo-Russian relations, and it remained for the two Powers to start their own conversations.

The British Foreign Office worked diligently to cultivate the Russians during the summer of 1904. News of a German attempt to conclude an alliance with Russia circulated through Europe shortly after the signing of the Anglo-French agreement, and the British worked closely with the French to block such a move. Further, everything possible was done not to anger the Russians. Problems with contraband articles and maritime rights were soft-pedaled, while the Japanese request that the British oppose any attempt of the Black Sea Fleet to run the Straits was carefully ignored, and no reply sent. Peace and calm were the objects of British policy, and Lansdowne wrote that "the more quietly we can proceed, the better ... and we must blacken their [the Russians'] faces as little as possible."[14]

Unfortunately, events did not go along that smoothly. In January, 1904, the Younghusband Mission had left India for Tibet to negotiate the settlement of various trade and border problems. When no Tibetan negotiator arrived at the pre-arranged site of the talks, Curzon and other members of

the India Office proposed that the expedition go on to Lhasa, the capital, to find someone able to speak for the Tibetan government. Younghusband's orders were to negotiate a settlement incorporating a modest indemnity to be paid to the British over a three year period. The emissary's actions went far beyond his orders, for he occupied Lhasa, and forced a large indemnity on the Tibetans with payments lasting for seventy-five years. The Russians had reluctantly agreed to the original plan, but were quite upset with what transpired, not only because of the high-handed method, but also because they felt that the British were attempting to take over this neutral territory. Thus, the actions of Younghusband in September, 1904, destroyed the whole summer's campaign to placate the Russians.

Younghusband's actions were perhaps motivated in part by the Indian government's fear of Russians in Tibet. Simla felt that unfriendly agents there would exploit Tibetan gold, sap at the important recruiting of Gurkha natives into the Indian Army, and call for the strengthening of Nepal.[15] These factors, combined with the fear of Russian penetration into Persia and Afghanistan, may have prompted the Indian government to attempt a coup in Tibet. Whatever the reason, the storm that followed made the attempt vain and useless. The Russians were angry,[16] but Lansdowne and Balfour were so irate that it seemed for a time as if heads would roll. Balfour made it clear to Curzon that the Viceroy could not make his

own foreign policy, and that such attempts would only lead to severe difficulties.[17] After some debate, the Younghusband Treaty was modified in several important respects, and the other Powers, especially China and Russia, were mollified, and the revised treaty was approved by an unhappy Curzon on November 11, 1904.[18] At this same time the Russians became increasingly preoccupied with the war, and all talks about Central Asia were halted until January, 1905.

In the meantime a worse crisis arose when the Russian Baltic Fleet, sailing through the North Sea on its way to the Far East, fired on a fleet of British fishing vessels on the Dogger Bank. The Russians, who had felt themselves the victims of British actions, now found the tables turned. The British were now the injured party, and British public opinion was aroused greatly because of the incident. Despite numerous Russian attempts to explain the problem, many official regrets and apologies, as well as offers of indemnities,[19] the British public and many government officers were looking for blood. The Cabinet members who had supported Lansdowne's try at a Russian entente had done so out of fear of Russia; now, with British honor insulted, they became hawks.[20] The Cabinet kept an eye on the offending fleet, and read such papers as "Disposition of Ships to Prevent Russian Baltic Fleet from Reaching the Far East."[21] Both the Indian Army and government were upset by the incident, and feared war in the immediate

future.[22] Though tempers flared and nerves were strained, cooler heads prevailed, and a settlement was eventually made without resorting to war. The incident caused a serious rupture in Anglo-Russian relations late in 1904, but had no long-term adverse effects.

This crisis did demonstrate the continued division of the British policy makers. The Russians were genuinely upset and apologetic after the incident, making as many peaceful offers and gestures as they could. Lansdowne still desired an entente, but the Cabinet and the Prime Minister kept the air filled with war rhetoric, making it difficult to negotiate a quick, peaceful settlement.[23] The King, too, felt that Russia "could not accept such a humiliation" as the British press and public demanded, and that a war with Russia "for the sake of the heirs of two harmless fishermen" would be a "dire calamity."[24] Surprisingly, Lord Fisher, the First Lord of the Admiralty, and a jingo on most such matters, still favored an alliance with Russia, feeling that a war with Germany was inevitable.[25] The French, now caught between the two conflicting parties, did what they could to restore peace and harmony,[26] though good relations were achieved only with the passage of time.

The end of 1904 and early 1905 saw no new crises in Anglo-Russian relations; indeed, as the Younghusband Mission

and the Dogger Bank Incident passed into history, and as more Russian troops were withdrawn from Central Asia, the British began to feel somewhat relieved. The Russians could feel no relief whatsoever though, for their situation was going from bad to worse. Defeats in the field humiliated her, while no decision could be reached in regard to the German overtures made during the winter of 1904-1905. Port Arthur fell on January 2, 1905; Bloody Sunday and strike and rebellion quickly followed, and in March the Russian Army was shattered at Mukden. The French, fearing the collapse of Russia, and thus of their check against Germany, became frantic in the spring of 1905, but found no consolation in the British, who saw only the benefits of a Russian failure. These benefits included a quiet Asia and an amenable Russia.[27] By the end of March, the Foreign Office was feeling quite smug, for Russia, beaten in an Asian war by an ally of Britain, would be willing to deal with the British, while their new partner, France, looked on with pleasure. The Germans were disturbed at this prospect, and decided to test the British where they felt they were weakest, the Anglo-French Entente Cordiale. Thus, the Moroccan Crisis came to occupy the attention of European diplomats throughout 1905, and into 1906, while the often frustrated Anglo-Russian talks languished in the back parlors of the embassies.

As the Russo-Japanese War drew to its close, the British

again took a look at their position and responsibilities in Asia, and the old suspicions of Russia came out again. Army reform was in the air, and one of the chief aims of the innovators was to create a mobile force ready to go where needed "especially on the N.W. frontier of India."[28] The Army Planning Section was still obsessed with India, and each year the maneuvers "strove to recreate the atmosphere of the North-West Frontier, as if there were no Entente Cordiale and war with Russia were the ever-present danger," while the Staff College continued to tour the Snowdon region "to illustrate the peculiarities of hill warfare on the North-West Frontier of India."[29] CID papers continued to examine the problems of war in the mountains, discussing the relative merits of the use of mules as opposed to camels for pack animals, noting that 234,794 camels would be needed to supply a given force in the event of war.[30] Many, including Kitchener, feared Russian activity in Seistan in the northwest, feeling that even in 1905 a "forward adventurous policy was in the ascendent ...."[31] The British, occupied with renewing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and reassuring the French over the Moroccan issue, had little to do with the peace conference at Portsmouth, and passed up an excellent chance to aid Russia. When President Roosevelt called upon the British to apply pressure to the Japanese, Lansdowne noted that "our advice would not be taken and would be resented," and that Balfour would have to be consulted as to "the course to be taken."[32] Thus, nothing was done, and the oppor-

tunity passed.

