## CHAPTER II

## THE SECOND ATTEMPT WITH GERMANY OCTOBER-DECEMBER 1899

When trying to trace the reasons which led to Wilhelm II's visit to Britain in November 1899, and to the negotiations resulting from it, we find that in addition to England's wish for such a "public advertisement" of Germany's neutrality in the South-African war, both the Anglo-German Agreement on the Portuguese Colonies, dated August 30th 1898, and the Samoan Convention of November 14th 1899 provided a propitious background and atmosphere which Chamberlain turned to good account in his efforts to negotiate with Germany about the more important matters at stake. It is, therefore, worth while to give the broad outlines of these treaties, as well as of the circumstances which led up to them.

As early as May and June 1897 there had been some preliminary conversations between Chamberlain and the Portuguese Ambassador in London, the Marquess de Soveral. The Kingdom of Portugal was in dire need of money and Britain was very anxious to get control of the railway running between Lourenço Marques and Johannesburg, as this might offer a chance of peacefully settling the South African difficulties. These negotiations, however, did not lead to anything, as the Portuguese Government was not willing to accept the British request that no further concessions should be given to any third State in the province of Lourenço Marques. Matters rested for about a year but, as her financial situation did not improve, Portugal sent her Governor-General of Portuguese East Africa to Paris, London and Berlin in order to sound the feelings of the respective Governments regarding possible financial arrangements. He had to report, however, that "wherever they turned for money they [were] invited to throw in Lourenço Marquez and its port and railway as security." 1)

The atmosphere in Portuguese Governmental circles seems to have changed in the meantime, because Mr. Bertie notes in the memorandum just quoted that the Portuguese Government "now [felt] less suspicious as to [the British] intentions in regard to their African possessions, and more in dread than they were of the designs of other foreign Powers, especially of Germany", and the Governor-General stated to the British Minister in Lisbon that "he entirely concurred in M. de Soveral's opinion that no time should be lost in coming to an understanding on the basis proposed by [the British] Government, viz. that a loan should be raised in England on the guarantees of the revenues of the Portuguese Colonies, including Lourenço Marques, coupled with a thorough understanding with [the British] Government." 2)

<sup>1)</sup> Memorandum by Mr. Bertie, May 1st 1898; Br. Doc. I no. 65. 2) Br. Doc. I no. 65.

The negotiations rested once again with Chamberlain and De Soveral, who in the middle of June 1898 were optimistic about the results. But when the news of the proposed agreement reached Germany, Wilhelm II immediately intervened. He ordered his Minister in Portugal to obtain an audience with the King and to tell him that the Emperor was not willing to continue amicable relations with Portugal, if the negotiations now being conducted by M. de Soveral in London were pursued without due regard to the legitimate interests of Germany in its African Colonies. 1)

This threat which was supported, if only half-heartedly, by France, made a great impression on the Portuguese authorities and Chamberlain's warning that he was "afraid that if the present opportunity [were] allowed to pass it [would] never recur", was in vain. For De Soveral called on Salisbury on July 13th telling him that his Government, in view of all the difficulties involved in the question of a loan, had decided to relinquish the whole idea, including any notion of altering the relationship of Great Britain or of Portugal towards any portion of the Portuguese possessions in Africa. <sup>2</sup>)

Nevertheless Great Britain and Germany now started discussions about the possible division of spheres of interest, should Portugal for any reason be unable to meet her financial obligations and thus have to relinquish economic or political control of all or part of her colonial empire.

In answer to the proposal that the British should take over a small part of Mozambique, including Delagoa Bay, the Germans put forward demands described by Chamberlain as "extravagant and irrelevant." <sup>3</sup>) Von Bülow stuck to his guns, arguing that "in leaving the English a free hand regarding Delagoa Bay and its hinterland, we take a step which will cause a feeling of painful disappointment amongst the whole German people, because the Boers for years have become the object of a sentimental sympathy, which, as in all cases of sympathy, cannot be combated on grounds of logic. Therefore, the Kaiser's Government, if it is not to suffer capitis diminutio must be in a position to show that its policy has not made merely renunciations but has gained evident advantages." <sup>4</sup>)

This part of the bargain was very well understood by the Colonial Secretary, and although he hated the way in which the Germans drove home their points, he commented icily to Balfour: "The only advantage to us is the assurance of Germany's abstention form further interference in Delagoa Bay and the Transvaal – in other words we pay blackmail to Germany to induce her not to interfere where she has no right of interference. Well, it is worth while to pay blackmail sometimes!!" 5)

So, at long last and after two months of hard bargaining, on August 30th 1898 a Convention was signed by Balfour (in Lord Salisbury's absence) and Hatz-feldt, stipulating that Britain would get the greater part of Mozambique,

<sup>1)</sup> Br. Doc. I no. 68. 2) Br. Doc. I no. 76; Garvin III p. 313. 3) Garvin III p. 314. 4) Garvin III p. 318; G. P. XIV no. 3818. 5) Garvin III p. 315.

and Germany the greater part of Angola and Portuguese Timor. It was a very hypothetical Convention stating that if Portugal borrowed money on the security of her Customs revenues in Africa and if she were unable to fulfil her financial obligations, then Germany and Britain would divide the Portuguese Colonies according to the conditions laid down in the Convention.

