CHAPTER III

THE THIRD ATTEMPT WITH GERMANY

(JANUARY–DECEMBER 1901)

We have seen that the German Emperor's official visit to England in November 1899 was favoured by those who wished to put Anglo-German relations on a closer and more permanent footing in order to further their cause.

It is not surprising, therefore, to find the Kaiser's visit in January 1901, on the occasion of Queen Victoria's death, coincide with the re-opening of negotiations for a possible Anglo-German alliance, [1]) and to find also most of the actors we have seen in the first and second act of the hitherto unsuccessful drama, once again playing their parts.

Meanwhile, however, there had been some changes. Count von Bülow, who since July 1897 had been the German Minister for Foreign Affairs, had succeeded Fürst Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst as Chancellor of Germany in October 1900, while Baron von Richthofen had been promoted Foreign Minister. In England, Parliament had been dissolved on September 25th, 1900, and when the uproar of the "Khaki-Elections" had died down, the Unionists found themselves with almost the same majority in the Commons as before. The formation of the Cabinet, however, caused some difficulties, as Lord Salisbury no longer felt able to carry the burden of both the Premiership and the Foreign Office.

The following correspondence between Mr. A. J. Balfour and Mr. Akers-Douglas, the latter being in attendance on the Queen at Balmoral, gives us some idea of the Queen's views on the resignation from the Foreign Office of Lord Salisbury.

Mr. Akers-Douglas to Mr. Balfour:

"18th October 1900

"....

But the great difficulty will be with Lord Salisbury and F.O.
It appears [Lord] James [of Hereford] has been telling her [the Queen] that the country looks on him as the only Foreign Minister and further that the effect abroad would be disastrous. This has sunk in.
She says if Lord S. *really* thinks the work too much – if his doctors are *really* sure his continuance at the F.O. is bad for him she will make no protest: but she must be assured on these points otherwise she will press him to stay." [2])

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[1]) The Anglo-German Agreement on China (Yangtse-Agreement) was signed on October 16th 1900; Br. Doc. II no. 17. [2]) Royal Archives B 51/no. 103a.

Mr. Balfour to Mr. Akers-Douglas:

"18th October 1900

"....Lord James may be right in thinking that public opinion on the Continent would view with dismay Lord Salisbury's retirement from office: but this is only because they think that the control of our foreign policy would thereby fall into the hands of Chamberlain, whom, for some reason or other, they have chosen to erect into a political bogey. I don't believe they would be the least alarmed at an arrangement which left Lord Salisbury Prime Minister and put the conduct of Foreign Office details into the hands of Lord Lansdowne." [1])

Mr. Akers-Douglas to Mr. Balfour:

"October 19th, 1900

"My dear Arthur,
Your letter came just at the right moment – was exactly what was wanted – and I think has quite settled the matter.
The Queen has always been convinced that Lord S. ought not to go on with his F.O. work. She was for the moment a bit upset and unsettled by James' advice – but told me yesterday she knew we were right, and would support our view.
Her only difficulty now is that she fears Lord S. may himself suggest that he should stay at the F.O. and she shrinks from the task of telling him *she* thinks he ought to go...." [2])

Memorandum by the Right Hon. J. S. Sandars:
(Private Secretary to Mr. Balfour)

"October 21st, 1900

"Douglas, who came back from Balmoral to-day, by command of the Queen, went down to Hatfield this afternoon to see the P. M.
Douglas' mission was (as you will have gathered from what has passed) to ascertain if Lord S. would himself propose to give up the F. O. to relieve the Queen of the responsibility, which she is most reluctant to face, of making the proposal herself to him.
Lord S. told D. he should submit Lord Lansdowne's name for the F. O. in the usual course and then the Queen would be spared the difficulty she dreaded...." [3])

When Lord Lansdowne left the War Office, Mr. Brodrick succeeded him as Secretary of State for War, and the Queen found some consolation for the loss of Lord Salisbury at the Foreign Office when his son, Lord Cranborne, became Parliamentary Under-Secretary there, as successor of Mr. Brodrick.

As wel as his son, Lord Salisbury had two of his nephews in government positions, Mr. A. J. Balfour as Leader of the House of Commons and Mr. Gerald Balfour as President of the Board of Trade; in addition, his son-in-law, Lord Selborne, was First Lord of the Admiralty. It is not therefore surprising to find this last Salisbury Government commonly being referred to as "Hotel Cecil".

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[1]) Royal Archives B 51/no. 103c. [2]) Royal Archives B 51/no. 103d. [3]) Royal Archives B 51/no. 103g.

The change in leadership at the Foreign Office strengthened the influence of the Liberal-Unionist wing in the Cabinet, where the Duke of Devonshire and Chamberlain now found a member of their own party in charge of foreign policy. Moreover the Wilhelmstrasse had a very favourable impression of Lord Lansdowne, whom they considered to be much less prejudiced on the question of an Anglo-German Alliance than Lord Salisbury.

Thus the scene was well set for the last act.

In Germany, the Kaiser, in his own way, was still very much in favour of a better understanding with Great Britain, as is made clear in the following letter from Colonel Swaine to the Queen's private secretary, Sir Arthur Bigge:

"Berlin, Dec. 28th, 1900

"....He [the German Emperor] was full of political interest after lunch. The impression conveyed to my mind by the Emperor's statements was that he intended to do everything that lay in his power to uphold and consolidate the good understanding that now existed between the two Powers. But he said: "I must feel and be made to feel that there is reciprocity. I think your people are gradually beginning to realize that I wish to live on good terms with them. Commercial rivalry is good for both of us and if we both spend our money on the same objects we shall soon put an end to our political rivalry. But we must stick together. There are only two Races in the world: the Teutonic and the Slavs [sic]. The Latin Race is dropping down the ladder and we need take no account of it. But the Teutonic People must stand shoulder to shoulder or the Slavs will destroy us. I suppose as long as Lord Salisbury influences your foreign policy so long I expect he will favour France at our expense. But believe me, he is wrong. France will never forgive Fashoda, and it cares little for your soft words. Beware also of America. America cares no more for what you did for her in her war with Spain. Such gratitude in an American is short lived. The Nicaragua question is becoming a serious one for you, and unless you show a determined front you will lose in prestige all over the world which will further be reflected on us here. America is now trying to mix herself up in European questions, and you will see that before long she will have a fleet in the Mediterranean...." [1])

However, things started to move again in England, as Eckardstein tells us, when, on January 9th 1901 he received a letter from the Duchess of Devonshire, saying:

"We have sent your wife an invitation to come with you to Chatsworth

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[1]) Royal Archives I 62/no. 113. The Nicaragua dispute arose from the Clayton-Bulwer Treaty of April 19th 1850, by which Great Britain and the United States agreed that any canal or railway across the Central American isthmus should be open on equal terms to the subjects and citizens of both countries. Great Britain would have been within her legal rights to protest against a Bill laid before the American Congress in 1899, empowering the President to acquire from Nicaragua and Costa Rica such territory as was necessary for the construction of the Panama Canal and to make provisions for its defence when completed. By signing the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty of November 18th 1901, Great Britain met the American aspirations and helped to remove all obstacles in the way of the construction of a canal by the American Government.

from about the 12th or 13th until the 17th or 18th. Pray come without fail as the Duke has several urgent political questions to discuss with you. You shall also find Joseph Chamberlain here. As we shall have a house-party of fifty or so for the theatricals you will easily get an opportunity of a quiet talk with the Duke and Jos. It is true Asquith and some other leading members of the Opposition will be with us too, but that will not matter, for there are in the "Schloss" plenty of rooms where you will be able to talk without anyone noticing it. The Duke makes a great point of your coming as he is again much worried about the Eastern Question and it is so good for him to have some one to talk to about it.
Many thanks for the wonderful Brunswick sausages and "Spickgänse" you sent me at Christmas. As there is no one in England with a taste for such delicacies I had some all by myself for breakfast every morning. It quite reminded me of my childhood in Hannover." [1])

Just before this house-party, from January 7th till January 12th, the Prince of Wales had stayed at Chatsworth and the conversations with his host had made it quite clear to him that the Government was going to make another effort to bring Germany and Great Britain together. [2]) As Balfour was staying at Chatsworth at the same time, we may safely take it that he knew about the conversation between the Prince and the Duke of Devonshire, and fully agreed to the invitation being sent to Eckardstein.