British policy throughout the war had shown a great degree of fluctuation. The war had at first been greeted with some joy by Whitehall. It had accelerated the French talks, and created, at least in part, a mutually beneficial settlement with that country. Further, both London and Simla felt that such a war would sap at Russian strength in Central Asia, and perhaps a defeat would make the Russians anxious for an agreement with Britain. However, no firm policy guidelines seemed to prevail, and relations went from cool to warm to cool again. In April, 1904, the King made ostentatious gestures of friendship, while Balfour, the Cabinet, and the Indian Army and government considered a forward policy against Russia. Lansdowne decreed that the Russians should not be pushed or bothered, and the Younghusband Mission announced that Tibet was all but a British protectorate. Furthermore, just as the Dogger Bank Incident was blowing over, and relations had a chance to improve, the British renewed the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and extended it to India, while passing up a good chance to aid Russia at the peacetable.

The renewal of the Japanese Alliance showed the reluctance of many British statesmen to break with "old" policies, as well as demonstrating the influence of the military upon the formation of foreign policy. Charles á Court Repington, military correspondent for the London Times, had long advocated strong

action in Central Asia, even to building British railways into Kabul.[33] Repington was a public sounding board for the Army, and his columns reflected Army thinking on any given issue. The belief that conflict between Russia and Britain was "inevitable" was common,[34] and it was little wonder that the members of the CID, and the upper levels of the Army and Navy staffs felt that Japanese military aid against the Russians might be necessary, even vital, to the maintenance of India.[35] In June, 1905, the Indian government was "believed to be in favor of receiving such assistance [150,000 Japanese soldiers]."[36] In July Kitchener submitted a report on the defense of India, noting that the Army ought to be built up, rail lines pushed to the borders, and a system of forts created along the frontier.[37] Lansdowne was unable to pass up such an opportunity to solve a part of the Indian problem, and pushed the Japanese on this matter as soon as he found them agreeable. The Cabinet opposition was minimal, and, after some haggling over terms and the amount of Japanese aid to India, the treaty was signed on August 12, 1905.[38]

The Russians were annoyed by the renewal of this alliance, and, though Japanese negotiations of their own occupied much of their time, they did lodge quiet protest in London, and inquire as to the state and nature of the Anglo-Japanese talks. Hardinge reported in late May, 1905, that he had told the Russian Foreign Minister that Britain "no more contemplated at

the present moment the possibility of a Russian attack upon India than a French invasion of Great Britain."[39] The Russians remained irritated as the summer wore on, and in September Lansdowne had to instruct Hardinge to reassure Lamsdorff, the Russian Foreign Minister, of Britain's friendly interests. Further, he wrote:

> I earnestly trust that you will be able to convince him that it contains nothing to which the Russian Government can reasonably take exception. I do not, of course, mean to say that the new Agreement is not, from force of circumstances, aimed at Russia more than any other power, but this is inevitable.[40]

Though the Russians still professed to be hurt by the renewal in October,[41] they were willing to talk, and a meeting between Hardinge and the Tsar on October 24, proved most useful, clearing the way for serious talks on the major Central Asian problems that confronted the two Powers. It is interesting to note that the upshot of the whole Japanese affair was that the British came to feel that they must defend India alone in order to save self-respect and face,[42] thus nullifying the gains of the new alliance, and ending a major source of Russian discontent.

Through the spring and summer of 1905, other factors were influencing Anglo-Russian relations, and these other conditions and events must also be considered. Germany was quite active diplomatically during this time, and the Moroccan Crisis and the Björko Treaty had no small influence upon

Britain and Russia. Events on the Russian domestic scene influenced British opinion of that Power, while events within the British Cabinet and bureaucracy also changed the course of the relations between the two countries.

By far the most important of these factors was the prolonged German diplomatic offensive, aimed at breaking the Anglo-French understanding and securing an alliance with Russia. The Moroccan Crisis was precipitated by the Kaiser's visit to Tangiers in March, 1905, at which time he spoke of the need to uphold Moroccan independence. The Germans had caught the French off-guard and at a bad time, for Russia was completely occupied with losing the Russo-Japanese War. The British gave diplomatic support to the French, but German pressure did not subside in the least. Delcassé was forced to resign in June, and his replacement, Rouvier, was known to be more of a Germanophile. Even this, however, did not satisfy the Germans. Though the entente with Britain was severely strained, it remained, and Britain, given the choice of no European ally or France, chose the latter. As British aims drew closer to those of France, the French sought to smooth the way for an Anglo-Russian agreement.

On the other front, the Germans also enjoyed an initial victory, followed by the loss of the campaign. At a pre-arranged meeting of the Tsar and the Kaiser at a remote port near Viborg, in late July, the Germans came prepared to do business, while the Russians came for pleasure.[43] Within a

short time William had induced the Tsar to sign a treaty with Germany without the least consultation from Lamsdorff, Witte, or the French. Though the German Foreign Office was not as pleased with the treaty as it might have been because of some rewording by the Kaiser, the treaty was left to stand. Hardinge had noted a change in "Russian sentiment towards Germany" in June,[44] and though rumors spread that some Russo-German treaty had been signed, it appears that no one knew for certain except the two parties involved. When Witte and Lamsdorff discovered what Nicholas had done, both were appalled, and quickly went to work to overthrow the treaty.[45] This task was accomplished with no little difficulty, but by the end of 1905 Russia had only her French alliance and a long list of French inquiries. With Germany thus eliminated as a possible ally, the Russians could turn their attention to the British offers.

The revolutions and strikes within Russia had bothered some British statesmen. Still, Russia was considered a "rich bride" for any Power making an alliance with her, even if her "diplomatic currency had become debased and discredited" to some extent.[46] The uncertainty about Russia's future was furthered by rumors of uprisings in Central Asia early in 1906, and rebellion in the Navy. Many British diplomats and foreign service employees disliked dealing with an autocratic Power to begin with, and looked with even less favor on a nation in revolution. However, the promise of a Duma and other reforms met with approval in Britain. Fears and misgivings were

further alleviated when Hardinge reported in September that "the military and chauvinistic party" was in shock, and that the "liberal and constitutional party" would run things in Russia in the future.[47]

This important, if subtle, change in the British attitude was accompanied by other, less noticed, but also important shifts in policy and practice. The CID decided in March, 1905, that Persia could best be preserved by maintaining the status quo there, rather than by occupying it.[48] As fear of Germany increased, so the desire to secure Russia as an ally increased, and in the eyes of some "It was not a question of getting Russia to join England against Germany: it was solely a question of preventing Russia from joining Germany against England."[49] Further, the anti-Russian Viceroy of India, Curzon, resigned in August, ostensibly over a dispute with Kitchener about military matters; in reality his independent ideas about Indian foreign policy had brought him into conflict with the Cabinet on several occasions, and Cabinet pressure was probably behind his resignation. The way was thus cleared for a more amenable Indian government that would go along with Cabinet policy. Thus, the Foreign Office, now working against the Germans, set about its task with a generally more favorable set of circumstances.

Balfour's Conservative Government had been struggling along for some time in deep political trouble; indeed, the Prime Minister had refused to dissolve the Parliament after the voting on an Irish bill had gone against him in October.