Balfour reported to his uncle: "I have signed the Anglo-German Convention – for good or ill" and Salisbury answered: "I only hope that it will not come into use for a long time." 1)

His hope was fulfilled, as the Portuguese, who knew something, if not everything, about the Convention, made it worthless by an arrangement with French financiers, who raised the necessary money on the security of the Portuguese home revenues, which was exactly what De Soveral had forecast to Chamberlain in July 1898. <sup>2</sup>)

It is interesting to note that about a year after this Anglo-German Agreement, another declaration was signed by Great Britain and Portugal, confirming the validity of the Anglo-Portuguese Treaties of 1642 and 1661. <sup>3</sup>) The reason why this so-called Windsor-Treaty, signed on October 14th 1899, was kept secret is to be found in the new Portuguese obligation not to permit Delagoa Bay to become a harbour for transit shipments of arms or ammunition to South-Africa. A careful study of the text of both the Anglo-German Agreement of 1898 and the Anglo-Portuguese Declaration of 1899 will show that Von Bülow's statement <sup>4</sup>) about their contradictory terms is without foundation. <sup>5</sup>)

It was only a few months after this landmark in Anglo-German relations that another troublesome question arose, which led to long, hard and bitter bargaining throughout 1899.

Ten years before, Great Britain, Germany and the United States had signed a Convention in Berlin, whereby they, as the three Powers whose nationals had settled on the Samoan Islands group, set up joint control, a Tridominium, on these islands. When, however, in August 1898 the King of the Islands died, a dispute arose over the question of succession, in which Germany on the one hand, and Great Britain and America on the other, found themselves heatedly arguing the rights of their candidates for the vacant throne. Their local consuls fought the battle with great bitterness and in March 1899 a British and American naval squadron went so far as to bomb the city of Apia, the local capital.

The Germans, for many reasons greatly valued their interests in the Samoan group and did their utmost to create an international crisis by demanding a partition of the islands, by which the most important ones would fall to her. 6)

Chamberlain had already pointed out to his colleagues that there was a strong feeling in the Australasian Colonies against allowing control of the

<sup>1)</sup> Dugdale p. 272. 2) Garvin III p. 313. 3) Br. Doc. I no. 118. 4) Bülow I p. 274. 5) Eyck p. 229-231. 6) Br. Doc. I no. 128-no. 133.

islands group to pass into the hands of a foreign Power, 1) and therefore negotiations came more or less to a dead lock.

Notwithstanding the remarkable methods used by Germany, such as an unsuccessful attempt to throw the weight of Cecil Rhodes' influence into the scales, and the notorious letter written by the Kaiser to Queen Victoria accusing Lord Salisbury of stubborn resistance over "a stupid island which is a hairpin to England compared to the thousands of square miles she is annexing right and left unopposed every year!!" 2), no way out was found until quite a different light was cast on the matter by the impending struggle in the Transvaal. 3)

Chamberlain laid great emphasis on the importance of Germany's neutrality in case of any outbreak of war in South Africa, but he left the final decision to Lord Salisbury writing on September 18th 1899: "The policy of the German Empire since Bismarck has always been one of undisguised blackmail. I expected that they would press Samoa at the present juncture.... I take it that my duty as Colonial Secretary is to represent the case of the colonials and to warn my colleagues of any bad effect that their action may have on colonial feeling. But I have also to consider the general policy of the Government and I cannot doubt that at the present time the Transvaal question is of much greater importance than any other.... If, therefore, you think it necessary or desirable to pay the price for the Emperor's support – or neutrality – I shall make no objection on my own account, and we must face the colonial indignation as best we can. In any case, I will follow your lead and accept your decision." 4)

At the same time the German Government, deciding that they were willing to renounce their share of the Samoa Group if Britain would give them compensation elsewhere, broadened the scope of the negotiations and on this new basis Eckardstein and Chamberlain, during the last weeks of September and the beginning of October 1899, tried to work out an agreement.

Time was telling against England, and the Kaiser made the most of his position by threatening to postpone or cancel his plans for visiting the Queen in November. Chamberlain, however, kept his head and even made a daring counter-proposal, whereby he tried to preserve the British rights in Samoa, by offering to Germany amongst others, territories in the Voltatriangle, if she were willing to give up any claims on the Samoa and Tonga groups. 5)

Although this proposal was most advantageous to Germany and was actually accepted by the German Colonial Council in their session of October 16th, it was nevertheless, turned down because of the pressure brought to bear upon the Emperor by Admiral Tirpitz who wanted Samoa as a naval base, as well as fear of German public opinion which proclaimed that Samoa "whatever else it was, it was German and must for ever remain German." 6)

Meanwhile, on October 11th 1899, the Boer War had broken out, and Eckardstein, who had gone to Berlin to discuss the Chamberlain proposals,

<sup>1)</sup> Br. Doc. I no. 130. 2) G. P. XIV no. 4074. 3) Eyck p. 236; Garvin III p. 333-335. 4) Garvin III p. 335 5) Garvin III p. 337. 6) Eckardstein p. 111, 112.

returned to London. A new settlement was worked out and accepted by the British Cabinet on November 1st, 1) by which Germany got the most important islands of the Samoa Group with the capital Apia, but had to cede to England the Solomon Islands, with the exception of Bougainville. 2)

The actual Convention was signed on November 14th, but the news that agreement had been reached was published on November 8th, which brought forth a curious letter from Eckardstein to Chamberlain stating: "They [Bülow and Hatzfeldt] are both fully alive to the fact that without your intervention this settlement would have been utterly impossible and they are extremely grateful to you.... Count Bülow, who is coming to England with the Kaiser on the 20th inst., hopes that he will have the pleasure of making your acquaintance in order to thank you in person for the great help you have afforded to him and his policy...." <sup>3</sup>)

