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Bethmann Hollweg and Anglo-German relations| A study in diplomacy

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BETTMANN HOLLWEG AND ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS
A Study in Diplomacy

By
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PREFACE

Most schools of historic interpretation agree that Theobald Theodor von Bethmann Hollweg, fifth Chancellor of the German Empire, stood for a short time at the focus of European history; his encouragement of Austria-Hungary early in July 1914 was the most important turning point in the crisis precipitated by the murder at Sarajevo. The history of the progressive involvement of European nations following Germany's support of Austria-Hungary has been related often enough. Quite the opposite is true of Bethmann Hollweg's earlier diplomacy. Very little attention has been given to the foreign policy of the man at the center of that fateful series of events, although for five years preceding it, he had directed a consistent and conciliatory policy for the German Empire. The nature of his choice in the final crisis, the reason for his decision, cannot be fully understood without an examination of the man's foreign policy from his accession to the office of Chancellor in 1909 to the end of 1913. Since it was his main endeavor to bring about a change in Anglo-German relations, it is most fruitful to concentrate a limited study on his direction of German policy toward Great Britain during the period in question.

This study is organized around four specific events or crises in Anglo-German relations: Bethmann Hollweg's first
efforts at a reconciliation with Great Britain, the 1911 Morocco crisis, Lord Haldane's mission to Berlin in 1912, and the Balkan Wars. Each of the four chapters seeks to ascertain the effect of one event or crisis on the diplomatic situation between the two countries. An introduction briefly examines Bethmann Hollweg's background and early career, his personal relationship with the Emperor, the constitutional position of a Chancellor in the German Empire, and the general European situation on his accession to the position of Chancellor.

Nearly all of the material is taken from two primary sources, the series of German Foreign Office documents, *Die grosse Politik der europaeischen Kabinette 1870-1914*, and the published British Foreign Office papers, *British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914*. Work on this study was greatly facilitated by the fact that both series are topically arranged. Volumes XXVIII to XXXV of the 40-volume German publication covered the topics under consideration, though other volumes were used for occasional reference. The profusion of editorial comment in these volumes often led to other pertinent sources, particularly to biographical works. All translations from the German in these and other documents were made directly from the original Volumes VI, VII, and IX of the British documents contains material on the same topics. Volumes VI and VII deal specifically with the Anglo-German tensions, while the two-part
volume IX deals with the origins and conduct of the Balkan Wars. Other volumes of the series were used for occasional reference.

A number of sources contain some primary material on narrower aspects of the topic. Ernst Jaeckh's biographical study, *Kiderlen-Waechter der Staatsmann und Mensch*, reveal details of Bethmann Hollweg's relationship to his Foreign Office. Admiral von Tirpitz's apologetic *Politische Dokumente* give a detailed, if somewhat biased, account of the Navy's persistent opposition to the Chancellor's policy toward Great Britain. Of a number of important biographical and autobiographical sources, the most useful were Bethmann Hollweg's *Reflections on the World War*, Sir Edward Grey's *Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916*, and Erich Eyck's *Das persoenliche Regiment Wilhelms II*. 
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INTRODUCTION

It is fitting to use Bethmann's own words to summarize the diplomatic situation which faced him when he became Chancellor in 1909. The previous Chancellor, Bernhard von Buelow, later gave a very optimistic summary of that situation, describing it as the most favourable since the days of Bismarck. In a conversation with the Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Graf Aerenthal in 1909, Bethmann himself agreed with this summary in general terms. He admitted...

...that he was unfamiliar with the complicated gearwork of foreign policy, that it would cost him much effort to become familiar with this department. His main endeavour would be to obtain goodwill abroad and to reduce as much as possible the many areas of friction in Germany's international relations. In this sphere, Prince Buelow had left him a well-managed heritage, a fact which would make his task significantly easier.

After the war, however, he made a totally different estimate of Beulow's heritage. It is reproduced here at length because it represents a remarkably objective analysis of Germany's diplomatic situation:

In the year 1909, the situation which I am broadly


attempting to describe here was based on the fact that England had firmly taken its stand on the side of France and Russia in pursuit of its traditional policy of opposing whatever Continental Power for the time being was the strongest; and that Germany held fast to its naval programme, had given a definite direction to its Eastern policy, and had, moreover, to guard against a French antagonism that had in no wise been mitigated by its policy in later years. And if Germany saw a formidable aggravation of all the aggressive tendencies of Franco-Russian policy in England's pronounced friendship with this Dual Alliance, England on its side had grown to see a menace in the strengthening of the German fleet and a violation of its ancient rights in our Eastern policy. Words had already passed on both sides. The atmosphere was chilly and clouded with distrust.

Under these conditions the position of Germany was all the more precarious, seeing that the Triple Alliance had lost much of its internal solidarity, even if externally it seemed still to hold good. This was not so, however, as between us and Austria-Hungary, where the closest understanding prevailed....But Italy, after coming to an understanding with the Western Powers over Morocco and Tripoli..., was more and more clearly drawing closer to France....Besides, preoccupations with its interests in the Mediterranean obliged Italy to look to England; to say nothing of the formidable prospect with which it was faced in the case of hostilities with England as its insular position put it quite at the mercy of the English fleet. The attitude of Italy at the Algeciras Conference and during the Bosnian crisis was sufficiently suggestive of the real state of the case. Its flirtations with the Entente had led to dangerous intimacies.

The external situation in the summer of 1909 may then be impartially summed up as follows: England, France and Russia were associated in close coalition.... The grave controversies of earlier times between England and France or England and Russia had been got rid of by agreements from which each party had received material advantages. Italy, whose Mediterranean interests had brought differences between it and the Western Powers but had also brought it into dependence on them, had been steadily drawing closer to their group. The cement that bound the whole structure of the coalition together was the community of interest, of do ut des, and by the conflict of each separate Power with Germany.

This analysis should by no means be dismissed as "wisdom
after the fact," for Bethmann's entire foreign policy was clearly based on it. The Leitmotif of the passage reproduced above is insecurity. This insecurity was characteristic of Bethmann the diplomat, and in the summer of 1914 it determined the nature of his decision.

To understand the foreign policy of the fifth Chancellor of the German Empire, a knowledge of his constitutional position is essential. Theoretically, Germany was a federation of a number of states, which all retained a substantial degree of sovereignty. This fact was reflected in the structure of the Imperial Parliament, which consisted of the Bundesrat, an upper house composed of delegates appointed by the federal states, and the Reichstag, elected by universal manhood suffrage. This lower house had a very limited right to initiate legislation, but derived its considerable power from the right to grant or refuse approval of all laws, including the budget. Thus it had, in theory, the leverage to increase its powers at the expense of the executive, though it displayed very little desire to do so; it seemed curiously devoid of a "will to power."