Little effective work could be done on either the domestic or the diplomatic scene, and it was no surprise when Balfour resigned in December, calling for new elections. The Conservatives had done well in the field of foreign affairs, and they left Anglo-Russian relations in good shape. In September Hardinge had written that:

> ... I have no hesitation in asserting my opinion that during the last six months there has been a decided improvement in the public sentiment towards England, that the bitter hostility [of the press] has almost entirely disappeared, and that the relations between the two countries are now on a more friendly footing than has been the case since the outbreak of the war.[50]

With this note of optimism the Conservatives turned the reins over to the Liberals, who would continue what their predecessors had so arduously begun.

The coming of the Russo-Japanese War caused mixed reactions within British policy making groups. On the one hand a war might humble, or at least exhaust Russia, causing her to be more amenable to negotiations about Central Asia. The other side of the coin was a European war created by the Far Eastern situation. To counter this threat the British and French threshed out their colonial differences, and embarked upon a policy of co-operation. The Germans then made a determined effort to crack the Entente Cordiale and to make an alliance with

a then weak Russia, but failed on both counts. British policy had been satisfactory, even to renewing and extending the Japanese Alliance, but it had still failed to approach Russia successfully. Talks progressed almost to the point of dealing with real issues, only to fall through. Each time Anglo-Russian relations began to turn for the better some incident arose to disturb them, and no gains were made. This failure was in part due to the situations created by the war, in part the result of the Russians' reluctance to talk about Central Asia in meaningful terms, and in part because of the division and confusion within the British Government.

This latter factor was a quite important one, for there were several schools of thought on the subject, each with influential backers. The solidly anti-Russian faction was led by the Simla Government under Curzon, and the India Office. They believed that their many years of first-hand experience with the Russians in Central Asia had shown them that negotiations would settle nothing. Their views were reinforced to some extent by the Army and the CID, who still planned and trained for a war on the Northwest Frontier. The majority of the Cabinet felt that some settlement must be made, but they also felt that Russia held the upper hand, and thus approached negotiations with a lukewarm attitude. Lansdowne and Balfour typified this group in many respects, for if the chance arose to be tough, they espoused such a course, yet at the same time

they feared permanently antagonizing Russia and losing all chance of an agreement. The third, and smallest, group was determined to bring about a Russian entente, and worked vigorously for it. Sir Charles Hardinge, the King, and a growing number of Foreign Office officials were in this group, and, considering that in many instances Hardinge worked almost alone, the results of their actions were gratifying. In view of this division it is little wonder that British policy was so inconsistent.

The German actions of the summer of 1905 had united the British and French, and also had convinced many British statesmen of the necessity of a Russian understanding. As the German threat became more blatant, Lansdowne shifted to the pro-Russian group. The CID still saw a threat to India, but placed it in a somewhat lower priority group after the Tangiers incident. Reform in Russia itself calmed some suspicious minds, while Curzon's departure from Simla eased the situation in India. Thus, by November, 1905, Anglo-Russian relations were well on the way to mending, and it appeared that real negotiations were in the offing after Hardinge's interview with the Tsar on October 24th. It was, unfortunately, at this point that the Conservative Government had to resign, and after the elections, a Liberal administration took over the talks. Though the Liberals were perhaps less interested in foreign affairs than their predecessors, they were determined to bring the Russian negotiations to a successful conclusion, and,

after some initial delays, worked diligently to do so.

Footnotes

[1]BD, II, 255.

[2]Ibid., IV, 181(b).

[3]Ibid., IV, 181(a).

[4]Great Britain, Offices of the Cabinet, Papers, 1880-1914 (London, 1880-1914), 37/68/1, 1 January, 1904. Hereafter cited as Cab. with folio, volume and paper number.

[5]Judd, 68.

[6]DDF, IV, 274.

[7]BD, II, 263.

[8]DDF, IV, 350 and 382. Also Lord Hardinge of Penshurst, Old Diplomacy (London, 1947), 106.

[9]BD, IV, 183; Sidney Lee, King Edward VII (New York, 1927), II, 287.

[10]Cab. 37/70/57, 22 April, 1904.

[11]BD, IV, 55, note 1.

[12]Lee, II, 279 and 569.

[13]Hansard, CXXXIX (1904), 621.

[14]Newton, 313-14.

[15]See Lamb, 272-79.

[16]BD, IV, 299 and 301.

[17]Cab., 37/79/154.

[18]BD, IV, 303; Monger, 171.

[19]Ibid., IV, 10,11, and 13.

[20]Monger, 172.

[21]Cab., 37/72/131.

[22]Ian Nish, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (London, 1966), 317.

[23]Churchill, 74.

[24]Lee, II, 303-04.

[25]Arthur Marder (ed.), Fear God and Dread Nought (London, 1956), II, 26.

[26]See DDF, V, 390,399 and 403.

[27]Monger, 185.

[28]Maurice Brett (ed.), The Journals and Letters of Reginald Viscount Esher (London, 1934), II, 85.

[29]Basil Collier, Brasshat (London, 1961), 103; C.E. Callwell, Field Marshall Sir Henry Wilson (New York, 1927), 70.

[30]CID, 6/3/79D.

[31]Stephen Gwynn (ed.), The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring-Rice (Boston, 1929), I, 460.

[32]BD, IV, 97.

[33]Luvaas, 305.

[34]Ameer Ali, "England and Russia in Afghanistan," Nineteenth Century, LVII (May, 1905), 778.

[35]See Nish, 306 for a collection of comments upon this subject.

[36]Ibid., 318.

[37]Stanley Wolpert, Morley and India, 1906-1910 (Berkeley, 1967), 80.

[38]BD, IV, 155.

[39]Ibid., IV, 189. The Russians felt that the British were hoping the war "would teach Russia a lesson." See Sergiei Witte, The Memoirs of Count Witte (London, 1921), 162.

[40]Newton, 327.

[41]BD, IV, 199.

[42]Nish, 354-55.

[43]See Churchill, 86-91 and 98-100 for full details of the meeting and its aftermath.

[44]BD, IV, 190.

[45]Alexander Izvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister (Garden City, 1921), 57-59; Witte, 426-27.

[46]Newton, 339-40.

[47]BD, IV, 191.

[48]CID, 2/1/67.

[49]BD, IV, 194 and 196.

[50]Ibid., IV, 191.

IV. The Making of the Convention

The Liberal Party that won the election in January, 1906, was determined to effect some sort of understanding with Russia about Central Asia. Though the party was divided into two wings, the Radicals, who were interested in domestic issues and the Imperialists, who were attracted more to foreign affairs, this policy of an entente with Russia was favored, or at least acquiesced in, by both groups. The Imperialist wing controlled the Foreign Office and the War Office, thus giving it good control of the foreign policy making groups. Sir Charles Hardinge was promoted to the London office from the embassy in St. Petersburg, and Sir Arthur Nicolson was moved to the latter post, thus placing two able men in key positions to further the goal of a Russian entente. Though the Indian Government still did not favor an agreement with Russia, the India Office in London was run by a staunch advocate of a peaceful policy toward Russia, John Morley. As some degree of calm was restored in Russia, Russian diplomats felt better able to discuss terms, and the British government, seeing some elements of a representative system being implemented, felt better about making some type of settlement. Thus, though working out the terms would take over a year, the two Powers were ready and able to begin serious negotiations in June, 1906, that would

culminate in the signing of the Anglo-Russian Convention.