During Eckardstein's and Chamberlain's visit, the political problems of the day were thoroughly discussed, and the Anglo-German alliance formed a major topic.

After returning to London, the German diplomat consulted his chief, Count Hatzfeldt, and two long cables were sent to Berlin, one to Von Bülow and another to Holstein.

Count Hatzfeldt to Count von Bülow:

"London, den 18. Januar 1901

"Bei einem kürzlichen gelegentlichen Zusammentreffen des Freiherrn von Eckardstein mit Herrn Chamberlain auf dem Lande beim Herzog von Devonshire hat der Kolonialminister unter anderem auch folgende bedeutungsvolle Äusserungen gemacht:
Er und seine Freunde im Kabinett seien sich jetzt darüber klar, dass für England die Zeit einer Politik der "splendid isolation" vorüber sei. England müsse sich für die Zukunft nach Bundesgenossen umsehen. Die Wahl sei zwischen Russland-Frankreich und dem Dreibund. Sowohl innerhalb des Kabinetts als auch im Volke gäbe es Stimmen, welche einen Ausgleich sowie ein festes Zusammengehen mit Russland wünschten und eifrig betrieben, und bereit seien, zur Erlangung dieses Zieles einen sehr hohen Preis zu zahlen. Er selbst gehöre nicht zu denjenigen, welche einen Anschluss an Russland wünschten, sondern sei der Überzeugung, dass ein Zusammengehen mit Deutschland sowie Anschluss an den Dreibund vorzuziehen sei. Er persönlich werde alles tun, um eine allmähliche Anbah-

[1]) Eckardstein p. 184. [2]) Lee I p. 798.

nung in dieser Richtung herbeizuführen. Zunächst sei er dafür, dass ein geheimes Abkommen zwischen England und Deutschland in bezug auf Marokko auf der bereits früher erörterten Basis zustande käme. Er rate dazu, die Sache aufzunehmen, sobald Lord Salisbury sich nach dem Süden begeben habe, und die Einzelheiten mit Lord Lansdowne und ihm zu verhandeln. Solange er, Chamberlain, die Überzeugung habe, dass ein dauerndes Zusammengehen mit Deutschland möglich sei, werde er sich jeder Idee eines Ausgleichs mit Russland auf das entschiedenste widersetzen. Sollte es sich jedoch herausstellen, dass ein permanenter Anschluss an Deutschland nicht durchführbar sei, so werde auch er ein Zusammengehen mit Russland trotz des voraussichtlich von England zu zahlenden abnormen Preises (eventuell inklusive China und des Persischen Golfs) befürworten. Er bäte diese seine Ausführungen mit Ausnahme der Marokkofrage vorläufig als keine Anregung, sondern als eine lediglich akademische Erörterung zu betrachten." [1])

Count Hatzfeldt to Von Holstein:

"London, den 18. Januar 1901

"Die bedeutungsvollen Äusserungen von Chamberlain scheinen nur die wiederholt von mir ausgesprochene Vermutung zu bestätigen, dass man uns hier kommen wird, wenn erst das Bedürfnis der Anlehnung empfunden und wir dies abzuwarten verstehen, dass man aber die Möglichkeit eines Ausgleichs mit Russland auch um einen hohen Preis ins Auge fassen wird, wenn sich die Verständigung mit Deutschland respektive Dreibund als unausführbar herausstellt.
Sie und ich stimmen wohl darin überein, dass der Gedanke einer Allianz vorläufig noch verfrüht ist. Diese Ansicht scheint aber Chamberlain zu teilen und die spätere definitive Verständigung durch besondere Abkommen über Marokko usw. einleiten zu wollen. Das können wir uns gefallen lassen. Inzwischen ist zu hoffen, dass die Abkühlung zwischen England und Amerika infolge der wachsenden Intimität des letzteren mit Russland noch mehr zunehmen, und dass dann England immer mehr auf uns angewiesen sein wird.
Sehr bemerkenswert ist dabei die von Chamberlain beinahe unverhüllt an den Tag gelegte Hoffnung, Lord Salisbury bald los zu werden und dann Herr der Situation zu bleiben. Zunächst scheint es ziemlich festzustehen, dass Lord Salisbury demnächst auf mehrere Monate nach dem Süden geht, und dass dann Chamberlain mit seinen Freunden, zu welchen vor allen Dingen Lord Lansdowne gehört, hier den Ausschlag geben wird." [2])

The answers show that in the Wilhelmstrasse the same opinions still prevailed.
Count von Bülow to Hatzfeldt:

"Berlin, den 20. Januar 1901

"Völlig einverstanden damit, dass wir abwarten und England die Initiative überlassen. Die neuesten englisch-portugiesischen Demonstrationen werden in Deutschland gegen die Politik der deutschen Regierung ausgenützt

[1]) G. P. XVII no. 4979. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 4980.

als Symptom dafür, dass England unser südafrikanisches Abkommen verleugnet. Nach dieser Erfahrung werden wir, Ew. pp. und ich, zu erwägen haben, ob es sich bei der nächsten gebotenen Gelegenheit empfiehlt, wieder ein solches Abkommen à longue échéance zu schliessen, oder nach Art der Bündnisse früherer Jahrhunderte unmittelbar vor dem Eintritt in die Aktion. An die Abmachung zwischen England und dem Zweibund glaube ich nicht, solange nicht England – wozu kein Grund vorliegt – die Aussicht auf Eingreifen Deutschlands zu seinen Gunsten endgültig verloren hat. Bei jeder solchen Abmachung muss der eventuelle Gewinn dem Risiko entsprechen. Ich zweifle, ob England auf ein von diesem Gesichtspunkt aus für uns annehmbares Abkommen eingehen wird, solange die Illusion fortdauert, dass Amerika unter Umständen an Englands Seite in den Kampf eintreten würde. Die Haltung der amerikanischen massgebenden Faktoren – Regierung, Senat, Presse – in der Clayton-Bulwer-Frage lässt vermuten, dass auf englischer Seite die Ernüchterung bald eintreten wird. Dann wird wahrscheinlich der richtige Moment zum Verhandeln zwischen uns und England um so viel näher gerückt sein. In der Zwischenzeit möchte ich der Orts- und Menschenkenntnis Ew. anheimgeben, die Engländer freundlich anzuhören, ihnen in aller Aufrichtigkeit zuzugeben, dass Deutschland und England unter Umständen zur gemeinsamen Vertretung von Lebensinteressen berufen sein können, dass aber im Augenblick die deutsche öffentliche Meinung, welche nach den Samoaerlebnissen sich zunächst an Burensympathien erwärmt hatte, jetzt wiederum durch die englisch-portugiesische demonstrative Annäherung neues Misstrauen gegen England gefasst hat." [1])

Holstein to Eckardstein:

"Berlin, January 21st 1901

"If England makes large concessions in spheres of influence to Russia and France, it will only whet the appetite of its two opponents and make a struggle for life all the more inevitable – a reduced England against reinforced enemies.
Hardly any general treaty with England is conceivable for Germany that would not involve a certain danger for war. And Germany could only expect compensation comparable to the immense risk it was taking if England had a more accurate, that is a more modest, opinion of its own performances. England still holds to what Lord Salisbury said to Count Hatzfeldt: "You ask too much for your friendship." This and the ill-treatment of Germany that has become a habit under Lord Salisbury, must first be forgotten and forgiven before we can "start fresh." [2])

If matters had rested here, these negotiations might have taken the same negative course as they did in 1898 and 1899, but the serious news about Queen Victoria's alarming condition brought the Emperor himself to England on January 20th, where he was met in London by the Prince of Wales. [3])

The Emperor did not know anything about the discussions at Chatsworth,

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[1]) G. P. XVII no. 4981. [2]) Eckardstein p. 187. [3]) The news of the Emperor's arrival at this moment, was very favourably received both by the general public and the newspapers.