The state of Prussia had a preponderance in the limited area of Imperial jurisdiction, both through the number of its members in the Bundesrat (three more than required for veto of any constitutional change) and through the fact that the Emperor was also King of Prussia, while his Imperial
Chancellor was simultaneously President of the Prussian Council of Ministers. This Prussian preponderance in the Empire is not surprising, since that state contained roughly two-thirds of the land area and population of Germany. Moreover, Prussia had clearly borne the burden of German unification.

Because of these constitutional peculiarities, the position of the Chancellor was an extremely difficult one. He had to concern himself with parliamentary majorities almost as much as the Prime Minister in Great Britain, because of the Reichstag's powers of financial obstruction. Since he was responsible not to the Reichstag which he manipulated, but to the Emperor, he had to reconcile the Emperor's wishes with Reichstag possibilities. This was never easy, but in the twentieth century, the shift to the left in popular politics rendered it increasingly difficult. The growth of the Social Democratic party indicated well enough that many Germans could no longer be reconciled with the Imperial prerogative on any terms.  

The overlapping of the Prussian and Imperial administrations added to the difficulties. In contrast to Imperial Secretaries of State, the Prussian Ministers had direct

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3 In the Reichstag elections of 1912, the Social Democrats became the strongest single party; they had received approximately one-third of the total vote.
access to, and therefore great influence on the Emperor. Their influence was for the most part a solidly conservative one, in direct contradiction to popular political trends. In a recent study of Bethmann's domestic politics, H. G. Zmarzlik concluded that the position of Chancellor required great mediating talents in view of this basic schism in the Empire's political structure, and that Bethmann possessed such talents to a high degree. In his opinion, Bethmann realized that only a strengthening of the position of Chancellor could salvage the system, and that he achieved such a strengthening at the right time.

In foreign affairs, the Chancellor had the constitutional task of implementing the Emperor's foreign policy. His own acquiescence in that policy was morally required, and to a man of Bethmann's nature such moral considerations were of great consequence. He certainly considered himself to be personally responsible for the foreign policy of Germany. The Imperial constitution made the conduct of a unified foreign policy excessively difficult. The Department of Foreign Affairs, under an Imperial State Secretary, had no immediate access to the Emperor, but was responsible to the Chancellor, whose task it was to defend the department's

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policy. However, numerous other officials with interests in and influences on foreign affairs did have direct access to the Emperor. These included all Prussian Ministers, three top navy executives, three top army executives, in addition to commanding Generals and Fleet Admirals. The policy these persons advocated was seldom that approved by the Foreign Office. While they bickered with each other, the military gentlemen tended to unite against the "mere civilians" of the Foreign Office, who were represented by the one voice of the Chancellor.

In the most extreme condition, this situation permitted the navy to conduct its own foreign policy, complete with publicity organs superior to those of the Foreign Office, and with a network of its own Ambassadors in the persons of Naval Attachés to the Embassies. These Attachés prepared political reports independent of, and often at variance with, those of the Ambassadors. They sent these reports directly to their military superiors who, as noted, had direct access to the Emperor. The German Emperor retained a measure of real sovereignty only in his administration of the armed forces. Under cover of that complete administrative sovereignty was conducted a second German foreign policy over which the Chancellor had virtually no control. This was a constitutional anomaly of great importance for the Chancellor's conduct of foreign policy.
Was Bethmann Hollweg suited by temperament and experience for this position, which the great Bismarck had described as requiring more talent and energy than he himself possessed? We must put out of mind the picture of the Bismarckian Chancellor, for Bethmann possessed an entirely different sort of qualification, which was in itself not unsuited to the position. In 1879, after a distinguished school career, Bethmann entered government service at the age of twenty-three, in the position of District Magistrate. He advanced very rapidly in the Prussian administration, serving from 1899 to 1905 as President of Mark Brandenburg. He attained cabinet rank in 1905 as the Prussian Minister of the Interior. In 1907, he entered the Imperial administration as Secretary of State for the Interior, while retaining a position in the Prussian administration as Vice-Chancellor. That he was a brilliant and conscientious administrator is granted even by his predecessor, von Buelow, who was not inclined to flatter him.

A contemporary German historian describes him typically as a thinker of great power and depth, very dependable, but handicapped by a certain ponderousness, a predilection for brooding, a lack of flair or of ability to inspire.

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6 J. Buehler, Geschichte, VI, pp. 314-16.
Other descriptions corroborate this picture, particularly on the qualities of seriousness and integrity. He was in every respect the opposite of Prince von Buelow, who had earned the nickname "the eel". Significantly, Bethmann had little military background; the noble title was of comparatively recent origin, and his family was traditionally devoted to banking, not soldiering. He was not a Junker, and his rapport with that class and with military officers on the whole remained poor even after the Emperor bestowed upon him the rank of Major General. In a Prussian General's uniform, he still looked the bemused philosopher.

Of necessity, Bethmann's political strength lay in his personal relationship with the Emperor. Unlike Buelow, he could not be his friend and boon companion, because their personalities were in almost every respect antithetical. William II was a man of quick, broad but shallow intellect, a man who cultivated the positiveness and sharpness of the military officer. Not only was the philosophic Bethmann unsuited by temperament for contact with his monarch on a social plane, but he lacked also the military background and bearing which William II prized in his intimates. Bethmann's hold on the Emperor was twofold: his flawless reputation abroad as a man of sincerity and goodwill was of consider-

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able benefit in diplomacy, and did much to offset the Emperor's less enviable reputation. More important, William II found his uncompromising devotion to the monarchy a pleasant change after Chancellor Buelow's failure to defend him from Reichstag criticism. This, the Emperor correctly assumed, would not happen with Bethmann.

While the latter's loyalty found frequent and enthusiastic expression, it was not the loyalty of a sycophant. Bethmann's devotion was not to William II personally, but to the Hohenzollern monarchy, to the principle of royalty. His was the proud, arrogant loyalty which is supposedly found in the best of that ancient nobility to which he did not belong. At times, Bethmann must have been consciously protecting the principle of monarchy from the aberrations of the individual monarch. He sought, by means of intrigue and discreet circumvention, to control the Emperor's sudden interventions in diplomacy, in a manner designed to prevent damage to the image of the Emperor. Throughout his career, the fifth Chancellor treated William II's startling directives as if they were merely theoretical speculations, not designed for immediate implementation. Only in this manner could he achieve a semblance of continuity in his policies.