The Liberals took command of the British government on December 11, 1905, and, after winning the general election in January, 1906, formed a Government. Since October, 1905, the Liberals had been debating the formation of a Cabinet, and this difficult problem was compounded by the split in the party. The "Liberal Imperialists", headed by Richard Haldane and Herbert Asquith, favored a strong foreign policy, while the Radicals, led by Henry Campbell-Bannerman and Lloyd George, were more interested in domestic reform, taking a rather casual attitude toward foreign policy. After some jockeying for offices, and an abortive conspiracy to move Campbell-Bannerman to the House of Lords, the Liberals divided the Cabinet posts, the "Imperialists" taking those concerned with foreign affairs, the Radicals taking most of the domestic offices, and Campbell-Bannerman becoming the Prime Minister. Had there been any hard feelings, the new Cabinet would have gotten off to a most inauspicious start, but things went smoothly as the Radicals became absorbed in domestic affairs.

Sir Edward Grey, who took charge of the Foreign Office in January, 1906, had held a number of subordinate positions in that organization, though in his several years of service he had never served abroad. Many of the Foreign Office career men were pleased to have Grey in command, for he was an "Imperialist", who favored an active foreign policy, and shared their anti-German and pro-Russian sentiments.[1] Grey had, since

the late 1890's, been known for his pro-Russian sympathies, though he kept them in check most of the time.[2] By 1906, Grey felt that peace should be achieved in Central Asia, and that

> an agreement with Russia was the natural compliment of an agreement with France; it was also the only practical alternative to the old policy of drift, with its continual complaints, bickerings and dangerous friction.[3]

Thus, in his first meeting with Benckendorff on December 13, 1905, even before the elections, Grey hoped "that an agreement might be reached between Great Britain and Russia with regard to outstanding questions in which both countries are interested," and told the ambassador that Britain would do nothing to "make the resumption of negotiations or a settlement more difficult later on ...."[4] Grey had then, very early in the game, shown his desire for a settlement with Russia.

The Russians, however, were not in a good position to deal with anyone late in 1905 and early in 1906, as Benckendorff had pointed out to Grey in December.[5] Hardinge and the Tsar had agreed in October to discuss the Central Asian problems area by area when a conference began. The October strikes, and the uprisings and mutinies associated with the Revolution of 1905 were no small embarrassment to Russian diplomats, and even the Tsar had to admit to Hardinge in January, 1906, that "it could hardly be expected that this series of outrages would ease at once."[6] Thus, no formal talks were held until June, 1906, though informal conversations laid the groundwork for

later negotiations.[7]

It was, perhaps, just as well that no negotiations with Russia began early in 1906, for the British found themeslves very busy dealing with the Moroccan Conference at Algeciras, Spain. This meeting of the European Powers was the outcome of the German diplomatic attack upon the French position in Morocco. Grey began to organize his forces in December, 1905, and sensing that this was a test of the entente, worked in close co-operation with the French, exploring answers to the German demands.[8] Talk of a Franco-German war unnerved the French to a great extent, causing the French ambassador to ask Grey about the possibilities of British military assistance, if such a war broke out. Even as he asked, secret military conversations between the French and British Army staffs had begun on the initiative of the British Army and a small group of Germanophobes in Whitehall, and the Anglo-French Entente had started to assume a new character.[9] At the conference itself the major debates were over who was to control the Moroccan Bank and the police force. A six week deadlock strained the nerves of the participants, but in the end, the Germans conceded their claims to the direct control of the bank, and opted to run the police force with the aid of the Spanish. The entente had withstood the test imposed by the Germans, and in the process the British and French had drawn closer together in the areas of both military and diplomatic co-operation. The accord signed at Algeciras on March 31, 1906, freed the

European Powers from a grave crisis, enabling them to turn their attentions to other matters.

Throughout the period of the Moroccan Crisis, Anglo-Russian relations were quite good. On January 1, 1906, Count Witte, then Prime Minister of Russia, proposed that Russia needed the co-operation of a "liberal and commercial power," such as Britain, and that he wished to make a "new departure" in negotiations with the hope of making a settlement in a "satisfactory treaty."[10] Hardinge, who had been in London, found Witte awaiting his arrival in St. Petersburg, eager to espouse his idea again. At this meeting the Count proposed that Nicholas and Edward meet to make an agreement, but in the face of a cool reception, "the conversation drifted off to secondary topics."[11] This gentle rebuff did not antagonize the Russians though, and at a meeting of Cecil Spring-Rice, the secretary of the British embassy in St. Petersburg, and Benckendorff late in January, the Russian ambassador stated that Lamsdorff, with whom he had just spoken, was most pleased with the present state of Anglo-Russian relations. Lamsdorff further hoped that some arrangement could be made, but feared that Russia could not be bound to an agreement at that time "because of her present state." Benckendorff continued, noting that the "atmosphere was now different" in the capital, and that if the British would now submit proposals for negotiation, "there was a fair chance of a negotiation being successfully carried through," though "under present circumstances

... no pledge could be made." Spring-Rice commented upon the conversation, stating that "Nothing could exceed the friendliness shown by Count Benckendorff to England."[12] From this conversation, and Witte's overture, it appeared that the Russians very much wanted a British offer, but were uncertain about accepting it because of their domestic troubles.

The Foreign Office was well pleased to find such an attitude on the part of the Russians, for it matched the British desire to see Russia return to European politics as a strong Power, capable of supporting or making agreements. Grey wrote Spring-Rice in mid-February that he was "impatient to see Russia re-established as a factor in European politics" to counter rising German power,[13] and during the deadlock at Algeciras, he wrote:

> The door is being kept open by us for a rapprochement with Russia; there is at least a prospect that when Russia is re-established we shall find ourselves on good terms with her. An <u>entente</u> between Russia, France, and ourselves would be absolutely secure.[14]

In late March, Benckendorff presented the British Foreign Office with copies of a document demonstrating a proposed Anglo-Japanese alliance to support Turkey in the event of an attack upon that nation's "Asiatic side." Grey quickly dispelled any such idea, noting that someone must have invented this document, and that this was the first time the Russians had given him "the opportunity of exposing [such] lies."[15] The military also began to see the benefits of a settlement with Russia.

Not only would the threat to India be reduced, but the menace of German hegemony in Europe might be checked:

> By thus detaching her [Russia] from Germany we should have her on our side if and when Germany reaches the Persian Gulf-a contingency which is far less to be desired than Russia's presence there. It would also tend to weaken Germany's military position in Europe, and therefore strengthen our own, as well as that of France ....[16]

On March 28, shortly before the Moroccan Conference ended, Grey wrote the King's Secretary, Lord Knollys, that

> An entente with Russia is now possible, and it is the thing most to be desired in our foreign policy. It will complete and strengthen the entente with France and add very much to the comfort and strength of our position.[17]

The Foreign Office was also impressed with the firmness and closeness with which the Russian representatives to the Algeciras Conference supported their French allies. A growing sentiment in favor of an agreement with Russia was evident with in the Foreign Office, and the end of the Conference permitted the reshuffling of personnel and the ordering of ideas needed to arrive at such an agreement.