but on his way by train from Port Victoria to London, Eckardstein gave him the latest news about the rapprochement and, apparently at Holstein's request, asked him to discuss the Anglo-German relationship but in a very general way only. [1])

The Prince of Wales, bearing in mind the things he had been told by Devonshire, pressed the Kaiser for talks with Lansdowne and Salisbury, which made the Kaiser send the following telegram to his Chancellor:

> "Er [Prince of Wales] hat ausdrücklichen Wunsch, dass ich Lord Lansdowne und Lord Salisbury sehen solle, der morgen eintrifft. Gott gebe mir die richtigen Gedanken und Worte, dass ich sie richtig zu fassen verstehe und zum Wohl beider Länder ausfalle, was wir beredet. Ich werde sogleich melden. Freiherr von Eckardstein sagt mir, Chamberlain habe vertraulich angedeutet, dass es mit "splendid isolation" vorbei, England müsse wählen zwischen Dreibund und Russland-Frankreich. Er wolle à tout prix ersteres, ein Teil Kabinetts letzteres. Auswärtiges Amt ersteres; nur wenn wir nicht wollten, dann Abschwenkung nach Zweibund. Verständigung über Marokko wieder von ihm erwünscht, kann geschehen, sobald Lord Salisbury nach Cannes fort. Also "sie kommen" scheints, worauf wir gewartet haben." [2])

Von Bülow's reply was another repetition of the old and well-known arguments; it is important to emphasize that even at this stage of the negotiations the Chancellor was still of the opinion that by delaying the German decision, the price to be extracted from Great Britain could be raised. Moreover, he still held that it would be absolutely impossible for England ever to come to terms with either France or Russia, and that everything Chamberlain had said with regard to such an understanding was pure humbug. He voiced his opinion in the following words:

> "Euere Majestät haben vollkommen Recht mit der Empfindung, dass die Engländer uns kommen müssen. Sie haben eben in Afrika viel Haare gelassen, Amerika zeigt sich unsicher, Japan unzuverlässig, Frankreich hasserfüllt, Russland perfide, die öffentliche Meinung in allen Ländern feindlich. 1897 beim diamantenen Jubiläum hatte das englische Selbstbewusstsein seinen Höhepunkt erreicht, schlug der englische Pfau sein stolzestes Rad und gefiel sich in der splendid isolation. 1898 zeigten sich die ersten Annäherungsversuche in dem Brief Ihrer Majestät der Kaiserin Friedrich, im Dezember 1899 verdichteten sich die englischen Wünsche zu der Chamberlainschen Rede, jetzt dämmert den Engländern allmählich das Bewusstsein auf, dass sie bloss mit eigener Kraft ihr Weltreich gegen so viele Gegner nicht werden behaupten können.
> Jetzt kommt alles darauf an, die Engländer weder zu entmutigen noch sich vorzeitig von ihnen festlegen zu lassen. Die englischen Verlegenheiten werden sich in den nächsten Monaten noch steigern, und damit steigt auch der Preis, den wir fordern können. Wir dürfen England kein zu grosses Empressement zeigen, was nur die englischen Ansprüche erhöhen

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[1]) Eckardstein p. 189. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 4982.

und unsere Aussichten auf Gewinn verringern würde, müssen aber gleichzeitig die Engländer in der Überzeugung erhalten, dass wir den Fortbestand eines mächtigen Englands wünschen, an eine Solidarität der deutschen und englischen politischen, kulturellen und auch wirtschaftlichen Interessen glauben und uns deshalb bei richtigem Verhälten von englischer Seite mit der Zeit auch zu dieser oder jener Verständigung mit England bereit finden lassen würden.
In letzterer Beziehung ist nach meinem ehrfurchtsvollsten Dafürhalten für uns ein dilatorisches Verhalten dringend geboten, auch deshalb, weil nicht viel Reelles einzuheimsen ist, solange Lord Salisbury seinen Urlaub nicht angetreten hat, der zwar nicht mehr unser ausgesprochener Gegner, aber misstrauisch, schwer von Entschluss und dur à la détente ist. Im Hinblick auf die gesamte Weltlage wie auf unsere eigenen Lebensinteressen würden Euere Majestät einen wahren Meistercoup ausführen, wenn es Allerhöchstderselben gelänge, den massgebenden Engländern die Hoffnung auf ein zukünftiges festes Verhältnis mit uns zu lassen, ohne Allerhöchst sich schon jetzt verfrüht zu binden noch festzulegen. Die von den Engländern angedrohte Verständigung mit dem Zweibund ist ein nur zu unserer Einschüchterung erfundenes Schreckgespenst, womit die Engländer schon seit Jahren operieren. Die Opfer, welche eine solche Verständigung England auferlegen würde, sind so extravagant, dass die englische Regierung selbst in der Zeit, wo die Gereiztheit zwischen uns und England am grössten war, sich nicht dazu entschlossen hat. Diese Verständigung, welche England durch die gebrachten Opfer schwächen, den Zweibund aber für weiteres Vorgehen gegen England stärken und ermutigen würde, könnte den schliesslichen Kampf Englands um sein Dasein nur um eine kurze Spanne Zeit hinausschieben, wäre also für England nicht nur zwecklos, sondern direkt schädlich. Das den Engländern freundlich aber deutlich unter die Nase zu reiben, werden Euere Majestät gewiss verstehen." [1])

Holstein, who had obviously either drafted or read Von Bülow's cable to the Kaiser, sent another telegram himself to Count Metternich, who was in attendance on the Emperor at Osborne, in even more telling terms:

"Ich bin gegen den jetzigen Freundschaftssturm von Chamberlain und Genossen deshalb besonders misstrauisch, weil die angedrohte Verständigung mit Russland und Frankreich so vollständiger Schwindel ist.
Englisches Zurückweichen würde den Kampf um die Existenz ein Paar Jahre hinausschieben, ihn dann aber um so sicherer machen, weil die Gegner gestärkt, die Engländer an Macht und Prestige geschwächt wären. Wir können warten, die Zeit läuft für uns. Ein vernünftiges Abkommen mit England, d.h. ein solches, wo der beinahe sicheren Kriegsgefahr, welcher wir uns dabei aussetzen, gebührende Rechnung getragen wird, lässt sich meines Erachtens erst dann erreichen, wenn das Gefühl der Zwangslage in England allgemeiner als heute geworden ist." [2])

This battle of opinions was abruptly interrupted for about a week, when on January 22nd, 1901 the flickering flame of Queen Victoria's life was slowly extinguished. Mr. Balfour fulfilled a painful duty by sending the following telegram to his colleague, the Duke of Devonshire:

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[1]) G. P. XVII no. 4983. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 4984.

"To Lord President of the Council – Privy Council Office
The Queen died peacefully at 6.30 Arthur Balfour" [1])

Next day the Duke presided over a meeting of the Privy Council, when the new King took the oath of sovereignty and chose the name of Edward VII.