This is not to say that Bethmann always avoided taking a strong position directly in opposition to the Emperor. In fact, William II, who was somewhat given to thoughtless
sarcasms, occasionally had to retreat in the face of his Chancellor's indignant defence. While it was not Bethmann's policy to use the threat of resignation as a lever, he made it quite clear that any attempt to circumvent his constitutional authority would bring about his departure. Nor did his devotion to the Hohenzollern monarchy prevent him from censuring any political interference on the part of the Royal Family. The Crown Prince, who was on more than one occasion the recipient of an official reprimand from the Chancellor, repaid this attention with an enduring hatred and constant intrigues against Bethmann.

From the Emperor's standpoint, Bethmann was in many respects a most uncomfortable Chancellor; this is one reason why he was not altogether unsuited for the position. Because of the constitutional peculiarities of the German Empire, the Chancellor had to be a person talented in mediation, who could correlate and reconcile the different branches of the government. These talents Bethmann possessed to a high degree. That he was at crucial times lacking in firmness appears tragic in retrospect only. It must be remembered that he saw as his diplomatic task the improvement of Germany's position and security in the world, not the prevention of the World War. He did not have the

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8 The best example of this is cited in connection with the Morocco crisis of 1911.
advantage of hindsight which today makes some of his actions seem tragically weak.

Through the Versailles War Guilt clause and through less than objective analyses of history prompted by the two world wars, Wilhelmine Germany has acquired the reputation of a saber-rattling Junker-dominated upstart among nations. The years between the wars and the years after the last war have not entirely erased this reputation. The fact that this man, who was centrally concerned with Germany's original "aberration," fits so poorly into the picture as a leader of such a country, makes him an object worthy of the closest examination.
CHAPTER I

BETTMANN'S FIRST APPROACH TO GREAT BRITAIN

Bethmann Hollweg's efforts to achieve an understanding with Great Britain were not the first such efforts made on behalf of Germany; nor was his approach a new one. The two most immediate antecedents of this direction in German diplomacy were Buelow's last attempts to achieve a similar understanding, and Alfred von Kiderlen-Waechter's conversations on the subject with British Ambassador Sir Edward Goschen when the former was temporary Foreign Affairs Secretary in the Buelow cabinet. Bethmann benefited directly from Buelow's experience, since, as an important member of the cabinet, he was informed of the major aspects of diplomacy. Kiderlen's experience became available when Bethmann in the autumn of 1909, requested his advice on a proposed approach to Great Britain, and later when, at Bethmann's insistence, Kiderlen again became Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

In the autumn of 1908, following the Emperor's humiliation through the public outcry at his indiscreet Daily Telegraph interview, Buelow again considered the question of Anglo-German rivalry. The diplomatic actions arising out of this must have been very instructive for Bethmann; they clearly revealed the strengths and weaknesses of the Chancellor's constitutional position in Imperial Germany.
Among higher officials in Germany, there existed two well-defined points of view on the subject of the Anglo-German discord and its solution. The diplomatic viewpoint, which Chancellor Buelow adopted at this time, considered the rivalry from the standpoint of Great Britain's key position in the European "alliance" system. The strategic viewpoint, as defended by Admiral von Tirpitz, the Secretary of State for the navy, considered the military problems in the eventuality of an Anglo-German war. The former sought to reduce Anglo-German animosity by reducing British suspicions of Germany's naval expansion. The latter sought to insure peace by constructing a naval power position which would deter British aggression, and would eventually force British cooperation—or even friendship.

Buelow began his efforts with an attempt to reduce the stubborn resistance of the Navy Secretary. He had to convince him of the importance of the naval rivalry in producing the Anglo-German discord, for this was the point at which Buelow saw an opportunity for an easing of the tension. To this end, he forwarded to Tirpitz Ambassador Paul Graf von Wolff-Metternich's reports from England, which placed great emphasis on the naval rivalry.\(^1\) Tirpitz, however,

\(^1\)Johannes Lepsius, A. M. Bartholdy, Friedrich Thimme, eds., *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914* (Berlin: 1951) XXVIII, #10227, pp. 5-6. (Hereafter cited as D. G. P.)
rejected this interpretation, placing emphasis rather on the trade rivalry and on the supposedly deliberate exaggerations of British party politics.² Late in November 1908, Buelow changed his tactics; he asked Tirpitz whether he could give assurances that the German navy could in the near future meet the British navy in battle with a fair chance of success.³ Tirpitz had to admit that this was not to be expected.⁴ However, he hastened to add his interpretation of this fact, which differed radically from that of Metternich. The chances of war with England could be reduced, he said, not by a naval agreement, but by an increase in the German navy. Germany should pass as quickly as possible through a "danger period," during which British animosity would naturally be quite high. At present, Germany was still in the "danger period." He proposed to get her through it by a substantial naval increase.

Despite this negative reply, Buelow acquainted Tirpitz with his plan for an Anglo-German détente.⁵ He proposed a concentration on coastal defences and on submarines, and a twenty-five percent slowdown in the construction of capital

²Ibid., XXVIII, #10227, pp. 5-6.
³Ibid., XXVIII, #10235, pp. 21-23.
⁴Ibid., XXVIII, #10238, pp. 26-28.
⁵Ibid., XXVIII, #10242, pp. 38-40.
ships. This procedure would reduce British animosity, whatever its origin, and would help Germany to pass through this so-called "danger period" without war.\(^6\)

Tirpitz took two weeks to answer; during this time, anxious queries attested to the nervous anticipation of the German Foreign Office. Finally, on January 4, 1909, Tirpitz answered with an eminently reasonable document which, however, made no concession to the Chancellor's viewpoint.\(^7\) The planned slowdown, he maintained, could only be interpreted as a German collapse under British pressure. The effect on the German diplomatic position would be disastrous in the long run. Furthermore, could such a slight postponement really remove British anxiety? Or would it merely weaken Germany's power position without bringing any benefit? The best prospect for peace, he argued, lay in a continuation of the legally-established tempo of naval construction,

\(^6\)E. L. Woodward pounced on the fact that, in this series of exchanges, Buelow used the term "danger period." Woodward interpreted this as a sign that Buelow also had in mind only a temporary understanding for the time period of the German navy's weakness. He implied that, following that time period, the understanding would be superfluous. E. L. Woodward, Great Britain and the German Navy (Oxford, 1934) p. 263. This interpretation is open to grave doubt. It is far more likely that Buelow only adopted the strategic point of view in order to convince the Admiral, who was more amenable to such arguments. Moreover, both Tirpitz's and Buelow's use of the term is not so much indicative of a German utilitarian attitude towards treaties and understandings, as it is of a deep German mistrust of England.