The Colonial Secretary politely answered that he hoped the agreement would help "to unite our two countries in closer bonds of friendship" 4), but he expressed himself more honestly in a letter he wrote to the Duke of Devonshire some days before: "The only fault I find with Eckardstein's diplomacy is that he tries to frighten me, and does frighten Alfred Rothschild, with bloodcurdling reports about Russian and French intrigues. I told him at last that I did not care a twopenny damn if the whole gang of them combined against us, and that in that case we and the United States together would give them such a lesson as they would never forget. I hope he reported my opinion at Headquarters". 5)

The last obstacles had now been swept away from the path leading the Emperor to Windsor, a visit which was looked upon as the "public advertisement" of German neutrality in the Boer War, nearly four years after the Jameson Raid and the Krüger telegram. The many people concerned in this visit, however, each held a different opinion as to its purpose and intrinsic value – "quot homines tot sententiae".

British public opinion, as voiced by the most important newspapers, held that it was a victory for Lord Salisbury's policy, but hoped that the forth-coming conversations would not lead to any agreements hampering British freedom of action. A Times editorial of November 20th said:

"We have had to note and for once we find ourselves in agreement with the German Press, that the friendship of Germany for this country is the friendship of the German Government rather than of the German people. It may be added that the converse is not true to anything like the same extent, since not even under the provocation of incessant and gratuitous expression of Geman hostility does the English public develop any corresponding degree of rancour against Germany.... It can be no secret to any one at all conversant with politics that Germany has again and

<sup>1)</sup> Garvin III p. 339. 2) Eckardstein p. 115, 116; Br. Doc. I no. 150, 151. 3) Eckardstein p. 127; Garvin III p. 342. 4) Eckardstein p. 128. 5) Devonshire Papers No. 2802; Nov. 5th 1899.

again endeavoured to bind us by engagements affecting our freedom of action in certain Continental contingencies, while no one can point to any occasion on which we have sought to impose any such engagement upon Germany. Lord Salisbury earns the approval and gratitude of the people of this country every time that he removes any outstanding difference and thus reduces the subjects upon which friction is possible. But this action would be viewed in a different light were there any reason to suspect that the price paid for such diplomatic successes involved an entangling engagement to support Germany in affairs of international politics . . . . "

The "Daily Telegraph" of the same day emphasizes the advantages of isolation:

"If we put aside Colonial questions, there is positively no issue upon which Germany and Great Britain can quarrel. We have long since renounced any pretension to interfere in any Continental disputes, except in so far as we are bound by treaties and by our Membership in the Concert of Europe. Our existence as an independent and necessarily isolated Power is of much importance to Germany, the preservation and consolidation of the German Empire are in the same indirect way of great moment to us. There are two Powers in Europe to whom the maintenance of the status quo is of supreme concern and these are Great Britain and Germany...."

The Belgian Minister in London, therefore, was quite correct in reporting: "Il semble à l'attitude des journaux, que le voyage de Guillaume II ait donné lieu jusqu'à la fin à des doutes et des arrière-pensées et que sans en vouloir exagérer l'importance, la presse anglaise considère la présence de l'Empereur à Windsor, en ce moment, comme un succès pour la politique de Lord Salisbury." 1)

In Germany itself the Imperial visit was highly unpopular and the anti-English agitation in most of the newspapers did not stop for one moment. The appreciation, publicly expressed in England, of the Imperial visit and of the sympathy for the British Empire which it implied, was treated with scorn <sup>2</sup>). The "Kölnische Zeitung" pointed out the realistic approach which German foreign policy ought to have, when it wrote on November 18th:

"Denn heute kann kein ehrlicher Mann daran zweifeln was das Wesen der deutschen auswärtigen Politik ist; sie gipfelt in dem streng durchgeführten Grundsatz, ausschliesslich deutsche Interessen zu verfolgen und in allen anderen Fragen, in denen diese deutschen Interessen nicht den Ausschlag geben, eine neutrale Haltung zu beobachten..."

Von Bülow was still blowing hot and cold. Although some days before he had asked Eckardstein to thank Chamberlain for all the help given to his policy, on November 15th he wrote to Hatzfeldt that "if Herr Chamberlain

<sup>1)</sup> Corr. Pol. le 20 Nov. 1899. 2) Eckardstein p. 136; Von Bülow I p. 303.

means to conduct political affairs, not merely with Boers and small folk but with Great Powers, he must accustom himself to the thought that people who are not English have also their just susceptibilities." 1)

The German Foreign Secretary, however, whether or not he liked Chamberlain's methods, had very clearly understood the possibilities of an Anglo-German agreement, and notwithstanding the overtures he made later to the Colonial Secretary during the Windsor visit, he himself had no doubts about the true situation in Germany, for he stated in his records about the trip that "British politicians know little of the Continent. They do not know much more of continental conditions than we do of those in Peru or Siam. To our ideas they are rather naive.... They believe with difficulty that others have bad motives.... The South African War excites the Berliner more than it does political circles here [in England].... In general it is beyond doubt that feeling in England is far less anti-German than the feeling in Germany is anti-English. Thus the most dangerous Englishmen are those like Chirol and Saunders [Berlin correspondents of the Times], who know from personal observation the strenght and depth of Germany's antipathy to England. If the English people come to see clearly what is the feeling now predominant in Germany, this would bring about a great change in its conception of Anglo-German relations."<sup>2</sup>)

This certainly is an amazing confession.