Whilst all the difficult and intricate arrangements for the Royal funeral, which took place on February 4th, were being made, there was still time for political conversations; the Kaiser had long and "academic" talks with the King and the Foreign Secretary, on which Eckardstein reported:

> "....Der Kaiser erzählte mir, dass er lange politische Gespräche mit dem Könige gehabt habe, und dass sie beide ganz accord seien. Der König besitze jetzt eine starke Abneigung sowohl gegen Russland als auch gegen Frankreich und habe sich ihm gegenüber in den schärfsten Worten entsprechend geäussert. Als er den König auf die Symptome einer amerikanisch-russische Annäherung aufmerksam gemacht habe, sei derselbe sehr ernst geworden und habe eine derartige Koalition als eine grosse Gefahr für das gesamte Europa bezeichnet. Bei der Ankunft Lord Lansdownes in Osborn habe der König ihm gesagt, dass derselbe trotz seiner französischen Mutter durchaus keine Sympathien für Frankreich besässe, dass dies jedoch bei Lord Salisbury im höchsten Grade der Fall sei. In seiner Unterredung mit Lord Lansdowne habe er, der Kaiser, ebenso wie mit dem Könige, politische Fragen nur vom akademischen Standpunkt aus erörtert. Lord Lansdowne habe ihm zwar zuerst von dem alten Satz der balance of power unter den europäischen Mächten, welche in der Hand von England läge, gesprochen. Darauf habe er ihm geantwortet, dass die balance of power jetzt auf den 22 deutschen Armeekorps beruhe, dass England nicht mehr in der Lage sei, sich wie in früheren Zeiten vom übrigen Europa fernzuhalten, sondern mit dem Kontinent zusammengehen müsse. Sowohl in dieser Frage als auch in bezug auf die dem gesamten Europa seitens einer russisch-amerikanischen Entente drohende Gefahr habe ihm Lord Lansdowne schliesslich, wenn auch mit einigem Zögern, zugestimmt. Deutschland selbst habe er, der Kaiser, im allgemeinen gar nicht erwähnt, sondern immer nur vom Kontinent gesprochen." [2])

On the day after the funeral, the King entertained his uncle at an official luncheon at Marlborough House, where the Kaiser replied to King Edward's toast:

> "I believe that the two Teutonic nations will bit by bit learn to know each other better and that they will stand together to help to keep the peace of the world. We ought to form an Anglo-German alliance, you to keep the seas, while we would be responsible for the land; with such an alliance not a mouse in Europe could stir without permission and the nations would, in time, come to see the necessity of reducing their armaments." [3])

That same afternoon the Emperor left London for Germany, leaving behind an atmosphere of expectancy and hope for a better understanding between the two nations.

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[1]) Devonshire Papers 1901; no. 2881. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 4986. [3]) Lee II p. 11.

Unfortunately, Von Holstein who had already decided what stand he would take up whilst the Emperor was still in England, now dug himself in, waiting for the British Cabinet to come round and make their offer.

"Die Frage eines deutsch-englischen Bündnisses ist zwischen Ihnen [Hatzfeldt] und mir [Holstein] und auch hier oft genug erörtert worden. Ein solches Bündnis mit dem Grundgedanken, dass jeder Kontrahent einen einzelnen Angreifer allein bekämpft, und dass der casus foederis erst eintritt, wenn der Gegner mehrere sind, hat für den denkenden Politiker manches Anziehende, würde aber leider in direktem Widerspruch mit der jetzigen deutschen Volksstimmung sein. Die systematische Hetzerei gegen England, welche anfing, als Fürst Bismarck zurückgetreten war, ist in ihrer Wirksamkeit wesentlich dadurch unterstützt werden, dass die unausstehliche Persönlichkeit von Lord Salisbury, dessen Abneigung gegen den Deutschen Kaiser und Vorliebe für Frankreich der englischen Politik des letzten Jahrzehnts den Stempel aufgedrückt hat. Diese Politik zeigte sich abwechselnd brutal und unzuverlässig. Brutal war sie in Samoa und bei Dampferfrage.

Um so weiter erstreckt sich aber die Wirkung der undurchsichtigen englischen Politik in den portugiesischen Angelegenheiten. Sie hat zuwege gebracht, dass heute in den breiten Massen des deutsches Volks und zwar keineswegs nur in den unteren Schichten das Axiom gilt, die deutsche Regierung habe sich von England mit den südafrikanischen Abkommen ebenso übers Ohr hauen lassen, wie seinerzeit mit dem Sansibarvertrage. Die deutsche Regierung habe, verlockt durch die im südafrikanischen Abkommen eröffneten Aussichten, die Buren ihrem Schicksal überlassen; England aber zeige jetzt durch die Betonung seiner Intimität mit Portugal, dass es gar nicht daran denke, eine Beeinträchtigung des portugiesischen Besitzstandes in Afrika zu sanktionieren. Der Reichskanzler, welcher von diesen Angriffen in erster Linie zu leiden hat, wird nicht geneigt sein, diese in verstärktem Masse gegen den Kaiser entfesseln zu lassen, was unzweifelhaft der Fall sein würde, wenn in gegenwärtigem Zeitpunkt ein deutsch-englisches Bündnis zustande käme. Es würde dann heissen, England nimmt die Vorteile mit, entlastet sich auf uns, wird sich aber seinen Verpflichtungen entziehen wie gewöhnlich. Diese Überzeugung, welche Sie heute als Gemeingut von 99/100 des deutschen Volkes ansehen können, würde nicht durch Zusicherungen, sondern nur durch Tatsachen umzustimmen sein, wenn nämlich der deutsch-englische Defensivvertrag, abgesehen von einer nach Möglichkeit gesicherten Gegenseitigkeit, unmittelbare, direkte Vorteile für Deutschland, keine blossen Versprechungen, mit sich brächte, sei es in Form von Gewähren oder von Zulassen....

Von den Ansichten des Reichskanzlers weiss ich, dass er einerseits für die Gewährung einer günstigen Neutralität ist, dass er aber andrerseits glaubt, Reichstag und Volk würden sich bei gegenwärtiger Stimmung und nach allem, was vorhergegangen ist (namentlich englisch-portugiesisches Freundschaftsbachanal), nur durch positive Tatsachen davon überzeugen lassen, dass ein deutsch-englischer Vertrag nicht ausschliesslich englischen Zwecken diene und von Anfang bis zu Ende nur für England nützlich sei." [1])

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[1]) Holstein an Hatzfeldt, 11. Februar 1901; G. P. XVII no. 4989.

The only thing that can be said for Holstein's policy is that it was consistent, and all his instructions to Hatzfeldt and Eckardstein were variations on the same theme.

A month later he warned Eckardstein:

> "But, meantime, you must on no account raise this idea [Anglo-German defensive alliance]. It must come from them and of this there is no prospect so long as Lord Salisbury is involved. My personal view is that Germany could more easily accede to such a general defensive agreement than to a special agreement concerning, say, Morocco, in which the danger would be the same and the advantage less. But, I repeat, you must not raise this now, if only because I don't trust Lord Salisbury not to make use of a German overture in Petersburg.
> If only we could pacify our public opinion with one single real material advantage that we have got from association with Great Britain!" [1])

Notwithstanding these detailed and very clear instructions, Eckardstein went his own way and used the Japanese request to Germany and England for help against Russia [see Chapter V] as an opportunity for furthering his own ideas on the Anglo-German alliance. On March 16th, when a guest at a dinner-party given by Lord Lansdowne, he told his host:

> "If there were a defensive alliance between Great Britain and Germany, covering all possibilities, it would be obvious that Germany could at once agree to localise a war between Russia and Japan by influencing France." [2])

Thanks to his conversations at Chatsworth in January, he knew that his words were spoken to sympathetic ears, and two days later, Chamberlain, although "not particularly anxious to burn his fingers a second time over the same business", told him once again that he still had the same ideas about Germany as in 1899. [3])

Holstein may have guessed something of Eckardstein's enthusiasm, but his warning, written on March 17th, "I forbid you expressly, my dear friend, even to breathe a word about alliance. The proper moment, if it ever comes, is certainly not now", came too late. [4])

Although Eckardstein confesses that he deliberately misled Von Holstein, he implies that in doing so he got negotiations started, and, in fact on March 18th the first official discussions on the Anglo-German alliance were held between Lord Lansdowne and Eckardstein.

In the official reports [5]) there is, of course, an inconsistency, Lansdowne rightly claims Eckardstein to have taken the initiative in suggesting an Anglo-German alliance, whereas Eckardstein told the Wilhelmstrasse that Lansdowne had raised the question. There is, however, a private letter from Lord Lansdowne to Sir Frank Lascelles in Berlin, in which the Foreign Secretary clearly points out the main difficulty:

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[1]) Eckardstein p. 203, 204. [2]) Eckardstein p. 208. [3]) Eckardstein p. 205. [4]) Eckardstein p. 207. [5]) G. P. XVII no. 4994; Br. Doc. II no. 77.