\(^7\)D. G. P., XXVIII, #10247, p. 51.
not in an appeasement of the British, which could only lead
to more extreme demands on their part.

This difference of opinion proved to be permanent.
Buelow again pointed out the broader diplomatic consequences
of the naval rivalry, but Tirpitz insisted that a mutual
reduction which maintained the "two-power standard" was
absolutely unacceptable. Instead, he advocated a ratio
of three-to-four which, in his opinion, provided a measure
of security for both nations. Buelow and Metternich
greeted this proposal with unconcealed impatience. Met­
ternich advised the Admiral not to propose the three-to-four
ratio unless he was ready for a war with Great Britain in
the near future.

Buelow now called a conference, in which the most
important military and civilian officials defended their
views. According to the Chancellor, the purpose of the
meeting was to decide if the three-to-four ratio proposed
by Tirpitz constituted a valid basis for negotiations with

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8 Ibid., XXVIII, #10254, pp. 67-69.
9 Ibid., XXVIII, #10254, 10257, pp. 67-69, 78-79.
10 Ibid., XXVIII, #10257, pp. 78-79, marginal notation
   by Buelow. XXVIII, #10258, p. 80.
11 Ibid., XXVIII, #10306, pp. 168-178. Present were
   Buelow, Bethmann Hollweg, Tirpitz, Moltke, Admiral Mueller,
   Wolff-Metternich, Schoen.
Great Britain. Buelow, Metternich, the Foreign Affairs Secretary Wilhelm von Schoen, Bethmann and Colonel-General Helmuth von Moltke, Chief of the General Staff, defended the position that an understanding with Britain must be achieved, even at the cost of a slowdown of ship construction. They rejected the three-to-four ratio as a basis for negotiations. Tirpitz, though virtually unsupported, clung to his original position on all points. This conference of June 3 illustrated the fact that the Imperial Navy had developed for itself a role which the civilian leaders of the Empire could in no way harmonize with their general policy. Moreover, it appeared that the navy had determined to modify that general policy to fit its conception of the navy's role, rather than accept a modification itself. The record of this meeting has the additional importance that it outlined Bethmann's viewpoint on the subject before he became Chancellor. To make possible a German initiative, a definite proposal was needed, but the ratio proposed by the Admiral was not a suitable one. Perhaps a colonial agreement might provide the answer; but, of course, the present British tariff position made that difficult. Could not the rate of shipbuilding be retarded, or the Navy Law be modified? The navy was obviously the key: what could the navy offer if renewed efforts at a détente were made? Evidently, Bethmann thoroughly understood the situa-
tion, and it appears that his initial lack of familiarity with diplomacy was not as crucial a factor as it is often made out to be. Perhaps in matters of diplomatic form he had much to learn, but, while this would have disqualified him for a consular position, it was scarcely a crucial defect in a Chancellor.\textsuperscript{12}

During this internal power struggle in Germany, negotiations took place in a rather informal manner between Kiderlen-Waechter, then temporary Foreign Affairs Secretary, and the British Ambassador, Sir Edward Goschen. Kiderlen proposed a political understanding based on mutual promises of non-aggression and neutrality in the event of war.\textsuperscript{13}

This approach had only one positive result: it provided a quick and unofficial lesson on British attitudes in the question, which were fixed on limitation or reduction of German naval armament and on preservation of the Entente. It is unlikely that Bethmann knew of this attempt before he became Chancellor, but he secured the benefit of the lesson by involving Kiderlen in his own attempt to obtain an

\textsuperscript{12} Woodward illustrated his point that the Chancellor was a stranger to diplomacy with a second-hand allegation that, in a letter to Francis Joseph of Austria, he addressed that individual with the wrong title! Woodward, \textit{Britain and the German Navy}, p. 265, footnote.

\textsuperscript{13} G. F. Gooch, Harold Temperley, eds., \textit{British Documents on the Origins of the War 1898-1914}. (London, 1930) VI, \#174, pp. 265-266. (Hereafter cited as B. D. D.)
Anglo-German understanding.

Buelow's attempted détente came to an abrupt end with his resignation in July, 1909. In the same month, the British Parliament accepted a vastly increased Dreadnought program; German diplomats could not fail to grasp the significance of this sequence of events.

Bethmann renewed negotiation immediately on assuming office as Chancellor; in fact, members of the Foreign Office staff regarded his evident haste and determination with some misgivings. Arthur Zimmermann, the Under-Secretary, wrote: "The new Imperial Chancellor appears determined to produce an understanding with England, and does not shrink from grasping...the initiative himself for this purpose. If only things work out well!" A series of memoranda had been prepared during the Chancellor-crisis preceding Buelow's departure. Bethmann studied these, then invited Admiral Tirpitz to an interview on August 11. On the same day, he received word that Albert Ballin, a prominent German businessman, had arranged a contact with the British government, which had voiced a desire to resume negotiations. Two days later, having received encouraging replies from Tirpitz,

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14Ernst Jaeckh, Kiderlen-Waechter der Staatsmann und Mensch. (Berlin, 1925) II, p.36.

he went, in the company of the Admiral, to seek the Emperor's support. The latter approved negotiations both on a political and a naval agreement.  

One of the most important diplomatic skills is the ability to recognize and exploit favorable situations of a temporary nature. Here, Bethmann displayed this skill on a high level. He recognized that his recent accession to the Chancellorship and his extraordinary reputation for sincerity gave him a significant but temporary advantage both at home and abroad. His precipitous haste, which the professional diplomats had frowned on, permitted him to re-open negotiations at a time when Anglo-German relations seemed very poor. Furthermore, he had succeeded in bringing Tirpitz to drop his insistence on the three-to-four ratio in favor of one more acceptable to England.