Chamberlain, on the other hand, was still quite prepared to put an end to British isolation by a bold stroke of diplomacy. He saw an Anglo-German alliance as the most natural solution for the international loneliness in which his country found herself, during the severe test of her strength on the South African plains.

Amidst all these varied feelings and susceptibilities, intrigues, plots and counter-plots, the Imperial yacht "Hohenzollern" arrived at Portsmouth on November 20th 1899, and a special train took the Emperor and Empress to Windsor, where "ils ont été reçus à la station par le Prince de Galles entouré de plusieurs membres de la famille Royale. Le traject de la station s'est accompli au milieu d'ovations enthousiastes de la foule. La Reine elle-même a reçu le couple Imperial à son arrivée au chateau et la journée s'est terminée par un dîner strictement familial." <sup>3</sup>)

Von Bülow accompanied his Imperial master but, alas, was not able to see Lord Salisbury as: "Lady Salisbury's death yesterday must cast a damper over the festivities. She was very highly esteemed by everybody and has been an immense help to Lord Salisbury in his laborious life." 4)

Lord Salisbury, therefore, was not present and Balfour and Chamberlain took his place as Ministers in attendance on the Queen.

<sup>1)</sup> Garvin III p. 498; G. P. XV no. 4397. 2) Von Bülow I p. 335; Garvin III p. 505; G. P. XV no. 4398; Spender p. 196. 3) Corr. Pol. le 21 Nov. 1899. 4) J. Choate to C. A. de Gersdorff, Nov. 21st 1899.

The next evening, November 21st, the famous St. George's Hall in Windsor Castle with its marvellous oak panelling, which had been the scene of so many historic occasions, witnessed a State Dinner with all the traditional pageantry. It was, as the American Ambassador wrote "a very splendid affair.... The Queen expressed to me her grateful appreciation of the sympathy and friendship manifested in America for her peoples – and both the Emperor and Count von Bülow were extremely cordial in their greetings - the former saying that he did not see how any conflict of interest could arise between us. I assured them that the great strain of German blood in our veins was a lasting guarantee of friendship between the two nations." 1)

That same evening after the banquet, and once again on the 24th, the day before the Imperial visitors left for Sandringham to stay with the Prince of Wales, Chamberlain talked at length with the Kaiser. He pressed for a largescale understanding with Germany, in which America could probably be included, but the Emperor expressed himself in favour of an agreement on a lesser scale, with the object of removing causes of friction between the two countries. This would leave time for public opinion to quieten down, and would not disturb Germany's relations with Russia. 2)

These talks were of a very general nature, but when Chamberlain in the afternoon of the 22nd had a searching conversation with Von Bülow, the Colonial Secretary, with his characteristic vigour, once again spoke of his desire to form an alliance with Germany. The only positive suggestion made by Von Bülow was a request to Chamberlain to say something in public, at some time or other, about the desirability of a closer understanding between America, Great Britain and Germany 3); but for the rest he encountered Chamberlain's enthusiasm by trotting out all the old German arguments, all very well-known and equally lame.

It was impossible for Germany, so he told Chamberlain to enter into any agreement which might be looked upon by Russia as being aimed against her; neither would any agreement with Britain be accepted by German public opinion as long as the Boer war lasted. Finally, the Germans regarded it as essential, in view of the English parliamentary system that any proposed treaty of alliance should be accepted not only by the Government but also by the opposition, so as to eliminate the danger of their repudiating it, should they come into power. 4)

It is very unfortunate that Chamberlain himself has not left any notes of his own version of this conversation, but we have an account of Bülow's talk with Mr. Bertie on November 26th, covering some of the same ground.

"By desire of the Emperor I had some conversation with M. de Bülow to-day.

<sup>1)</sup> Choate to Hay, Nov. 22nd 1899. 2) Garvin III p. 501, 502; G. P. XV no. 4398. 3) Garvin III p. 510. 4) Bülow I p. 316, 324.

M. de Bülow deprecated the tone of the German Press. It did not, he said, represent the views of the Emperor on the contrary, its attacks on England were in part prompted by the desire to annoy his Majesty, at least that portion of the German Press that was opposed to the Emperor's policy in home affairs.

I said that I did not suppose that either Government attached much importance to Press abuse. In this country we did not care what the newspapers said. We were accustomed to our actions and motives being misrepresented. M. de Bülow laid great stress on the desire of the Emperor to be on the best of terms with England, and now that the Samoan difficulty had been got over, His Excellency saw no reason why any questions which arose might not be treated in a similar fashion. I answered that I saw no reason why they should not, but the Samoan arangement as settled was a very different solution to the original proposals of the German Government, and the settlement was evidently a very fair one as the Public in both countries seemed to be satisfied.

As M. de Bülow encouraged me to speak quite frankly and gave me an opening to say something as to the causes of the difficulties in negotiating with England, I told him that times had very much changed since the Bismarckian era. Prince Bismarck was a very dictatorial Minister and rather brutal in his methods. Lord Granville was most conciliatory and rather weak. Berlin had not entirely rid itself of the Bismarckian tone, which had the effect of making Englishmen resent and resist proposals made in that way. Much more could be got from England by calm discussion than by bringing out heavy artillery on every occasion and stating that the non-solution of a question in a particular way would have a disastrous effect on the relations of the two countries.