"Eckardstein who has several times suggested to me (of course "without authority") that Germany and England might egg on Japan and then combine to prevent a third power from intervening, now drops this idea altogether and is talking to me and others about a defensive alliance, limited in duration to, say, five years, between Germany and England against Russia and France, the idea being that neither we nor Germany should be bound to help one another so long as we or they were at war with only one of the other two Powers, but that if a second joined in the attack, a second should join in the defence too. I doubt whether much will come of this and there are obvious difficulties in giving effect to such an arrangement, even if it were accepted in principle. It would oblige us to adopt in all our foreign relations a policy which would no longer be British but Anglo-German." [1])

Up till now, all proposals and conversations had centred round a straightforward Anglo-German alliance, but at this stage of the negotiations German diplomacy took a sharp turn when it was proposed that Great Britain should join the Triple Alliance, instead of concluding the originally planned Anglo-German Alliance. This idea originated from the German diplomat Klehmet, who, in a written memorandum, had pointed out to Von Bülow:

"Man sieht ziemlich deutlich, dass wir uns in Asien auf manche Feindseligkeiten von Russlands Seite gefasst machen müssen, und dass wir dort mehr auf England angewiesen sind. Da es nicht möglich ist mit einem gewaltsamen Ruck nach Osten mit Russland sofort wieder zusammenzukommen, bleibt zurzeit nur die Annäherung an England als einziger Ausweg übrig, um mindestens für den Augenblick eine englisch-russische Verständigung zu hintertreiben. Darum müsste die Annäherung an England möglichst schnell sich vollziehen und folglich möglichst einfach gehalten und auf ein Minimum beschränkt werden.
Hierzu scheint der Defensivvertrag der geeignetste Weg- und Ausgangspunkt.... Die Form in der wir uns.... England nähern würden, ist doch eigentlich schon die denkbar abgeschwächteste, indem wir England, das mit uns abschliessen will, stattdessen an Österreich verweisen, während es doch eigentlich unsere Sache wäre, uns mit dem uns verbündeten Donaustaate abzufinden." [2])

Von Bülow accepted the suggestion and instructed Hatzfeldt accordingly.

"Der Gedanke Lord Lansdownes von einem auf längere Dauer berechneten Defensivarrangement zwischen England und Deutschland würde hier einer durchaus sympathischen Aufnahme begegnen. Dem Wesen einer Defensivabmachung entsprechend würde es sich dabei allerdings nicht um Begründung einer Erwerbsgesellschaft zur Erlangung von neuen Vorteilen, sondern lediglich um Erhaltung und Sicherung des Besitzstandes der Kontrahenten handeln können. Auch mit dieser Massnahme aber würde immer ein solches Arrangement die politische Stellung unserer Dreibundsverbündeten einschneidend berühren, da dieselben in einen etwa daraus in der Folge für uns entstehenden Konflikt mit einer dritten Macht gemäss ihrer Bündnispflicht hineingezogen werden würden. Wir könnten

[1]) Newton p. 199. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 4995.

daher auf das Defensivarrangement erst eingehen, nachdem die Zustimmung unserer Verbündeten durch vorherige Befragung festgestellt ist. Da wir somit auf eine bezügliche englische Anregung nicht sofort eine definitive Antwort zu geben imstande wären, würde es sich empfehlen, wenn England sich damit zunächst an das Wiener Kabinett wendete." [1])

When, on March 22nd, Count Hatzfeldt had another talk with Lord Lansdowne, he did not mention his Government's request that the negotiations should now be carried on with Vienna, because he did not consider the moment to be opportune. He did, however, say that it would be more acceptable for his Government if England would join the Triple Alliance, than if she would only conclude a defensive agreement with the German Empire. [2])

Earlier in this interview Lansdowne had told him that he had discussed the whole question of the defensive alliance with Germany with Lord Salisbury and Balfour, and that during this discussion:

> "Der Premier-minister [ihm] gesagt [habe]. . . ., dass er sich im Prinzip mit einem streng definierten Defensivbündnis einverstanden erkläre, dass jedoch einerseits alle nur möglichen Eventualitäten genau erwogen und anderseits Mittel und Wege gefunden werden müssten, um die Schwierigkeiten, welche durch den Charakter der parlamentarischen Einrichtungen Englands gegenüber einem auf längere Zeit berechneten bindenden Abkommen beständen, zu beseitigen." [3])

At this hopeful stage the negotiations were again interrupted for about two months when Lord Salisbury fell ill and had to go and recuperate on the French Riviera. Officially nothing could be done during that time, but Eckardstein reported on April 18th:

> "As Lord Lansdowne did not raise the question of the accession of England to the Triple Alliance, I did not of course bring it up. But I know from other quarters that the discussions of it will be resumed now that Devonshire and Chamberlain have come back from the Easter holidays." [4])

and Hatzfeldt added two days later:

> "Mein Eindruck. . . . ist, dass die einer allgemeinen Abmachung mit Dreibund geneigten Minister, zu welchen Lord Lansdowne gehört, ihrerseits diese beschleunigen möchten, dass sie aber die baldige Rückkehr Lord Salisburys abwarten wollen, um zunächst eine Entscheidung des Kabinetts in der Frage herbeizuführen." [5])

Lord Lansdowne himself still had his doubts about the whole project and he knew better than anyone else that in this matter the Prime Minister's opinion would be decisive. Whilst the latter was still on the Riviera, Lansdowne confessed to Sir F. Lascelles in Berlin:

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[1]) G. P. XVII no. 4996. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 4997. [3]) G. P. XVII no. 4997.
[4]) Eckardstein p. 219. [5]) G. P. XVII no. 5002.

> "I doubt whether much will come of the project. In principle the idea is good enough. But when each side comes, if it ever does, to formulate its terms, we shall break down; and I know Lord Salisbury regards the scheme with, to say the least, suspicion." [1])

In the middle of May 1901 things got going again, for on May 15th Eckardstein saw Lord Lansdowne, who told him that he had discussed the matter with Lord Salisbury.

> "Bei meiner gestrigen Unterredung kam Lord Lansdowne sofort aus eigenem Antriebe auf die Bündnisfrage zurück. Er bemerkte, dass, wie er mir bereits früher gesagt, er sowie einige seiner Kollegen ein Defensivbündnis mit Deutschland sehr wünschen würden.
> Er habe in dieser Frage mit Lord Salisbury in den letzten Tagen ausführlich konferiert und ihm dabei auch meine Ausführungen über das Verhältnis Deutschlands zu Russland mitgeteilt. Der Premierminister sei zwar jetzt im Prinzip geneigt, auf vertragsmässige Defensivabmachungen bei welchen der casus foederis eintritt, mit uns einzugehen, trage aber noch verschiedene Bedenken in bezug auf die dabei Österreich und Italien gegenüber zu übernehmenden Verpflichtungen. Wenn es sich nur um Deutschland allein handelte, so würde die Fassung eines Defensivarrangements sehr einfach, durch Österreich und Italien werde jedoch die Fassung eines solchen Vertrags kompliziert." [2])

When Von Bülow saw this report he wrote in the margin, "Nur auf dieser Basis ist ein Arrangement denkbar", [3]) and Baron von Richthofen in his official reply underlined once again that

> "....Unsererseits ist bei der Annäherung Englands an den Dreibund Grossbritannien mit allen seinen Kolonien als ein ganzes gedacht und ebenso der Dreibund als ein Ganzes. Die Annäherung würde ausschliesslich einen defensiven Charakter haben, d.h. der Bündnisfall tritt ein, wenn Grossbritannien zur Verteidigung eines Kolonialgebietes oder andrerseits, wenn der Dreibund zur Verteidigung eines der zu ihm gehörigen Gebiete in Krieg gegen zwei oder mehrere Grossmächte verwickelt wird. Die Einwendungen von Lord Salisbury erwecken jedoch den dringenden Verdacht, dass er den casus foederis nur auf den Fall beschränken will, wo Deutschland direkt von zwei Grossmächten mit Krieg überzogen wird, dass dagegen England in der traditionellen Zuschauerrolle bleibt, falls Österreich oder Italien angegriffen ist, und Deutschland, ohne selber noch angegriffen worden zu sein, dem Verbündeten beispringt. Der Dreibund befände sich hierbei lediglich in der Defensive, Lord Salisbury aber würde, da Deutschland nicht direkt angegriffen würde, vielleicht oder sogar wahrscheinlich den Bündnisfall abstreiten. Ein Bündnis, welches diese Hintertür offen lässt, ist für Deutschland schlimmer als gar keins." [4])