The Chancellor now invited Sir Edward Goschen to his office and formally proposed negotiations on a naval and a political agreement. He explained that, for Germany, the two agreements were necessarily connected, since a limitation of armaments could only take place between two friendly

16 D. G. P., XXVIII, #10325, pp. 211-16.

17 On his reputation abroad, see Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916 (New York, 1925) and D. G. P., XXVIII, #10328, pp. 219-20.

nations. To Goschen's interjection that the Entente must not be forgotten, he replied that a formula could be found in which Britain's present commitments would not suffer. Sir Edward Grey reacted very warmly and voiced satisfaction at Bethmann's step. The proposal for a naval agreement would be welcome, he explained, and the proposal for a political agreement would receive sympathetic consideration.\textsuperscript{19} In somewhat curious contrast to this expression of satisfaction, the British intimated that Sir Edward Goschen urgently desired a vacation just then, but that this should not be regarded as an effort to postpone negotiations! That, however, was exactly the outcome; negotiations were postponed until October.

Bethmann used the resulting pause to prepare himself for the diplomatic task, for he intended to keep the matter as much as possible in his own hands. In conversations with Buelow on the eve of the Chancellor change, Bethmann had admitted his relative lack of familiarity with diplomacy, but claimed that he would "soon get the hang of foreign policy."\textsuperscript{20} To Buelow's great disappointment, the new Chancellor did not come to him to "get the hang of it," but went instead to the temporarily disgraced Kiderlen-Waechter, at the time German representative in Bucharest.

\textsuperscript{19} B. D. D., VI, #187-91, pp. 284-88.
Immediately on coming to office, Bethmann considered replacing von Schoen, the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. He had no personal dislike for Schoen, and in fact, he worked with him very harmoniously for almost a year. However, the Chancellor, who was well aware of his own contemplative personality, thought he could work better with a stronger nature than that of Schoen. Notes went from the Foreign Office to Bucharest, informing Kiderlen of Bethmann's feelings in the matter, but cautioning that an obvious circumvention or brusque displacement of Schoen must be avoided. When Bethmann made the customary official visit to Vienna, he met Kiderlen and gave him the task of preparing a memorandum on the coming Anglo-German talks.

This memorandum arrived in Berlin at the end of September. Kiderlen stated at the outset that he, also, regarded an Anglo-German détente as the worthiest objective of German foreign policy. Germany would not only benefit directly from such a step, but Austria and Italy would show greater loyalty to the Triple Alliance in direct relation to the improved Anglo-German relations. Kiderlen had no fear of a preventive war launched by Great Britain. He considered far more dangerous the probability of a series of Fashoda-like confrontations, which could lead to a situation in

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22 Ibid., pp. 48-59.
which Germany was forced to choose between a diplomatic setback or a war. Moreover, in the event of war with another power, Germany could expect Great Britain to be on the other side. To avoid these two dangers, a naval agreement must be coupled with a political understanding, if possible with a neutrality agreement. He considered such an agreement necessary to dampen the aggressive tendencies of the Franco-Russian partnership. Kiderlen also outlined a procedure for negotiation. The Chancellor must avoid giving the impression that he desired to wreck the Entente. Therefore, the political agreement must be revealed very gradually. But it should precede the naval agreement, because the political sphere could be adjusted more easily than the naval sphere, in which the intractability of the two Admiralties might cause difficulty.

The importance of this document, and Kiderlen's importance for these early negotiations, has at times been exaggerated. The memorandum does not represent a blueprint for Anglo-German relations, nor is it a startling insight into the German diplomatic situation. Buelow made essentially the same estimate of the danger in the previously cited conference, and Bethmann had voiced a similar viewpoint.

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even before he became Chancellor. Nor was the suggested *modus operandi* new. Bethmann secured the Emperor's and the Navy Secretary's cooperation long before Kiderlen pronounced this step essential. Furthermore, he constantly advised cautious procedure, particularly stressing secrecy, and he endeavored at all times to avoid giving an impression of haste once the negotiations were in progress.

This is not to underestimate the importance of Kiderlen's memorandum. It reinforced a number of Bethmann's ideas, and gave him the confidence to attempt to put them into operation. Indeed, certain phrases from the memorandum reappeared from time to time in Bethmann's statements. Essentially, the Chancellor needed not Kiderlen's ideas, but his forceful personality and his self-confidence, qualities in which the Chancellor knew himself to be weak. There is no need to look far for an explanation of Bethmann's continued requests for Kiderlen's viewpoints. If, as seems likely, he intended to bring Kiderlen into the Foreign Office at the earliest opportunity, then it was only reasonable to keep him informed.

24 **D. G. P.,** XXVIII, #10306, pp. 168-78.

25 *Ibid.,* XXVIII, #10333, pp. 223-24 and footnote. The German Foreign Office accepted Kiderlen's document as extremely valuable, but made some very strong criticisms of his point of view. The criticisms exposed Kiderlen's lack of understanding of the British diplomatic situation. These marginal notations on Kiderlen's memorandum are signed by Flotow, whose opinions the Chancellor valued highly.
and to consider his opinions on such a vital matter.  

There were in Germany at least three great sources of danger to the delicate secret diplomacy which Bethmann had in mind. One such source of danger was the Emperor. Bethmann dutifully kept him informed; he noted his comments, but he kept him out of harm's way as much as possible on the pretext that his name should not be connected with a venture which might fail dismally. Another potential source of danger was German public opinion. Germany was a late arrival on the colonial scene, but now that she had to a degree arrived there, her people were at least as amenable to the ideas of imperialism and "world power" as the people of the older colonial powers. In an era dominated by Admiral Mahan's concepts of the importance of sea power, the navy was regarded as the very embodiment of a nation's desire or capacity for "world power" status. Any attempt on the part of a government to place limits on its naval construction might be interpreted as a voluntary abdication of "world power" rank. Such organizations as the Navy League and the Pan-German League had both the means and the desire to propagate such views. Secrecy was therefore essential. A

26See the editor's footnote, D. G. P., XXVIII, #10333, pp. 223-24.

27This was an obviously spurious excuse, since Bethmann specifically permitted Metternich to state in London that the Emperor approved of the negotiations. Ibid., XXVIII, #10333, 10338, pp. 223-24, 227.
press report in one country based on partial, biased or erroneous information could produce a state of public opinion in which no negotiations could survive.