In the spring of 1906 several changes were made in the British Foreign Office, and in the Russian government that were to have some influence upon the course of future talks. Lansdowne had offered the post of Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs to Sir Charles Hardinge late in 1905, but the ambassador to Russia had refused, preferring

to be on active service abroad. When the Liberals came to power, the offer was repeated, and this time Hardinge, who had worked hard for an Anglo-Russian understanding, accepted the position. Another strong supporter of a pro-Russian policy was thus moved to a position of some influence in London. As Permanent Under-Secretary, Hardinge had access to the King, general supervision of the execution of foreign policy, and served on policy making committees. Hardinge's replacement in St. Petersburg was the able career diplomat, Sir Arthur Nicolson, who had served well as the British representative at the Algeciras Conference. Nicolson, who undertook the post with "considerable misgivings," was, nonetheless, "most anxious to see removed all causes of difference between us and Russia."[18] Thus, a person who was as much interested in obtaining a settlement as Hardinge had been sent to Russia.

On the Russian side, the departure of Lamsdorff, and his replacement by Izvolsky, created some apprehension on the part of the British, though Witte's resignation as Prime Minister did allay British fears somewhat. Count Witte, who, despite his offer of January, 1906, was known to be of German sympathies, and later said he was opposed to a British understanding,[19] was engaged in the knotty problem of domestic reform, and had little time for foreign affairs during his brief premiership.[20] The British looked at him with some suspicion,[21] and made no comment upon his leaving office in April, 1906. Lamsdorff, who had shown himself most anxious

to arrive at an understanding with Britain, resigned in May, believing that the Duma, which threatened autocratic government, would interfere with his control of foreign policy.[22] Lamsdorff's replacement, Alexander Izvolsky, was on good terms with the German Foreign Office, and his promotion created a fear on the part of the British that Russo-German relations might take a turn for the better at the expense of Anglo-Russian relations.[23] Though Izvolsky himself thought that "Russia had already felt in no small measure the benefit of this [Anglo-French] entente," and that "it was now clear that she [Russia] must herself come nearer to Britain,"[24] the British remained skeptical of him for some time.[25] Though Lamsdorff's departure delayed talks, and Izvolsky was regarded with suspicion, Nicolson went to work as soon as he arrived in St. Petersburg, and in the first week in June definite proposals regarding Tibet were exchanged. The new ambassador to Russia expected a long period of negotiation, in part because of the difficult nature of the subjects to be dealt with, and in part because of the unsettled conditions in Russia,[26] and, as will be seen, he was not disappointed.

By mid-1906 most of the offices and officials in London were in favor of a Russian rapprochement. The King had vacillated back and forth in his support. His influence upon the formulation of long-range policy was minimal, but his attitudes and whims did affect the day to day execution of policy. In

April, 1904, the King had favored a Russian agreement, and made friendly gestures to the Russians. He had, however, opposed a loan to Russia in January, 1906, feeling that one could not buy a Russian treaty.[27] Moreover, other rulers watched the King, and used his actions to gauge the direction of British foreign policy.[28] Thus, the King, though not directly affecting the formulation of policy, was an element to be considered, and at the time negotiations began in earnest, he was amenable to them.

The Cabinet, as mentioned above, was split into two factions, and the "Imperialists" had obtained control of several of the key foreign policy posts, especially by placing Grey in the Foreign Office, and Richard Haldane in the reformed War Office. John Morley, the new Secretary of the India Office, was also disposed to a Central Asian settlement, though he was associated with the Radicals. The majority of the Radicals, including the Prime Minister, had little interest in foreign affairs, and left that topic in the hands of Grey and his associates. Thus it was that shortly before Nicolson left for St. Petersburg, the members of the Government most concerned about Russia, including Grey, Haldane, and Morley, met for dinner with Nicolson to discuss the plans and proposals of the future negotiations.[29] Nicolson's appointment to Russia, and Hardinge's promotion to London meant that key positions in the Foreign Office, as well as in the Cabinet, were occupied by those favoring better relations with Russia.

Opposition to an understanding with Russia centered around the government of India and the military offices in London. Throughout 1906 the Army and the CID continued to speculate about the possibility of a war with Russia in India. Plans for this possible war were also being drawn up. Though the benefits of a detente with Russia in Central Asia were apparent, a deep suspicion of Russian intentions colored the thinking of both groups, preventing an objective view of the situation. The Government of India, now headed by the Earl of Minto, continued its policy of opposing a Russian accord, and instead of settlement, proposed an aggressive British policy on all frontiers. Minto frequently complained that a Russian settlement would do no good, and with Kitchner asked for more money, troops, guns, and railroads to the frontier. The Viceroy favored an Indo-Afghan-Persian alliance against Russia, and, having no faith in Russian diplomats, was loath "to appear in any way to support the most infamous tyranny in modern times in the shape of the Russian government."[30] Opposition as staunch and emphatic as this created a tender situation in Whitehall, and raised the same problems that Curzon's attitudes had produced a year earlier. It is much to the credit of John Morley and the India Office that Minto's quick tongue was curbed.

John Morley, a well-known Liberal of the first decade of the twentieth century, was a man of tact and reason. Though he was a Radical, much interested in domestic reform, he took the India Office when the Liberal Government was formed, and, seeing

that Anglo-Russian animosities could only endanger India, and cause more and more military spending there, supported Grey's effort to make a reconciliation. The India Office was no easy post in any event, and the diplomatic overtures and discussions concerning Central Asia made the job no lighter, especially considering Simla's fears of Russia. In this respect Morley saw that his job "was to moderate these apprehensions, while conveying to our neighbors at the Foreign Office here for their information the argument from the great Asiatic bureau in India."[31] Though he did favor an entente, he also realized that his first duty was to India, and he was "not in the least inclined to let the F.O. decide affairs that are specially Indian, and on which India will have to smart if they go wrong."[32] Thus, the Secretary worked long and hard to reconcile the views of the Foreign Office and his Viceroy, in order to achieve a settlement that would aid India.

Morley's efforts to persuade the Viceroy that a Russian entente would be safe and practical were unceasing, and his tact in handling Minto, as well as his advice regarding the Indian situation "removed mountains in the way of negotiations" according to Grey.[33] The Secretary was critical of narrow thinking in regard to the Indo-Russian situation,[34] and could not "believe that there is no alternative to the stupid and ignoble rivalries that now constitute what is called our Central Asian System."[35] Despite Minto's protestations that more

funds were needed for Indian defense, and despite the Viceroy's continued objections to a Russian accord, Morley remained firm in backing Grey and the Foreign Office. As Lansdowne and Balfour had reprimanded Curzon, so Morley wrote Minto stating that "You argue as if the policy of entente with Russia were an open question. This is just what it is not." Further, Morley's subcommittee of the CID had examined the state of Indian defenses, and was opposed to further spending for that purpose. Still, he agreed to show Minto and Kitchener's ideas for a bigger military budget to the Cabinet, though telling Minto that the Cabinet would probably not change its mind.[36] In all things Morley treated Minto with respect, but firmly closed him off when the Viceroy's harping became too shrill and insistent.