On May 23rd Lord Lansdowne went to the German Embassy to see Count Hatzfeldt, who, after a long illness, was not yet able to move about freely, but

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 81. [2]) G. P. XVII no. 5005. [3]) G. P. XVII no. 5006.
[4]) G. P. XVII no. 5007.

who, judging by his masterly and concise report on the ensuing conversation, had lost none of his grip on the situation:

> "Lord Lansdowne stellte durchaus nicht in Abrede, ohne dies jedoch ausdrücklich zuzugeben, dass er beim Premierminister noch manche Schwierigkeit zu überwinden haben würde, suchte aber geltendzumachen, dass derselbe besonders parlamentarische Bedenken und Schwierigkeiten im Auge habe, die wohl auch nicht ausbleiben würden. Ich erwiderte, dass es mir durchaus fernliege, mich in diese Fragen zu mischen oder die englische Regierung darüber aufklären zu wollen, was ihrem Interesse am besten entspreche, ein Bündnis mit dem Dreibund oder die Fortsetzung der Isolierungspolitik oder gar eine Verständigung mit Russland und Frankreich, falls dies nämlich ohne zu grosse Opfer erreichbar wäre. Aber nach einem so langen Aufenthalt in England dürfte ich mir wohl ein gewisses Urteil über die parlamentarische Situation gestatten, und mein Eindruck sei, dass alle einsichtigen Männer in der mächtigen Regierungsmajorität über die ungeheuren Vorteile keinen Augenblick im Zweifel sein würden, welche aus dem Zusammengehen mit dem Dreibund für englische Interessen hervorgehen müssten (mächtige Hülfe gegen kombinierte Angriffe auf irgendeinen Punkt des englischen Gebiets, voraussichtliche Sicherstellung des europäischen Friedens für weitere zehn oder fünfzehn Jahre und entsprechende ungestörte Entwicklung des englischen Handels in der ganzen Welt). Ein Allianzvertrag, durch welchen der eine Teil sich nur Vorteile sichern könne, ohne zugunsten des anderen Teils das geringste Risiko zu übernehemen, sei aber bis jetzt überhaupt noch nicht erfunden worden. Gegen diese Auffassung erhob der Minister seinerseits keinen Widerspruch." [1])

Meanwhile Eckardstein had gathered his own information and in a private letter of May 23rd he paints a hopeful picture of the situation.

> "These and other erroneous ideas having been cleared up, the Alliance is again moving. Lansdowne, Devonshire and Chamberlain are fully determined to carry through their idea. They quite recognise that it is only possible if the Alliance is based on complete reciprocity. Salisbury, who no longer has the same animus against us, still raises small objections now and then, as is his way, but is, as I learn from Devonshire and Lansdowne, quite satisfied that the policy of "Splendid Isolation" is over and that something must be done. Anyway, these Ministers hold so fast to their point of view, that Salisbury cannot help himself. Lansdowne seems to manage him very cleverly. In order to carry important points he gives way to him on minor matters, which accounts for some apparent contradictions in his attitude. Lord Lansdowne is by no means a weak and insignificant personality. He knows quite well what he wants, though he manoeuvres at times in order to get it." [2])

As the Germans had made it quite clear what they wanted, it was now up to the British Cabinet to decide whether or not they were willing to accept the German proposals.

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[1]) G. P. XVII no. 5010. [2]) Eckardstein p. 219, 220.

Lord Lansdowne paved the way by drafting a memorandum for Lord Salisbury, outlining the main problems. Mr. T. H. Sanderson, the Permanent Under-Secretary at the Foreign Office went so far as to make a draft for the Anglo-German convention, and in his covering note he stated:

> "....There must be a certain amount of qualifying words to prevent either Party from being dragged into a quarrel of which it disapproves, and in which it would not have the necessary amount of popular support. These qualifications are likely to be the cause of serious disputes, and the Germans will be much less scrupulous in making use of them to throw us over than we can be in leaving them in the lurch. Our public opinion would not allow it – theirs would." [1])

Memorandum by the Marquess of Lansdowne:

"May 24th 1901

"At the time when the Prime Minister was about to leave England, and during his absence, Baron Eckardstein several times recurred to the subject of an Anglo-German Alliance or understanding, mentioned in the Very Secret paper which I submitted to some of my colleagues on the 20th March.

I told him that until Lord Salisbury's return it was impossible that the matter could be taken into consideration.

On the occasion of one of these interviews, Baron Eckardstein mentioned incidentally that Austria and Italy would have to be included in such an arrangement as he had proposed.

I said that this seemed to me a most important point. We had, I reminded him, until then, been discussing the possibility of a purely defensive alliance between England and Germany, against any other two Powers, and I had said to him that in my view the objection to such an arrangement was that this country might find itself dragged into a quarrel in which we had no concern, and which might have been in fact provoked by our ally, whose external policy might be quite beyond our control, although that ally was ostensibly defending itself from attack. These objections could, I thought, be urged with infinitely greater force if we were asked to enter into similar obligations to Austria and Italy as well as to Germany. On the 23rd instant I had an interview with Count Hatzfeldt, whom (until the 20th instant) I had not seen for a long time, and who had expressed a desire to discuss this question with me. Baron Eckardstein had evidently repeated to him what I had said as to the extension of the Agreement to Austria and Italy. As to this, Count Hatzfeldt said that, in his opinion, the foreign policy of Germany must always be based upon the closest intimacy with Austria. To his mind the idea of throwing Austria over was 'néfaste'. What it really came to was this. There would be two 'unities' – one consisting of Great Britain and her numerous Colonies – the other of the members of the Triple Alliance, and the Agreement, if it was to be made at all, must be between the two groups.

Was I then, I said, to understand that the proposal was simply that we should join the Triple Alliance? Count Hatzfeldt answered in the affirm-

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 85.

ative. We ought, he thought, to examine the bases of that alliance, and consider how far they suited our purposes.
I said that I was under the impression that the actual details of that alliance had not been communicated to us, and I was not sure that we were sufficiently informed as to its terms.
Count Hatzfeldt replied that there was nothing very mysterious about the Agreement in question. He had not got it by him, but it was perfectly natural that we should desire to consider the actual text. During the conversation which followed, I dwelt upon the great difficulty of distinguishing clearly between the cases in which one of the allies might be attacked and those in which it might be defending itself. I also said that it seemed to me to follow from any such arrangements that each of the allies would have a right to claim a voice in guiding and controlling the external policy of the others.
I was afraid that in this country there would be a great reluctance to allow our liberty of action in regard to questions of foreign policy to be restricted in this manner.
Count Hatzfeldt did not deny that these inconveniences might result. We could not, however, expect to reap all the advantages of such an arrangement as he had proposed, without some corresponding disadvantages. Were we, he asked, prepared to continue our present 'isolement'?
We must be alive to the dangers which it invoked. If we recognised them, it was for our interest to join one of the two great groups into which the European Powers were divided. We might try Russia if we liked, 'mais cela vous coûtera cher'. As for Germany, if nothing should come of these overtures, she might find herself obliged to look elsewhere for alliances. He begged that I would not consider that when he said this he was using the language of menace, but the friction which existed between Germany and Russia was most inconvenient to his country, and it was a matter of notoriety that Russia could be easily 'squared'.
I promised Count Hatzfeldt that now that the Prime Minister had returned I would again lay the matter before him." [1])

There was nothing more that those on the British side who had for so long favoured the Anglo-German alliance could do now, but wait for the decision of their Prime-Minister. When the decisive document was put before them, they could at least claim that it was their stand which had forced Lord Salisbury, the man who had guided British foreign policy for a quarter of a century, into wording the most poignant defence of his isolation policy ever put on paper. "There is no more impressive state paper in our recent diplomatic history than this brief and massive plea for keeping the supreme decisions of peace and war in our own hands," as Gooch claims correctly. [2])

Memorandum by the Marquess of Salisbury:

"May 29th 1901

"This is a proposal for including England within the bounds of the Triple Alliance. I understand its practical effect to be:

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1) Br. Doc. II no. 82. 2) Gooch: Before the War. I p. 12.