A third source of danger for the negotiations was the navy, particularly its Secretary of State, Admiral Tirpitz. Bethmann's relations with him began surprisingly well, a situation which did not last long. On August 13, without any evidence of pressure from the Chancellor, Tirpitz conceded a naval ratio more favorable to England than the three-to-four ratio he had previously defended. Two weeks later, however, the Admiral attempted to convince Bethmann that a slight change of form represented a further "concession" to Great Britain. Bethmann rebutted this proposal in an overbearing, schoolmasterly tone, explaining that he found it somewhat difficult to attach much importance to the mathematical result when the actual number of ships to be built was the same. Indeed, since the program would be completed somewhat sooner than under the old plan, and thus Germany could presumably start a new naval program at

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28Ibid., XXVIII, #10325, pp. 211-216.

29By building one more Dreadnought in 1909, and starting the "period of agreement" only in 1910, one Dreadnought fewer could be built during this period, thus producing a more favorable ratio for this period only. Tirpitz also included a proposal for a change of Ambassadors to Great Britain; to him, Metternich and his ideas were anathema. The Chancellor did not deign to notice this encroachment on his diplomacy. Ibid., XXVIII, #10339, pp. 227-30.
an earlier date, he did not think the British government would be pleasantly surprised by the concession. Tirpitz reverted back to his plan of August 13, which yielded a reasonable ratio of approximately three-to-two in new construction of capital ships.

When the talks resumed, they ran a very peculiar course. It became clear in the fall of 1909 that there would be an election in Great Britain in the near future. Bethmann and William II saw the danger that the naval negotiations might become involved as an issue in these elections, or that the behavior of the British government might be determined more by election needs than by the course of the talks with Germany. On October 1, Bethmann telegraphed Metternich requesting information on the likelihood of an election. He expressed the fear that in such an event the Liberal government might attempt to gain a triumph out of the negotiations to help insure its re-election. To prevent this, Bethmann ordered a "dilatory procedure" until the British political scene had cleared somewhat.

This proved to be impossible, for the British government now showed a great desire to continue the negotiations. On October 12, Sir Edward Goschen, just returned from his

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30 Ibid., XXVIII, #10342, pp. 234-35.
31 Ibid., XXVIII, #10343, p. 235.
"vacation," declared himself ready to begin the talks. Consequently, a meeting took place on October 14, in which Bethmann and Goschen negotiated while Schoen took notes—a procedure which Goschen disliked. This meeting produced only the most careful preliminary exploration. Bethmann claimed that a political understanding would appropriately set the stage for a naval agreement. Such an understanding need not include anything contrary to Great Britain's present friendships. Britain had not even concluded such a political agreement with France and Russia, Goschen observed. But he certainly hoped that a "suitable" formula might be found. On the subject of the naval agreement, Bethmann made it clear that the existing navy law must stand, but within its framework, ship construction might be slowed down to accommodate Great Britain. The Chancellor carefully avoided giving away the scope of the political agreement which he sought. All he would say was that it must be sufficient to enable him to defend the naval concessions in the Reichstag.

Two weeks after this interview, Sir Edward Grey sent an optimistic message to the German Ambassador. Again,

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32 Ibid., XXVIII, #10346, p. 238.


Grey stressed the necessity of continuing negotiation. "I would say at once that we should very much regret a suspension of negotiations. Business here might occasionally delay our replies, but this would not be so great a drawback as the total suspension of negotiations." Grey further expressed his willingness to include a political understanding, even a colonial understanding, in the negotiations. The entire tone of the message was such that it could only lead to expectations of rapid success.

The turning point came in the next discussion, on November 4. Bethmann still held back somewhat, for he did not present the draft of the proposed agreement which the German Foreign Office had prepared. But Grey's apparent optimism must have affected him to a degree, for he now introduced the neutrality principle under which each party was to state that it was not presently engaged in agreements with aggressive design against the other, and in the event of an attack on one party by a third power, the other party was to maintain neutrality. Goschen repeated that Great Britain had no such agreements even with France and Russia. Neither did Britain have a naval agreement with those countries, replied the Chancellor; the situation with Germany was entirely new. Sir Edward Goschen


36 For a text of this agreement, see Jaeckh, Kiderlen-Waechter, II, pp. 67-9.
observed that Bethmann had spoken only of a temporary slowdown of naval construction, not of a reduction of the German plan. Bethmann replied that naval agreements, by their very nature, extended over a strictly limited period of time; no country could promise never to exceed a certain level of naval construction. He had in mind a proposition which could give Great Britain a financial respite over the next few years. Then, depending on the world situation, a further agreement might be contemplated.

The meeting produced an immediate change of tone on the part of British diplomats. Two days later, Sir Edward Goschen, in a letter to Schoen, expressed disappointment over the limited nature of the naval concessions, and he doubted if his government could accept them as sufficient. The neutrality proposal, on the other hand, went too far. On November 15, Sir Charles Hardinge, a Foreign Office employee, commented in a similar sense to Metternich. Finally, on November 17, Sir Edward Grey stated that the reductions in naval construction proposed by Germany were not of sufficient financial benefit to Britain. If the entire German program was to remain intact, with but a small chance of real reduction at an unspecified time in the future, then Britain must answer the pressure of German armaments by renewed expansion, whatever the cost. In view of the impending

37D. G. P., XXVIII, #10358, p.265.
elections, he thought it wise to suspend negotiations for a time.\footnote{38}

The question is: what caused the sudden change in the official attitude of the British government? Sir Charles Hardinge and Sir Eyre Crowe, permanent employees of the Foreign Office, claimed that the Chancellor's last statements had finally exposed the whole unsavoury scheme, which of course could not be accepted.\footnote{39} Great Britain, having only one potential enemy, would gain nothing from the neutrality agreements, Crowe explained. Furthermore, the shipbuilding agreement would tie her hands not only against Germany, but against the entire world. These two reasons are of course, incompatible, for if England had only one probable enemy, then the limitation of that enemy's naval construction was quite sufficient. Much more serious was the same limitation for Germany, which admittedly had three probable enemies, all of whom were naval powers of importance, and all of whom made vast naval increases in the next few years.\footnote{40} It is unlikely that the British government's

\footnote{38 D. G. P., XXVII, #10365, pp. 273-75.}
\footnote{39 B. D. D., VI, #204 Foreign Office minutes, pp. 309-12.}
\footnote{40 In this connection it is instructive to compare the number of Dreadnoughts building or completed from 1907 to 1914, and the amount spent on new naval construction in the same period, for Britain, France, Russia and Germany. These figures are given in Woodward, Great Britain and the German Navy, pp. 490-52, and P. N. Neilson, \textit{How Diplomats Make War}, (New York, 1916) p. 146.}
drastic change of attitude was based largely on Bethmann's further revelation of Germany's desires in the November 4 meeting. Bethmann made substantially the same statements on October 14 and on November 4. The vague political agreement of the first meeting became in the second meeting an equally vague and extremely tentative neutrality proposal. The British government did not even exercise its option of proposing a formula which was suitable to it, but simply dropped the negotiations in a rather abrupt manner. Nor did it intend to re-open the talks immediately after the election; in fact, months elapsed before talks were resumed.