The consensus of the leading figures involved in the Russian dealings was that the Government of India could not be permitted to pursue an independent policy toward Russia or Persia and Afghanistan, and that the military advice that Simla was receiving was not in touch with or in keeping with the situation as it existed, for they insisted upon preparing for war. A CID report of mid-July stated that the Indians had much to gain from an Anglo-Russian Convention, and then set about knocking down Kitchener's ideas for more defense spending and urging more up-to-date military thinking.[37] The complaint that the Indian Army was out of touch with the latest

developments, was repeated in October, 1906, when Viscount Esher, a permanent member of the CID wrote Morley that "The I.O. military advisers are never up to date. It was so in 1880, and has been ever since."[38] Hardinge's comments to Nicolson in August, 1906, show that Simla did provide obstacles:

> We have not yet got the views of the India Office on our proposed instructions to you. We have had the views of the Government of India which were quite impossible and to which we have replied. They will probably be overridden by Mr. Morley. As soon as Grey has decided the question of the negotiation we will, if necessary press the India Office for a definite statement of policy ....[39]

Grey also wrote the British ambassador, pointing out that consultations had delayed the prompt dispatch of new instructions for the talks, remarking that "... the Indian Government has to be consulted and it takes a little time to lead them to the waters of conciliation and get them to agree that they are wholesome."[40] In the end the India Office was consulted on Asiatic matters, but the Indian Government was not asked to comment at all.[41]

The long-awaited formal negotiations began on June 7, 1906 with Tibet as the first area of conflict to be discussed. No gains were made, no concrete Russian responses were forthcoming to the British proposals, and the talks languished. The British now ready, well prepared, and united in their aims got nowhere

in part because Izvolsky claimed that time to study the subject was needed.[42] Events also worked against the negotiations. A proposed visit to the Baltic ports by the British fleet was ill-timed, and caused an uproar both in the Russian court, and in the House of Commons.[43] Nicolson, who did not think highly of the Duma, realized its importance to British public opinion, however, and was disappointed when the Tsar dissolved it on July 22.[44] Not only did the dissolution bring an outcry from liberals in Britain, but it marked renewed unrest in Russia. Henry Campbell-Bannerman did nothing to aid this tender situation when he inserted the cry "La Duma est morte, Vive la Duma" at the end of his speech to the Inter-Parliamentary Union on July 23.[45] Russian feelings were hurt by this outburst, and tempers aroused by a press attack on the Tsar early in August. The picture was becoming increasingly gloomy, and Nicolson noted in his diary that "Two months ago there was every hope, and now very little."[46]

Negotiations proceeded at a snail's pace for the remainder of 1906. The Tibetan problems were discussed, and a tentative agreement was all but decided upon by the end of the year. Fear that Germany might claim some stake in Persia by granting a loan to that country prompted somewhat concerted action by both Britain and Russia. The idea of a joint loan was raised by Izvolsky,[47] and this issue was used to begin the negotiations concerning Persia. The partitioning of Persia, opposed by Lansdowne, was easily accepted by his Liberal suc-

cessor, and discussion soon centered around where to divide the territory.[48] Izvolsky was somewhat taken aback by the suddenness of this British proposal, and sought more time to study the question, and win his colleagues over to it.[49] The British, now knowing their position on each of the issues, were eager to settle the problems, but the Russians, unsettled at home, and in a weak position diplomatically because of new Japanese threats, did not wish to be rushed and were suspicious of British attempts to move rapidly.[50]

In October, 1906, Izvolsky travelled to Berlin and Paris, and though the stop in Paris did not arouse much suspicion in Britain, the visits to Berlin created a stir.[51] Izvolsky admitted that all he was doing was attempting to prevent another Morocco by consulting the Germans,[52] but this only partially soothed British fears. November passed quietly, and in December Grey halted the talks until February, 1907, giving the Russians a chance to settle some differences with Japan. Despite the uneasiness created by the October visits, the talks were making headway, if slowly, and Nicolson's end of the year report was gradually becoming optimistic.[53]

The resumption of the convention talks in February saw no startling change in either the style or the pace of the talks. Point by point the issues were discussed, analyzed by each party, and compromises and agreements made. The Government of India provided the only real opposition to what transpired in St. Petersburg. In June, Minto wrote an "alarmist" letter to

the King and Morley to the effect that the Russian army might still attack India over the Himalayas.[54] Morley replied that such talk was foolish, considering the stage of the Anglo-Russian talks, and he further enjoined Minto to stay out of all political discussions with Afghanistan and India's other neighbors.[55] The CID came to the conclusion during the period of the forthcoming agreement a Russian attack on India could be "ruled out of practical politics,"[56] and in a reprint of an April, 1905, memorandum, stressed the need to recast the British thinking about Central Asia and the defense of India.[57] Despite Curzon's declaration that Russia could not be trusted, and the statement of Lord Percy, former Parliamentary Under-Secretary for Foreign Affairs, that Russia would break her agreement,[58] Grey and Nicolson both felt that the agreement would be kept, and would serve some useful purpose.[59] Thus, Grey and Nicolson pursued the issues, resolved the problems as best they could, and on August 31, 1907, signed the Anglo-Russian Convention.

The terms of the arrangement were brief and to the point.[60] In essence Tibet became a neutral area, where neither Russia nor Britain was to interfere, and China's rights as suzerain were to be recognized. Afghanistan was recognized as being within the British sphere of influence, and the Russians promised not to deal directly with that state, provided the British made no attempt to change the government of that nation or annex it. The Northern and Western Frontier of India were thus covered from the Khyber Pass east to China. Persia was divided into

three zones. The British received the southeastern sector, thus covering the western invasion route to India. The Russians received the northern sphere of influence, which included the capital, while a large third sector, including the Gulf of Persia, was declared neutral. This colonial settlement was the only written agreement and the only visible result of months of negotiation. Beyond the brief document, however, was the beginning of a general understanding between the two Powers, and the genesis of a powerful diplomatic combination. It was in these respects that the Anglo-Russian Convention was important, for it marked another step in the growing isolation and encirclement of Germany that characterized pre-war diplomacy and led to the holocaust of 1914.

On the whole the Convention was greeted favorably in Great Britain and Russia. The Prime Minister of England, who seldom commented upon foreign affairs, noted that the agreement would " remove the danger of an Asiatic Avalanche and will make things easier in Europe,"[61] while Morley saw it as removing the pressure from India, enabling defense spending cuts of some magnitude to be made.[62] The King believed that the Convention opened the way to settling other disputes, "now that the ice was so effectually broken."[63] Sir Charles Hardinge, who had played no small part in starting the talks, as well as directing them from London, gave credit to the King, seeing the accord "as the triumph of King Edward's policy ...."[64] Grey, too, was pleased, feeling that, given time, the combination

of France, Russia, and England would "be able to dominate Near Eastern policy."[65] Further, the Convention not only brought Russia and Britain together; in Grey's eyes it was also a good bargain, for "what [Britain] gained strategically is real, while the apparent sacrifices we have made commercially are not real."[66] Thus, though a few in India felt that the agreement was a "feeble and artificial growth," and Curzon considered it "deplorable,"[67] the consensus among British statesmen was in favor of the Convention. The Russians, for their part, were also pleased with the agreement. The neutral sphere in Persia precluded any thought of an attack upon Russia from India, while Russian domination of the Persian capital might yield future benefits. Afghanistan and Tibet were not Russia's to lose in any event, so no remorse was felt in being excluded from those regions. Further, Izvolsky felt that he had paved the way for further concessions from the British, especially in regard to the old Straits question.[68] Thus, in August, 1907, both parties were pleased with the new arrangement.