I further observed that Englishmen, generally, regarded the bickerings between Germany and England in the Press and elsewhere as in the nature of family squabbles which are carried on with great heat but disappear in face of a common danger.

M. de Bülow did not admire the methods of Prince Bismarck or of his son and did not intend to imitate them. He was most anxious to cultivate good relations with England. He knew that alliances were not in vogue here but he hoped to be able to get over difficulties, as they arose, by friendly discussion, and goodwill would not be wanting on his part.

His Excellency spoke of Russia and Japan. He seemed to think that there was an uneasy feeling in Russia as to the intentions of Japan. The Japanese Navy being stronger in the Far East than the Naval Forces of Russia and France, it seemed possible that Japan might desire to take action before the Trans-Siberian Railway reached the Asiatic coast.

I said that I understood that the Railway would not be completed for at least five years, and that as the naval scheme of Japan would not be complete for some two years, perhaps Japan would not hurry events.

M. de Bülow rather regrets the action taken by Germany in joining France and Russia in depriving Japan of the Liaotung Peninsula. It had made Germany unpopular in Japan where previously she had been appreciated. With regard to China M. de Bülow fears that Russia will not only practically possess Manchuria, but will assimilate the people with her own and turn out some good Manchu troops for her [own] use. He thinks, however, that Russia does not desire to hurry matters. She looks far ahead, as an autocratic Power can do, and wishes to keep China in a feeble state till she

is ready and able to utilize what she covets. The great objection to Russian acquisitions in China would be exclusive tariffs. Germany in that quarter of the globe is a Free-Trader. He admitted that it was something new, but in this particular matter she was sincerely for free-trade for all. As to Russia, M. de Bülow appears to be of opinion that the Czar is too liberal for the nation. He is not strong enough to carry out his good intentions. With regard to Austria-Hungary he is not comfortable. Germany does not want any Austrian Germans. They are not of the right religion to suit German purposes, and they would not be satisfactory subjects. He fears that if Austria-Hungary breaks up, the Slav populations, though they may not come directly under the rule or guidance of Russia, will be a support to her in times of European complications.

M. de Bülow did not speak of Italy, Spain or Turkey. He did not refer to South Africa or to France, and did not say anything about America or Egypt.

Signed: F. Bertie." 1)

In his conversations with Balfour too, von Bülow stressed Germany's desire to remove the causes of friction between the two countries. Balfour told him that any British politician would gladly follow such a policy, but his warning that there were no controversies between England and Russia which could not be bridged because Asia was big enough for both of them, was clearly lost on the German statesman. <sup>2</sup>)

It was indeed a great pity that Salisbury could not be present, because the Belgian Minister reports a conversation with Mr. Barington, the Prime Minister's private secretary in the following words: "Il est vrai que M. Balfour a eu de longues conversations avec Sa Majesté et Son Ministre des Affaires Etrangères, mais, a ajouté le Secrétaire du Prime Minister: ce n'est pas la même chose car nul ne peut le remplacer tant qu'il est aux affaires. M. Barrington m'a dit très confidentiellement qu'on ne pouvait avoir une confiance absolue dans le Comte de Bülow. M. Chamberlain a eu également deux entretiens avec l'empereur allemand et son ministre. L'ambassadeur allemand était présent à l'un d'entre eux. Je n'ai pu savoir les questions qui ont été traitées à ces occasions, toutefois on m'a assuré qu'il n'avait nullement été question d'un arbitrage entre les belligérants." <sup>3</sup>)

On November 25th, after some days at Windsor, the Imperial party left for Sandringham, and on the 29th the "Hohenzollern" sailed from Plymouth, thereby bringing the visit to an end, but the Kaiser left behind him an almost universal feeling of reconciliation, 4) and the "Times" commented: "We do not, of course, pretend to know what took place at the interviews the Emperor and his Foreign Minister had with the representative British statesmen whom they met. But there is every reason to believe that the conclusions come to were in accordance with the real interests of both England and Germany – interests which to a very great extent run upon parallel lines." 5)

<sup>1)</sup> Royal Archives I 62/no. 65. 2) Von Bülow I p. 318, 319. 3) Corr. Pol. le 25 Novembre 1899. 4) Garvin III p. 506. 5) Times Nov. 29th 1899.

Chamberlain had never been slow to take a hint, but he had never acted more quickly than he did, in response to Von Bülow's suggestion that he should say something about the necessity for a closer understanding between Germany, America and Great Britain. On the very day after the Kaiser left Britain, the Colonial Secretary had an engagement to speak at a Unionist luncheon in Leicester, and there and then he seized his opportunity, and spoke in a way which left no doubt about his reasons for such an alliance.

".... No far-seeing statesman could be content with England's permanent isolation on the Continent of Europe.... The natural alliance is between ourselves and the Great German Empire [loud cheers]... We have had our differences with Germany.... I cannot conceive any point which can arise in the immediate future which would bring ourselves and the Germans into antagonism of interests. On the contrary, I can foresee many things in the future which must be a cause of anxiety to the statesmen of Europe, but in which our interests are clearly the same as the interests of Germany, and in which that understanding of which I have spoken in the case of America might, if extended, do more perhaps than any combination of arms in order to preserve the peace of the world,... I may point out to you that at the bottom the character, the main character of the Teutonic races differs very slightly indeed from the character of the Anglo-Saxon [cheers]... and if the union between England and America is a powerful factor in the cause of peace, a new Triple Alliance between the Teutonic race and the two great branches of the Anglo-Saxon race, will be a still more patent influence in the future of the world.