Thus, it appears probable that Bethmann and William II were substantially justified in their fears concerning the impact of the elections. When it appeared that the German naval concessions were not of a nature that could be exploited in the elections, the continuation of talks became a handicap for the Liberal government. Bethmann may have made a very wise decision in refusing to negotiate a naval construction limitation without a political agreement. One can imagine the internal reaction in Germany if the British press had been able to exploit a German naval limitation in the election campaign. Nor would it have required a breach of faith on the part of the British negotiators to make such information public, since a leak to the press had been established some time ago, and its source had not been
It can be objected that Bethmann gave the scope of the political agreement away too soon, that he should have procrastinated until conditions became more favorable. But was it possible to continue talking in vague generalities without making it obvious that only delay was intended? Would the British government not have been far more justified in breaking off negotiations if it appeared that Bethmann was not acting in good faith? In view of the suddenly awakened British desire to negotiate, the Chancellor could not risk wrecking the negotiations by compromising his reputation of sincerity. This way, at least, the prospect of renewed talks after the election remained in sight.

During the negotiations, the Chancellor maintained an optimistic attitude; since the temporary halt seemed justified by the British elections, this fact alone did not alter his disposition. But during the pause in negotiations, the optimism gradually disappeared; Bethmann never regained the positive attitude which he brought to these first efforts at an understanding. Early in February, he doubted that the Liberal cabinet could still be interested in Anglo-German talks. The need for overwhelming naval supremacy

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42 Ibid., XXVIII, 10369, pp. 282-84.
had become an election topic. Present cabinet ministers had underscored that need during the campaign. Bethmann felt that public opinion would preclude a resumption of talks on a reasonable basis.

To add to the troubles of diplomacy, Bethmann now had two unpredictable Imperial visits to Great Britain to worry about. In March, 1910, Prince Henry, on a "private" visit, gave public expression to his conviction that a German naval limitation was impossible. But this should not alarm Great Britain, for in the near future, the two navies would fight side by side against the "yellow peril." (This he said to the only European ally of Japan!) Metternich, of course, reported this to Bethmann, who replied that he had specifically begged the Prince to avoid all political statements during his visit. Now he, the ardent royalist, had to disavow the public statements of an Imperial Prince!

He instructed Metternich to explain in London that Prince Henry was generally not in touch with politics, and that he had apparently no knowledge of the official German attitude toward Anglo-German negotiations. On the other hand, the Emperor's visit on the occasion of his uncle King Edward's funeral progressed with unexpected smoothness. William II managed to confine his comments pretty well to

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43 Ibid., XXVIII, #10375, pp. 301-4.
44 Ibid., XXVIII, #10377, pp. 307-8.
expressions of sympathy. These, delivered with his uncommon theatrical talent, produced some spontaneous demonstrations of goodwill toward Germany.

While the naval question lay dormant, Sir Edward Grey made an effort to raise other issues for discussion. He proposed talks on the Bagdhad Railway question, on the issue of Persian trade, and on "his favorite point," an exchange of naval information. With regard to the latter, he felt that a clear knowledge of the other side's armaments would do much to dispel unreasonable fears in both countries. Bethmann hoped to utilize this opportunity to pursue his original goal of a political agreement. He could not grant a concession on the Bagdhad Railway, for the building of which German companies had obtained the right-of-way from Turkey, without a quid-pro-quo with which to justify such a step in Germany. The concession which Grey offered, a removal of British objections to the proposed four-percent increase in Turkish customs duties, fell far short of what was needed. That was, after all, a concession to Turkey, not to Germany. Both the Baghdad Railway question and the "open door" in Persia could be included in a general political understanding.


46B. D. D., VI, #343-44, pp. 451-59.
The permanent Foreign Office staff in Great Britain made short work of Bethmann's offer. They fastened their attention on the neutrality clause of the political agreement, which was identical to the one they had rejected a short time before. In their interpretation, they were being asked to promise Germany a free hand, in other words, hegemony on the continent. Though this interpretation is very questionable, it must be admitted that Bethmann made a mistake in returning to the rejected plan so soon. In his tiresome insistence on this political understanding, he lost sight of the fact that a successful negotiation, of whatever useless or minor character, can have profound effects on diplomatic relations. At this point, a nominal success could have opened the way to his coveted political understanding. The Chancellor's reply, said Grey, left no further basis for negotiation with Germany.

As it turned out, this was not the case, for the main negotiations, which had been dropped more than six months previous, received an unexpected impetus from a speech by Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith. The speech summarized the previous year's negotiations in a manner to which Bethmann took exception. The British reply to the German complaint incidentally hinted at a resumption of negotia-

\[47\] Ibid., VI, #344, Foreign Office minutes. Comments by Sir Eyre Crowe pp. 459-60.

\[48\] Ibid., VI, #345, p. 461.
tions, and the Chancellor decided to take up the hint. The resulting talks, however, were of a nature to exclude any possibility of agreement or benefit. On September 14, 1910, Bethmann gave official notice of the completion of his reply, which he intended to communicate verbally to Sir Edward Goschen. The latter was not in any hurry to receive the communication, and to Bethmann's great annoyance, he waited a month before making his appearance. In his reply, Bethmann stated that he had no objection to an exchange of naval information, though he personally considered this of little value. If, however, he was to promise not to expand the present navy bill, he must have an equivalent concession from Britain, probably in the area of general policy. The political agreement still held a central position in his thought!

This communication produced a remarkable series of charges and countercharges, which illustrated the state of nerves on both sides. Bethmann and the German Foreign Office saw fit to include various general and specific charges against Great Britain's recent policies toward

49 Ibid., VI, #387, pp. 501-2.
51 D. G. P., XXVIII, #10416-17, pp. 367-73.
Germany. The British Foreign Office refuted the charges, but was particularly incensed by an alleged statement that the ministers were themselves responsible for anti-German outbursts in Britain. The German government denied that their dictated statement contained the offending phrase. Both sides eventually realized that they were about to accuse each other of deliberate falsification, and they drew back, although neither party was satisfied.