The years 1906 and 1907 saw the successful conclusion of the overtures and talks begun in 1900. Once the domestic scene in Russia became quiet enough to permit serious negotiations, the Russians carried them through in earnest, though at their own pace. The British, who had long wanted a settlement with Russia, closed their own ranks to form one policy, and made the necessary arrangements and territorial divisions

with the Russian diplomats. The King, Grey, the Foreign Office staff, and John Morley in the India Office worked diligently to arrive at terms suitable to the interests of both Britain and Russia. British opposition to any type of rapprochement with Russia came from the Indian government and the military staff in London. By January, 1907, even the military had been won over to the side favoring a convention, and Minto's lone voice of dissent was ignored when it seemed impractical or impossible to muzzle it. Thus, a small group of interested and powerful men, working for what they deemed the best interest of Britain, achieved their goal of an Anglo-Russian Convention in August, 1907.

Footnotes

[1]Monger, 257.

[2]Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-five Years (New York, 1925), I, 4.

[3]Ibid., I, 147-48.

[4]BD, IV, 204.

[5]Ibid.

[6]Ibid., IV, 206.

[7]Gwynn, II, 61.

[8]BD, III, 200.

[9]The debate about the time and nature of the Anglo-French military conversations is a lengthy one. Monger, 236-256, is the best and most recent account.

[10]BD, IV, 205.

[11]Ibid., IV, 207.

[12]Ibid., IV, 208.

[13]Cited in Monger, 281.

[14]BD, III, 299.

[15]Ibid., IV, 213.

[16]Memo by Robertson in the Grey MSS. Cited in Monger, 282.

[17]G.M. Trevelyan, Grey of Fallodon (Boston, 1937), 208.

[18]Nicolson, 202-08.

[19]Witte, 433.

[20]Ibid., Chapter XII.

[21]BD, IV, 210.

[22]BD, IV, 209; Churchill, 116-17.

[23]Nicolson, 217. Also BD, IV, 219.

[24]Izvolsky, 21-22.

[25]See Monger, 293; also Nicolson, 215, notes that the Russian Foreign Minister "evidently had one eye on Berlin" in late May, 1906.

[26]Nicolson, 215, 216, and 220.

[27]Lee, II, 565.

[28]Monger, 263-64.

[29]Nicolson, 206.

[30]Wolpert, 81.

[31]John Viscount Morley, Recollections (New York, 1917), II, 151.

[32]Morley to Minto, August, 1907. Cited in Monger, 284.

[33]A.J. Spender, The Life of Henry Campbell-Bannerman (London, n.d.), II, 362.

[34]Stephen Koss, John Morley at the India Office (New Haven, 1969), 114.

[35]Morley to Minto, 2 November, 1906. Cited in Wolpert, 80.

[36]Morley, 177-79.

[37]Cab., 38/12/40. This is the report of Morley's subcommittee (CID).

[38]Brett, II, 194.

[39]BD, IV, 226.

[40]Ibid., IV, 227.

[41]Ibid., IV, 274. This was admitted by Hardinge in July, 1907.

[42]Ibid., IV, 223.

[43]Churchill, 130-31.

[44]Nicolson, 220 and 222.

[45]Spender, Campbell-Bannerman, II, 262-63.

[46]Nicolson, 222.

[47]BD, IV, 336.

[48]Ibid., IV, 347-350.

[49]Alexander Izvolsky, Correspondences Diplomatiques (Paris, 1937), I, 377; also BD, IV, 352.

[50]Izvolsky, Correspondence, I, 402-07; Nicolson, 242; BD, IV, 370.

[51]BD, IV, 235.

[52]Ibid., IV, 230.

[53]Ibid., IV, 243.

[54]Lee, 570; see Wolpert, 285, note 28 for an excerpt from the letter.

[55]Wolpert, 83.

[56]Ibid., 84.

[57]Cab., 38/13/15. This was reprinted and circulated on 2 August, 1907.

[58]Lee, 570; BD, IV, 270.

[59]BD, IV, 271.

[60]BD, IV, Appendix I.

[61]Trevelyan, 214.

[62]Wolpert, 86.

[63]Philip Magnus, King Edward the Seventh (London, 1964), 395.

[64]Hardinge, 146.

[65]BD, IV, 550.

[66]Trevelyan, 212.

[67]Nicolson, 261; Zetland, III, 38 and 42.

[68]BD, IV, 268.

V. Conclusion

In the first decade of the twentieth century British diplomats faced a difficult problem, and managed to resolve it to some extent without involving themselves in European affairs. The problem in simplest terms, was that there were too few British ships and soldiers to defend the Empire and Britain according to the standards that the British themselves had set. The logical answer was to come to terms with their rivals, and to find allies. This, of course, entailed involvement with and possibly support of other European Powers, a policy that had not seen full practice since the days of Castlereagh and Canning. The Anglo-Japanese Alliance was an attempt to circumvent this difficulty, and though the alliance worked well in the Far East, it became clear that the European ramifications could be disastrous if all parties carried out their obligations. In order to settle old colonial differences, and prevent the spread of a Far Eastern war between Russia and Japan, the British diplomats began negotiations with the French, and arrived at an entente in the spring of 1904. The British had thus seemingly secured their position while making a limited commitment to, or taking a small interest in the Continental Powers. The difficulty, however, arose as the German attitude toward Britain, France, and Russia began to change.

The Germans had courted the Russians since the days of

Bismarck, and had met with varying degrees of success. The Franco-Russian rapprochement of the 1890's antagonized German diplomats and soldiers, who could see an encircled Germany, waging war on two fronts. There had never been any great love-loss in Franco-German relations, and after 1900 the German diplomats were suspicious of Russia, though they did not quit attempting to create a Russo-German Alliance. In the 1890's Anglo-German relations were on good, if somewhat distant, terms, for the British had no real problems with Germany, and were still bent upon pursuing a course of isolation and independence. That the 1901 China Agreement failed caused no rupture between the two nations. It was only in 1903 and 1904, as the British became aware of the purpose of the German "risk fleet," that antagonism grew. The German attempt to crack the Entente Cordiale created even more Anglo-German friction, and prompted British military men and diplomats to turn their attentions to this new, European problem. The fear of Russia becoming Germany's ally, especially after the German attempt to induce the Tsar to sign and ratify a treaty at Bjorko in 1905, convinced many British statesmen of the need for some type of understanding with Russia, lest she be lost to the Germans.[1]

There is an element of continuity in British policy toward Russia in the period 1900-1907. Lord Salisbury had first proposed the idea of an understanding with Russia in order to reduce friction in Central Asia, thus permitting a cut in military spending in India. In the days of isolationist

sentiment, such a policy found no great favor with either the public or the Cabinet. Russia was not a highly developed industrial nation by European standards, and, to the dismay of British liberals, it was the last major autocratic state in Europe in the twentieth century. Russia had long antagonized the British in Central Asia, and threatened British interests in the Far East. Further, many Cabinet members felt that if Britain were to seek an understanding with Russia with regard to Asian problems, the Russians held all the high cards, and the British had no way of securing favorable terms. Despite these protests, Salisbury made a few overtures to Russian diplomats, though they came to nothing.