I have used the word "alliance" sometimes in the course of what I have said, but again I desire to make it clear that to me it seems to matter little whether you have an alliance which is committed to paper or whether you have an understanding which exists in the minds of the statesmen of the respective countries.... An understanding, a determination to look favourably on the motives of those with whom we desire to be on terms of friendship – a feeling of that kind, cultivated, existing and confirmed by all these three countries will I am certain be to their enormous advantage, and I believe whether they think it themselves or not, will also be to the advantage of other nations." 1)

On the same day the American Ambassador, Mr. Joseph H. Choate, spoke at the Thanksgiving celebration of the American Society in London and used the words: "Let England and America clasp hands across the sea and the peace of the world will be absolutely secure." 2)

Quite naturally the newspapers played up the similarity between these remarks and Chamberlain's speech, but the implication of the Ambassador's words was quite different:

"Why some of them [the papers] have made such a fuss about my speech there [Thanksgiving celebrations] I can't imagine, except that I happened to speak on the same day that Mr. Chamberlain delivered his Philippine.

<sup>1)</sup> Lee II p. 117; Garvin III p. 507, 508; Times Dec. 1st 1899. 2) Times Dec. 1st 1899.

I said nothing that I had not said half a dozen times before, and never hinted at an "alliance" of which I never dreamed." 1)

The whole of Chamberlain's speech, however, was packed with highly controversial and inflammable material, and to his great astonishment the newspapers all over the world made it their business to throw cold water.

The New York correspondent of the "Times" commented:

"The significance of his [Chamberlain's] present speech, following hard on his conference with the German Emperor, is no more lost on us than on his own countrymen.... All we ask of him, with reference to the relations of England and the United States, is not to propose to us the impossible, not to use language which makes the realisation of his wish and ours more difficult.",

## to which an editorial added:

"In forms of government, in political ideals and in general aspirations, as well as in their common tongue, this country and America are similar with a similarity which does not exist between Germany and either of them. Our friendly relations are with the American people, but with the German Government." 2)

In Germany he did not meet any friendly reactions either. The accusation of "laying it on too thick" was only surpassed by a remark that his "long-spoon" speech had now been exceeded by a "long-bow" speech. 3) The Belgian Minister even thought that Lord Salisbury's return to work had something to do with the speech for he reported:

"Bien des personnes commençaient en effet à craindre que le 'Prime Minister' ne fût obligé de renoncer à sa double charge à la suite du deuil qui l'a frappé et du mauvais état de sa santé.

Il n'en est rien cependant, car on m'assure que Sa Seigneurie n'a nullement l'intention de se démettre de sa place de Prime Minister ni de Chef du Foreign Office dans un moment où l'Angleterre a si besoin du service de son expérience et de ses hautes capacités. J'ai même entendu dire que le récent discours de M. Chamberlain n'aurait pas été étranger à la décision prise par Lord Salisbury de ne plus tarder à reprendre la direction des affaires.

Les paroles prononcées récemment par le Secrétaire des Colonies ont été vivement critiquées, non seulement par la Presse, mais aussi par les hommes politiques de toutes les parties et mêmes par des hautes fonctionnaires de son Département avec lesquels j'ai eu l'occasion de m'entretenir. Quelques personnes, qui lui sont peu favorables, ont exprimé leur satisfaction de ce qu'il s'est ainsi enlevé toute chance de devenir un jour Prime Minister, position qu'il ambitionne extrêmement à ce que l'on m'assure." 4)

<sup>1)</sup> Choate to De Gersdorff, Dec. 5th 1899. 2) Times Dec. 2nd 1899. 3) Garvin III p. 509. 4) Corr. Pol. le 11 Déc. 1899.

Chamberlain himself cherished great hopes and was anxiously waiting for an official reply. The day after his speech he wrote to Eckardstein "Count Bülow, whose acquaintance I was delighted to make, also greatly impressed me. He expressed a wish that I might be able at some time to say something as to the mutual interests which bound the United States to a triple understanding with Germany as well as Great Britain. Hence my speech yesterday which I hope will not be unsatisfactory to him." 1)

Eckardstein answered that he did not "doubt for a moment that your speech at Leicester has given them [the Kaiser and Bülow] the greatest satisfaction", 2) but if one compares this statement with the official report written by Count Hatzfeldt on December 2nd 1899 the duplicity of German diplomacy shines out brightly.