1. If England were attacked by two Powers, – say France and Russia – Germany, Austria, and Italy would come to her assistance.
2. Conversely, if either Austria, Germany, or Italy were attacked by France and Russia, or, if Italy were attacked by France and Spain, England must come to the rescue.

Even assuming that the Powers concerned were all despotic, and could promise anything they pleased, with a full confidence that they would be able to perform the promise, I think it is open to much question whether the bargain would be for our advantage. The liability of having to defend the German and Austrian frontiers against Russia is heavier than that of *having to defend the British Isles against France*. Even, therefore, in its most naked aspect the bargain would be a bad one for this country. Count Hatzfeldt speaks of our '*isolation*' as constituting a serious danger for us. *Have we ever felt that danger practically*? If we had succumbed in the revolutionary war, our fall would not have been due to our isolation. We had many allies, but they would not have saved us if the French Emperor had been able to command the Channel. Except during his reign we have never even been in danger; and, therefore, it is impossible for us to judge whether the 'isolation' under which we are supposed to suffer, does or does not contain in it any elements of peril. It would hardly be wise to incur novel and most onerous obligations, in order to guard against *a danger in whose existence we have no historical reason for believing*.

But though the proposed arrangement, even from this point of view, does not seem to me admissible, these are not by any means the weightiest objections that can be urged against it. The fatal circumstance is that *neither we nor the Germans are competent to make the suggested promises*. The British Government cannot undertake to declare war, for any purpose, unless it is a purpose of which the electors of this country would approve. If the Government promised to declare war for an object which did not commend itself to public opinion, the promise would be repudiated, and the Government would be turned out. I do not see how, in common honesty, we could invite other nations to rely upon our aids in a struggle, which must be formidable and probably supreme, when we have no means whatever of knowing what may be the humour of our people in circumstances which cannot be foreseen. We might, to some extent, divest ourselves of the full responsibility of such a step, *by laying our Agreement with the Triple Alliance before Parliament* as soon as it is concluded. But there are very grave objections to such a course, and I do not understand it to be recommended by the German Ambassador. The impropriety of attempting to determine by a secret contract the future conduct of a Representative Assembly upon an issue of peace or war would apply to German policy as much as to English, only that the German Parliament would probably pay more deference to the opinion of their Executive than would be done by the English Parliament. But a *promise of defensive alliance with England would excite bitter murmers in every rank of German society* – if we may trust the indications of German sentiment, which we have had an opportunity of witnessing during the last two years. It would not be safe to stake any important national interest upon the fidelity with which, in case of national exigency, either country could be trusted to fulfil the obligations of the Alliance, if the Agreement had been concluded without the assent of its Parliament.

Several times during the last sixteen years Count Hatzfeldt has tried to elicit from me, in conversation, some opinion as to the probable conduct of England, if Germany or Italy were involved in war with France. I have always replied that no English Minister could venture on such a forecast. The course of the English Government in such a crisis must depend on the view taken by public opinion in this country, and public opinion would be largely, if not exclusively, governed by the nature of the *casus belli*." [1])

The disapproval of the Prime Minister was a serious blow to the Anglo-German alliance, but an even more decisive one had been struck by the Germans themselves in their efforts to substitute Great Britain's accession to the Triple Alliance for the originally proposed agreement. This move had made a very bad impression, as it was looked upon by Chamberlain and his followers as another German effort to sidestep a real solution of the problem, neither had they forgotten their experiences with Von Bülow in 1898 and 1899.

Eckardstein tells us about a letter he received from Alfred Rothschild, after Von Bülow had once again tried to explain to the British Ambassador in Berlin what had been the reasons for the course which German diplomacy had taken.

> "Your negotiations in March and April were "tackeles" (Yiddish for business), but what is going on now is only "schabheshmus" (Yiddish for blethers). Nobody here in England has any more use for the fine empty phrases of Bülow.
> Frank Lascelles laughs at the clumsiness with which Berlin is handling the business.
> Moreover your Government seems no longer to know what it wants.... Joe, who dined with me, is quite disheartened. He will have nothing more to do with the people in Berlin. If they are so short-sighted, says he, as not to be able to see that the whole new world system depends on it, then there is nothing more to be done for them." [2])

From this loss of belief in Germany's genuine desire to work wholeheartedly for a positive and realistic improvement of Anglo-German relations, the negotiations never recovered, and the end, although postponed for another couple of months, was clearly in sight.

On the death of the Empress Frederick of Germany, who was the Kaiser's mother and King Edward's eldest sister, the King and Queen Alexandra travelled to Germany to attend the funeral at Potsdam on August 13th. [3]) The King, accompanied by Sir F. Lascelles, availed himself of this opportunity to visit the Emperor at Wilhelmshöhe and on August 23rd, the two monarchs made another attempt to remove the misunderstandings between their two countries. The account of this conversation, however, given by the Emperor himself, makes it clear that he completely failed in his task. Denouncing British policy regarding the Japanese request of February 1901, for Anglo-German

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 86. [2]) Eckardstein p. 221. [3]) Lee II p. 123, 124.

help against Russia, as "treason" and a perfect explanation for the continued use of the catchword "perfidious Albion" [1]), was certainly not calculated to put his Royal Uncle in a more conciliatory mood.

Three weeks after this incident, Count von Bülow received a report from Eckardstein, which must have given him much food for thought, as it described at great length how completely Germany had lost her chance of extracting from the British Cabinet concessions which he and Holstein had always hoped for, as the price of an alliance with Germany.

> "Als ich in der vergangenen Woche bei dem Kolonial-Minister Mr. Chamberlain auf seinem Landsitz bei Birmingham als sein Gast weilte, nahm derselbe eines Abends Gelegenheit, mir gegenüber seinem Groll gegen Deutschland freien Lauf zu lassen. Ich hatte Mr. Chamberlain seit längerer Zeit immer nur flüchtig gesehen und gesprochen und dabei wohl herausgemerkt, dass derselbe von seiner früheren deutschfreundlichen Tendenz abgekommen sei, im übrigen aber geglaubt, dass seine Verstimmung gegen uns nur vorübergehender Natur, und unter Umständen unschwer zu beseitigen sein würde.
> Die Äusserungen sowie die Vehemenz, mit welcher der Minister dieselben mir gegenüber von sich gab, lassen jedoch darauf schliessen, dass seine Missstimmung gegen Deutschland viel tiefere Wurzeln gefasst hat und einen weit gefährlicheren Charakter trägt, als anzunehmen gerechtfertigt erscheinen dürfte.
> Mr. Chamberlain kam zunächst auf die Haltung der öffentlichen Meinung und Presse Deutschlands während des Burenkrieges zu sprechen und bemerkte, dass es lange Zeit gedauert habe, ehe er sowohl als seine Kollegen im Kabinett sich darüber klar geworden seien, was diese ungebändigten Ausbrüche des Hasses gegen England tatsächlich bedeuteten. Im deutschen Volke habe sich augenscheinlich der Gedanke festgesetzt, dass es Deutschland im Laufe der Jahre mit Leichtigkeit gelingen könne, England und sein Kolonialreich zu Fall zu bringen und dessen gesamte Erbschaft anzutreten. Er selbst sei zwar davon überzeugt, dass derartig phantastische Ideen undurchführbar seien und jeder Versuch, dieselben in Taten umzusetzen, zunächst verhängnisvolle Konsequenzen für Deutschland haben würde. Trotzdem müsse die englische Politik mit dem Factum eines anscheinend unüberwindbaren Hasses gegen England seitens der deutschen Nation in Zukunft rechnen. Niemals habe es in England einen Minister gegeben, welcher mehr als er selbst von dem Nutzen, den ein Zusammengehen Englands mit Deutschland in allen grossen politischen Weltfragen für beide Teile haben würde, überzeugt gewesen. Hieraus habe er weder innerhalb des Kabinetts noch öffentlich jemals ein Hehl gemacht, vielmehr durch alle ihm zu Gebote stehenden Mittel versucht, die öffentliche Meinung Englands für diesen Gedanken zu gewinnen. Jetzt sehe er aber ein, dass er sich getäuscht habe, und sei er infolgedessen von seiner früheren Tendenz vollständig abgekommen....
> Er sei sich vollständig klar darüber, dass ein deutsch-englischer Konflikt auf die Dauer für England ebenso wie für Deutschland nachteilige Konsequenzen haben würde. Im übrigen beruhe jedoch der vielfach auf dem

[1]) G. P. XVII no. 5023.