Lord Lansdowne, the Foreign Secretary in Balfour's Cabinet, took over the idea of an Anglo-Russian settlement, and pursued it more vigorously than his predecessor. His early overtures made no headway, and the creation of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902 put a damper on the talks then in progress. The Russians seemed to realize, as Salisbury's critics had pointed out, that they were in the commanding position in Asia for the time, and refused to seriously consider the British proposals, while pursuing a vigorous offensive policy in China and Korea. The coming of the Russo-Japanese War in 1905 ended talks for a time, as the Russians felt that the British were working against them. When the war failed to go as the Russians had hoped, the British diplomats again brought up the idea of an Anglo-Russian understanding about

Central Asia. Though the Russians appeared interested, they were too weak at home and too busy making peace with Japan to begin serious talks. Indeed, it was not until after the Algeciras Conference that Russia was prepared to enter into negotiations, and even then it took a full year to work out the terms.

The number of British statesmen favoring an Anglo-Russian entente had grown considerably from Lansdowne's early days as Foreign Secretary. The rise of a potent and aggressive Germany had made the image of an aggressive Russia look rather pale, especially after it was apparent that the Russians were not doing well against the Japanese. The rise of the German Navy brought calls for more spending to build British warships, which meant that fewer funds would be available for the Army. This in turn meant that Indian defenses would be stretched even thinner. Though the unrest in Russia after 1905 created some doubts about her stability, the creation of the Duma in 1906 made Russia much more respectable in the eyes of many British liberals, while the weakened Russian position in Asia gave the British a better position from which to negotiate. Further, the abortive German attempts to secure an alliance with Russia only prompted British diplomats to work harder to keep Russia from coming under German influence. Thus, in the period 1904-1907, the number and caliber of arguments in favor of an Anglo-Russian agreement grew, and won an increasing number of supporters.

The Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 was the work of a few men, as far as British policymaking was concerned. Salisbury was alone in proposing the idea in the late 1890's, and his successors in the Conservative Party followed his lead as circumstances permitted. Lansdowne and Balfour both at various times favored the idea of an understanding with Russia, but their support flagged in times of difficulty. Lansdowne was perhaps more firmly committed to the idea than Balfour, though he was unable to make any significant progress in the negotiation of a treaty. Despite the problems raised by the Russo-Japanese War, the Younghusband Mission, and the Dogger Bank Incident, Lansdowne managed to keep Anglo-Russian relations on an even keel, while laying the groundwork for later talks. When the Conservative Government resigned in December, 1905, the way was still open for an agreement. The Liberal Imperialists who directed British foreign policy after December, 1905, saw the benefits of good relations with Russia, and worked vigorously to implement the old Conservative policy. John Morley in the India Office and Edward Grey in the Foreign Office both saw advantages for Britain if a Central Asian settlement were made, and both encouraged their subordinates to find suitable terms, and to make a settlement with Russia. Further, Grey moved Hardinge, the former ambassador to Russia, to an important post in London, while dispatching Arthur Nicolson, one of Britain's best diplomats of the day, to the post in St. Petersburg. Though it took time and effort to finally make the

Convention of 1907, the Liberals were willing to work and wait to arrive at mutually agreeable terms, thus culminating the efforts begun by the Conservatives several years before.

The Convention of 1907 had both its Asian and European aspects, and it is in deciding the relative importance of each that controversy about the significance of the Convention arises. Certainly it was a boon for the British in India. Afghanistan and Tibet were protected from Russian encroachment, a defensible frontier established along the Persian border, the Russians prevented from reaching the Persian Gulf, and generally potential Russian diplomatic and military pressure in Central Asia was reduced. The Russians received northern Persia, which made an excellent base for later advances and claims in the south of Persia. As a colonial settlement, which both parties, especially the British, professed it to be,[2] the Convention was a success, solving, at least for the time, a long outstanding problem. This was important for both Powers, to be sure, but the ramifications of the settlement extended to Europe.

Despite the disclaimers from Grey and Nicolson to the effect that the Convention was a settlement of colonial problems, having no anti-German bias, intended only to distract Russia from German overtures, the Convention did have its effects upon European diplomacy. As R.W, Seton-Watson pointed out, the Convention "may be said to have altered the whole focus of Europe, by ridding Britain of all reasonable anxiety on the Indian frontier, ... while at the same time it reduced almost

to zero the danger of any combination by the Continent against Britain ...."[3] The threat posed by Germany could be more readily met, as men, ships, and, above all, money, could be released from India and the eastern Mediterranean for use in Europe. Like the French entente, the Convention was a first step toward closer relations, and surely Nicolson, who so glibly wrote that the British were only attempting to keep the Russians from becoming an ally of Germany,[4] must have realized that in keeping Russia from Germany's side, he was in effect adding her to the British side, especially considering the Franco-Russian connection that dated from the 1890's. As was pointed out, the press of the day was not so naive as to miss the import of the Convention for European affairs, and it is doubtful that Grey, Hardinge, and Nicolson missed the significance either. Indeed, the effect upon European affairs seemed to outweigh the merits of the settlement as a purely colonial issue.

It is easy to make too much of an individual incident, or to claim too much importance for a single act. The division of Europe into two camps was not accomplished overnight. The British and the Germans attempted to settle their differences on other, later occasions, though to no avail. The Anglo-Russian Convention did not immediately usher in a new era of peace and harmony between the two nations involved, nor did it mark the final division of the Powers into pro- or anti-German camps. The Russians made moves into southern Persia, and the

British press showed no great liking for the repression of the Dumas in later days. Perhaps no single act in the period 1900-1914 was capable of dividing Europe and triggering a war, but taken together, they created the situation and the tension to do just that. The settlement of a colonial issue was bound to have some effect upon the relations of the Powers in Europe, particularly when that colonial issue had been a persistent one, that the Powers had taken as a constant among a multitude of variables in their relations with one another. British policy makers after 1900 could not forsee, or did not try to forsee, the consequences of their actions, which were gradually, though fundamentally, altering the balance of the European situation. They pursued their new policies in a pragmatic, persistent way, and played the game that they had begun to the finish. No one country, nor any one act was responsible in and of itself for what happened in 1914; each nation, each event had its effects, and it is in this light that the Anglo-Russian Convention of 1907 must be viewed.

Footnotes

[1]Nicolson, 234-35.

[2]Ibid., and Grey, I, 253.

[3]R.W. Seton-Watson, Britain in Europe, 1789-1914 (Cambridge, 1955), 611.

[4]Nicolson, 235.

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