"Über die vorstehend von mir hervorgehobene massvolle Haltung in der hiesigen Presse und in den Hof- und Regierungskreisen ist inzwischen Mr. Chamberlain, von welchem es am wenigsten zu erwarten war, in seiner Rede in Leicester hinausgegangen, indem er darin die Frage einer Allianz mit Deutschland offen und unverhüllt aufstellte. Ich muss es mir vorläufig noch versagen über die Motive dieses Vorgehens eine bestimmte Meinung auszusprechen, die sich vorläufig nur auf Vermutungen begründen liesse, und darf mir deshalb vorbehalten, auf diese Frage später zurückzukommen. Dagegen möchte ich schon hier an die mehrfach von mir ausgesprochene Ansicht erinnern, dass Mr. Chamberlain zwar ein sehr fähiger und schlauer Geschäftsmann, aber durchaus kein Diplomat ist, der sich in seinen Handlungen durch bestimmte Regeln begrenzen lässt. So gross sein persönlicher Ehrgeiz ist, so darf doch meines Erachtens nicht angenommen werden, dass er sich ausschliesslich dadurch leiten und nicht gleichzeitig durch bestimmte politische Überzeugungen leiten lässt. Seine Gedanke einer Allianz mit Deutschland und Amerika ist aber, wie Eure Durchlaucht sich erinnern wollen, durchaus kein neuer und er hat denselben schon vor längerer Zeit in geheimen Unterredungen mit mir, über die ich damals ausführlich berichtet habe, wiederholt besprochen. Wenn er heute damit vor die Öffentlichkeit tritt, so beweist dies meines Erachtens, dass er auch in dieser Frage den grössten Teil des Kabinetts hinter sich zu haben glaubt, und dass er ferner den Zeitpunkt für gekommen hält, das englische Publikum, welches bisher vor jeder Allianz zurückschreckte, an den Gedanken einer solchen zu gewöhnen. Für keineswegs ausgeschlossen halte ich, dass er dabei aus persönlichen Ehrgeiz den Zweck verfolgt, es zum Bruch mit Lord Salisbury zu treiben und denselben aus dem Sattel zu heben, um sich an seine Stelle zu setzen. Nach meiner Überzeugung ist Lord Salisbury trotz mancher Vorwürfe, die ihm in der eigenen Partei gemacht worden sind, noch keineswegs als ein politisch fertiger Mann zu betrachten, den die Konservativen ohne weiteres würden fallen lassen, solange er nicht selbst den Wunsch zeigt, sich zurückzuziehen.

Überdies kann aber Mr. Chamberlain auch darüber nicht im Zweifel sein, dass es selbst bei einem Rücktritt des jetzigen Premier-Ministers noch recht zweifelhaft sein würde, ob er sich mit Sicherheit als Nachfolger desselben betrachten könnte.

<sup>1)</sup> Garvin III p. 510; Eckardstein p. 130. 2) Garvin III p. 510.

Wenn ich mir dies alles vergegenwärtige, bin ich durchaus nicht abgeneigt anzunehmen, dass Mr. Chamberlain als er seine Rede über die Allianz hielt, die prinzipielle Zustimmung Lord Salisbury's dazu bereits in der Tasche hatte oder aber von der Überzeugung ausging, dass es ihm – wie in der Samoafrage – mit Hilfe der Majorität seiner Kollegen gelingen würde, den Premier-Minister zum Eingehen auf seine Wünsche zu bestimmen. Für uns kann es, soweit ich mir ein Urteil gestatten darf, nur nützlich sein, wenn Mr. Chamberlain, ohne dass wir unsererseits irgendeine Verpflichtung übernehmen, an der Hoffnung festhält, dass wir uns schliesslich noch bestimmen lassen werden, auf seine Wünsche bezüglich einer Allianz, oder doch einer intimen Verständigung einzugehen. Solange er an dieser Hoffnung festhält, wird er uns in den voraussichtlich noch auftauchenden kolonialen Fragen Entgegenkommen zeigen, und wie in der Samoafrage seinen Einfluss im Kabinett und speziell auf Lord Salisbury für uns geltend machen müssen." 1)

From the last sentences of this letter and its absolutely incorrect judgment of the Colonial Secretary's character, the principal mistake of German diplomacy at that time can be perceived.

In the meanwhile Eckardstein had passed on Chamberlain's letter of the 1st of December to the Wilhelmstrasse, and Holstein answered him on December 7th that he "submitted your full and interesting letter to Count Bülow. Its content, and especially the letter from Chamberlain enclosed, show clearly the line of thought followed by Chamberlain in his speech. I can understand this speech very well; but it was an incomprehensible blunder for so experienced a politician to say that he wished to come to an understanding with the German people, not with the German press; and so to provoke the latter to attack him. As an old parliamentary hand he could have expected as much. The "Kölnische Zeitung" had from the first been quite proper in its attitude, standing up for Chamberlain and for the sincerity of his pro-German sentiments." 2)

In fact, the "Kolnische Zeitung" was one of the very few newspapers which commented favourably on the Leicester speech, and an article in the edition of December 2nd runs as follows:

"Die jüngste Rede, die Minister Chamberlain in Leicester gehalten hat, schwingt sich am Schlusse zu einem weitanschauenden Ausblick in die Zukunft empor.

Herr Chamberlain spricht von einem Dreibund der germanischen Rasse mit den beiden Zweigen der Angelsachsen in Grossbritannien und in den Vereinigten Staaten. Das Wort Dreibund in diesem Zusammenhang hat zunächst etwas Befremdendes. Aber Chamberlain hat selbst dafür gesorgt, dass es so ausgelegt wird, wie er es gemeint hat. Er hat nicht einen formlichen Bund auf Grund eines allgemeinen Abkommens mit festen Verbindlichkeiten im Sinne, sondern er versteht darunter ein gemeinsames, freundschaftliches Zusammengehen der drei Völker und Reiche da, wo sie gemeinsame Interessen zu wahren und zu schützen haben. In diesem Sinne werden Chamberlain's Worte auch in Deutschland, nicht bloss bei allen

<sup>1)</sup> Von Bülow I p. 337, 338; G. P. XV no. 4401. 2) Eckardstein p. 146

berufsmässigen Politikern, sondern bei allen denen an einer stetigen und würdigen Aufrechterhaltung des Weltfriedens liegt, volles Verständnis und ehrliche Zustimmung finden. Die deutsche Politik hat es verstanden, zum Schutze des Friedens einerseits ein festes und zuverlässiges Bündnis mit Oesterreich-Ungarn und Italien zu schliessen, andererseits aber im Einklang mit diesem Bundesgenossen sich die Möglichkeit zu schaffen, die besten freundnachbarlichen Beziehungen mit allen derjenigen Mächten zu pflegen, denen gleichfalls die Aufrechterhaltung des Friedens am Herzen liegt und mit denen gemeinsame Interessen im gegebenen Augenblick ein Zusammengehen wünschenswert machen.