Kontinent und speziell in Deutschland verbreitete Glaube an die Isolierung Englands auf einer Legende. Ebenso wie England im Jahre 1896 mit Bestimmtheit auf Frankreich rechnen konnte, so werde es auch künftighin stets in der Lage sein, einen, wenn nicht mehrere Bundesgenossen selbst im letzten Moment zu finden....
Aus der Unterredung habe ich zwar den bestimmten Eindruck gewonnen, dass es nicht ausgeschlossen erscheint, den Kolonialminister von seiner gegenwärtig für uns so bedrohlichen Stimmung abzubringen.
Der Charakter Mr. Chamberlains ist aber ein derart schwieriger, dass es nur durch *vorsichtige* Bemühungen unsererseits und nur *allmählich* gelingen kann, denselben wieder zu unseren Gunsten umzustimmen." [1])

Knowing Chamberlain's temperament and remembering that the German newspapers were constantly criticizing the measures taken by Lord Kitchener to meet the guerilla-warfare of the Boers in South-Africa, it is not surprising to find the following outburst in a speech made by the Colonial Secretary at Edinburgh:

"There is no subject which has given us greater anxiety, more anxious consideration – I think that the time has come – is coming – when measures of greater severity may be necessary and if that time comes we can find precedents for anything we may do in the actions of those nations, who now criticize our "barbarity" and "cruelty", but whose examples in Poland, in the Caucasus, in Algeria, in Tonking, in Bosnia, in the Franco – German war, – whose examples we have never approached." [2])

The ink with which the reports of this speech were printed had scarcely had time to dry before an outcry was heard from the combined German press against this attack on the honour of the Imperial Army. Count Metternich was instructed to see Lord Lansdowne and:

"nachdrücklich auf die überaus taktlose und ungeschickte Rede des Mr. Chamberlain zu verweisen, welche die anti-englische Stimmung in Deutschland aufs neue gereizt und die Wirksamkeit der ernsten, für gute deutsch-englische Beziehungen eintretenden Blätter sehr erschwert hat." [3])

This was done on November 26th, but neither verbal explanations, nor the written despatch from Lord Lansdowne to Baron von Richthofen, pointing out that "Mr. Chamberlain's statement, moreover, had no special reference to the German Army, the Franco-German war being only of a series of campaigns referred to by Mr. Chamberlain as cases in point" [4]) were any real help in view of German feelings on the subject. One must, therefore, agree with the statement that this speech "dealt the death-blow to the Anglo-German negotiations." [5])

In spite of all the indignation and turmoil, Lord Lansdowne made another, and this time final, attempt to convince the Prime-Minister that, if a formal Anglo-German Alliance could not be brought about, it might still be worth

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[1]) G. P. XVII no. 5094. [2]) Times October 26th 1901. [3]) G. P. XVII no. 5073.
[4]) G. P. XVII no. 5075. [5]) Newton p. 206.

while either to attempt making arrangements on a smaller scale, or to draw up a "declaration of common policy" with Germany. [1]) Lord Salisbury did not like this idea either, as "at present it seems to me full of risks and to carry with it no compensating advantage". [2])

On December 19th 1901 the official diplomatic burial of the hopes for an Anglo-German alliance took place at the Foreign Office in London. In a long and trying conversation with the new German Ambassador, Count Metternich, the Foreign Secretary reviewed the course of the discussions about the alliance throughout the spring and summer of that year. He pointed out that "while, therefore, we [British Government] certainly did not regard the German proposal with an unfriendly or indifferent eye, I [Lansdowne] did not think that for the moment we could afford to take it up."[3]) When Lord Lansdowne asked whether it would not be possible for the two Governements to work more closely together "in particular questions" or "in particular parts of the world in which they were alike interested", the German Ambassador "unhesitatingly replied that no such minor proposal was likely to find favour with the German Government. It was a case of 'the whole or none'." [4])

Although from a formal diplomatic point of view, the story of the failure of the alliance ends here, there is another ending which showed even more clearly and more publicly that the third attempt also had failed.

After a most characteristic and revealing New Year's letter [5]) from the Kaiser to King Edward, which concluded more or less with a threat, there followed on January 6th 1902, another letter containing the following remarks:

> "By dint of soothing and calming the more turbulent sons of my Fatherland and their Press I had at last with great efforts managed to get the papers quiet here. You may well imagine with what dismay and very deep regret I read the last speech of the most ill-advised Colonial Secretary. It is a conglomeration of over-bearing, bluff and secret insult to the other nations at large, which will do a great deal of harm, provoking sharp repartees and creating unnecessary uneasiness all over the world. It was a most unlucky thing to do and if he does not stop these lucubrations, which he certainly likes to spring on mankind in general, one fine day he will wake up and see his country in the greatest of muddles ever seen." [6])

On top of this, and notwithstanding Count Metternich's warning to Von Bülow not to antogonise the Colonial Secretary and further [7]) by answering the Edinburgh speech, the German Chancellor, amidst applause from all sides of the Reichstag, said on January 8th:

> "England and Germany have always maintained friendly relations with one another and it is in the interests of both sides that such relations should continue undisturbed. It was inevitable that in a nation like the

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[1]) Br. Doc. II no. 92. [2]) Br. Doc. II no. 93. [3]) Br. Doc. II no. 94. [4]) Br. Doc. II no. 94. [5]) G. P. XVII no. 5029. [6]) Lee II p. 136. [7]) G. P. XVII no. 5075.

> German nation, which is identified with its glorious army, any attempt or any appearance of an attempt to disparage the heroic character and the moral spirit of the German struggle for national unity should excite profound resentment. Happily the German army enjoys too high a reputation to be injured by distorted censure." [1])

As if this were not enough, the Chancellor ended by reminding the Reichstag that in former days, too, attacks had been made on the German Army, to which the best answer was still Frederick the Great's famous reply: "Let the man alone, don't excite yourselves, he is biting on granite." [2])

If there were any doubts that Chamberlain was not yet convinced of the impossibility of coming to terms with Germany, he put an end to those doubts in a speech at Birmingham a few days later:

> "I am well aware that in some quarters this animosity is attributed to another cause. It is said to be due to the indiscreet oratory of the Colonial Secretary. (Laughter).
> Gentlemen, what I have said, I have said. (Loud Cheers). I withdraw nothing. (Great cheers). I qualify nothing. (Renewed cheers). I defend nothing. As I read history no British Minister has ever served his country faithfully and at the same time conveyed popularity abroad. (Cheers). I make allowance, therefore, for foreign criticism. I will not follow an example which has been set to me. I do not want to give lessons to a Foreign Minister (hear, hear, and applause) and I will not accept any at his hands. (Loud cheers). But I am ready to meet that form of criticism which is made at home (laughter and cheers) – which is manufactured here for export by the friends of every country but their own (cheers) and, in reference to these I would ask you gentlemen: How can it be due to a few words in a speech that was delivered only a few weeks ago, that for months and for years – from the very beginning of this war – the foreign press has teemed with abuse of this country. . . ." [3])

The scene and the atmosphere had so completely changed, that a British diplomat, visiting London a few weeks later, noted: "Every one in the [Foreign] Office and out talks as if we had but one enemy in the world and that Germany... The change in Chamberlain's mind is most remarkable." [4])

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[1]) Lee II p. 137. [2]) Lee II p. 137. [3]) Times January 12th 1902. [4]) Letters of C. Spring Rice I p. 350.