Holstein's letter of the 7th had already predicted the kind of answer Chamberlain was going to get, but in the event Von Bülow's speech of December 11th 1899 in the Reichstag made the blow even harder than had been predicted.

The German Foreign Secretary did not allude to the Leicester speech, but emphasized the importance of a strong fleet combined with a strong army, because, as he told his audience "in the coming century the German people will be hammer or anvil".

He also made it perfectly clear that with such a fleet, Germany was going to be a force to be reckoned with, and that, "as for England, we are ready and willing on a basis of full reciprocity and mutual consideration, to live with her in peace and harmony. But just because the foreign situation is at present favourable, we must utilise it to secure ourselves in the future." <sup>2</sup>)

Garvin acknowledged that the Leicester speech might have been an error, but he adds "this kind of response was a fatality." 3) Von Bülow was, of course, too good a politician not to guess what kind of an impression his speech was going to make on Chamberlain. The words he had used were clearly in accordance with the views expressed by him in letters from which we have quoted; but he gave another example of the peculiar duplicity of his policy when he instructed Eckardstein to get hold of Chamberlain at the shortest possible notice, and to explain to him the "real" feeling of the German Foreign Secretary.

"Count Bülow attaches the greatest importance to his attitude not being misunderstood and to the maintenance of a good understanding between the two Governments. He has therefore empowered the Ambassador to convey herewith a strictly confidential assurance that His Majesty's Government will abstain from every realignment of the Continental Powers against England, as well as from every joint action that might cause England embarrassment; of course in the assumption that German interests

<sup>1)</sup> Köln. Zeitung 2. Dez. 1899. 2) Von Bülow I p. 356; Garvin III p. 511. 3) Garvin III p. 511.

will be taken due account of by Great Britain. Count Bülow attaches special importance to the maintenance of full and frank communication between the two Governments at a juncture when England's position in South Africa is one of extreme difficulty.

In this connection it is also to be taken into consideration that the position of Count Bülow himself is one of extreme difficulty. The Ambassador has already explained this more than once to Lord Salisbury; and Mr. Chamberlain will no doubt have gathered it for himself from proceedings in the Reichstag.

The weapon, of wich the opposition make so much use against us, is the reiterated insinuation that the Government is carrying on secret political deals with England and sacrificing to that country the true interests of Germany. The attack in the Reichstag on these lines has been so violent, that Count Bülow has had to take it into account and compose his speech with reference to it. We no longer live in the days when Prince Bismarck was all-powerful in foreign policy and had nothing to fear even when he took no account of public opinion. The present Chancellor cannot do this and still less can Count Bülow; so the latter has to let the storm blow over, but without – and that is after all the important point – in any way abandoning the prosecution of the policy that he has recognised as being sound, proof of which is the assurance given above. And that this assurance really means what it says and will be acted upon in every respect by Count Bülow is personally guaranteed by the Ambassador. The point is now to prevent tendentious and thoroughly untrustworthy interpretations of the Bülow speech in the Franco-Russian press from causing misunderstanding. People in England may rest assured that Count Bülow will hold fast to his policy and that the time will come when he will be able to stand for it publicly without thereby arousing dangerous opposition in the Reichstag or in the country." 1)

Although Eckardstein reported some days later that he had fulfilled his mission, there was no doubt he had only partially succeeded.

"The speech of Count Bülow would be understood by any man who realised the difficulty of his position in the face of present public feeling in Germany. As yet the great mass of the people in England have not seen in it anything hostile or even cool towards England.

On the other hand I have for some days been exposed to attacks from politicians, Cabinet Ministers, the Rothschilds and the Royal Family. Happily I have succeeded to some extent in appeasing them, including Chamberlain himself who seemed inclined to understand the speech as intended for a cold douche directed at him." 2)

It was, however, the Colonial Secretary himself, who in a polite letter (Dec. 28th) to Eckardstein, indicated that in his opinion the second attempt to come to terms with Germany had failed.

"I will say no more here about the way in which I have been treated by Bülow. In any case I consider it advisable to drop every kind of further

<sup>1)</sup> Hatzfeldt to Eckardstein, Dec. 16th 1899. Eckardstein p. 144-146. 2) Eckardstein to Holstein, Dec. 21st 1899. Eckardstein p. 150.

negotiation on the Alliance question which has been discussed between us. Whether after the end of the South African war, which seems to have thrown up so much dust, an opportunity of renewing the negotiations will return once more, is what I must leave to circumstances.

I am indeed sincerely sorry that all our own earnest and wearisome efforts seem now to have been made in vain. But I am as sorry for myself. Everything was going so well, Lord Salisbury himself was in a friendly humour again, and entirely at one with us as regards the future development of Anglo-German relations. But, alas, it was just not to be." 1)

<sup>1)</sup> Garvin III p. 513; Eckardstein p. 151.