Under the circumstances it is a tribute to the goodwill of Grey and Bethmann that negotiations continued at all. Still, a pause was desirable, and a new British election offered a good pretext. Following this election, the British government formally proposed a scheme for the exchange of naval information. At the same time, Sir Edward Grey, in a speech in the House of Commons, expressed his belief that this matter could be settled in the near future. He also believed that Germany might be induced to promise not to


53Documents in D. G. P. support the German contention that the German statement was incorrectly reported. The B. D. D. support the British contention that the German Foreign Office changed the draft of the dictated memorandum following British protests. C. W. Bolen and E. L. Woodward agree with this version which, on balance, seems the more likely one. Both authors place the responsibility (alleged) on Kiderlen, not on Bethmann. C. W. Bolen, "Kiderlen's Policy in Naval Conversations," Journal of Central European Affairs, (July, 1949) p. 142, and E. L. Woodward, Great Britain and the German Navy, pp. 288-91.

54D. G. P., XXVIII, #10429, pp. 390-91.
increase her present naval program. Bethmann turned the proposal over to Admiral Tirpitz, who suggested minor changes to insure a simultaneous exchange of plans. With this change, Bethmann declared himself ready to accept the proposal. The British accepted the change, and held out the possibility of extending the talks to cover a "political agreement" as a concession to Bethmann's desire, but only on the Baghdad Railway and Persian trade questions.

This brought Bethmann further exasperation. Under the guise of a political agreement, he was asked once again to negotiate strictly on questions in which Germany should make the major concessions! Germany, which had the concession for the Baghdad Railway, was to relinquish the most profitable part of it with little compensation. Germany, which had the status of "most favoured nation" in Persian trade, was to place limitations on this status. Furthermore, the Chancellor suspected that the secrecy of negotiations had been broken; Goschen had inadvertently mentioned that France and Russia were told of the negotiations for the

55Ibid., Tirpitz took the Chancellor to task, after the war, for failing to react more positively to this speech, which he interpreted as a concession to the German proposal of a three-to-two standard of construction. Actually, the speech was merely an answer to inevitable questions in the Commons, of which Bethmann had been informed beforehand. Tirpitz, Aufbau, II, p. 189. D. G. P., XXVIII, #10433, 10435, pp. 395, 398.

56Ibid., XXVIII, #10438, p. 402.
information exchange, but when Bethmann pressed him on the exact extent of the information that had been given, the Ambassador gave only evasive answers.\textsuperscript{57}

By this time the Chancellor entertained little hope that these negotiations would bring success. In a memorandum to Metternich, he expressed his growing impatience with British procedure in the various talks.\textsuperscript{58} Their procrastination had cost so much time that a retardation of the navy program was now no longer possible. Nor was it desirable, since British and French naval increases had created an entirely new situation. Herewith the only common basis for the talks had disappeared; he did not believe Great Britain could suggest a new basis. Their efforts to negotiate separately on the Baghdad Railway and Persian trade questions were not steps in the right direction. The rapid progress on the naval information question impressed him not at all, for he had always considered such an agreement to be useless.\textsuperscript{59} If its intention was to dispel public

\textsuperscript{57}\textit{Ibid.}, XXVIII, \#10438, 10439, pp. 402-3, Anlage. The suspicion was well founded. Russia and France were informed of the extent of these and of previous negotiations,

\textsuperscript{58}\textit{D. G. P.}, XXVIII, \#10433, p. 395.

\textsuperscript{59}The notion that such a step could prevent each party from "stealing a march" on the other party by secret buildup is rather absurd. In early 20th century Europe, it was by no stretch of the imagination possible to build a battleship secretly.
fear, then only Great Britain could benefit, for in Germany there was no fear of the British naval expansion. The British had repeatedly assured him that the Entente had no anti-German intentions, that therefore a political agreement was unnecessary. Yet they refused to believe his assurances that the German navy had not been built against Britain, but only for the protection of German shores and German trade.  

The later history of the naval information talks underlined the futility of these negotiations. When Germany had tentatively accepted the last English draft, the Agadir crisis intervened. The British answer was therefore delayed for months. During this delay, the Foreign Office found fault with the provision that details should be arranged by the Admiralties. Thus, their long-delayed answer contained further changes, which would require more talks. The proposal simply disappeared from the diplomatic scene.

The most striking aspect of Bethmann's diplomatic efforts during his first attempt at a détente with Great Britain is the fact that his basic position remained the same from beginning to end. For him, the main fact of international relations was Germany's "encirclement." To break

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60 D. G. P., XXVIII, #10443, p. 395.
61 Ibid., XXVIII, #10453, p. 424.
62 B. D. D., VI, #472, p. 461. (Memorandum by Sir Eyre Crowe.)
this encirclement, and thereby to dispel the danger of war, British friendship was vital. He regarded as sheer lunacy any thought of naval limitation in relation to Great Britain when that country continued to support the two countries which were diplomatically opposed to Germany and which could in the meantime increase their naval armaments at will. Therefore, a political settlement with Great Britain was absolutely essential. If such a settlement became a reality, British fear of the justified German naval expansion would disappear. After all, Great Britain was not at all alarmed by the expansion of the American fleet. Obviously, an Anglo-German political agreement was the key to Germany's (and Europe's) diplomatic dilemma.

The Chancellor's summary of the situation was realistic, and formally correct. His goodwill and his dedication to his task were unquestioned. But his procedure in putting his convictions into practice in a diplomatic situation left much to be desired. He made no concessions to the fact that British policy depended to a considerable degree on public opinion.63 He was convinced that British friendship could be

63 It is ironic that Bethmann clearly understood the influence of public opinion in Britain, although he failed, in general, to adjust his diplomacy accordingly. Concerning the elections in January 1910, he states, "On the one hand, the need for an overwhelming naval superiority was so emphasized during the election—even Lloyd George and Grey spoke in that sense—that it seems doubtful if the Liberal cabinet, which knows the limits within which we can meet it in the naval question, can, in the face of public opinion, let itself get
assured only by treaty, in a formal manner. It did not occur to him that this friendship could be cultivated by a careful cultivation of public opinion. Useless or meaningless agreements, ostentatiously concluded, could have done much to achieve this. But Bethmann always had in mind the one treaty which could be a panacea for all ills.

Of Bethmann's ventures into the field of diplomacy, his first attempt at an Anglo-German friendship was probably the one in which he was most directly involved, to which he gave the most personal attention. Though he depended on his Foreign Secretary a great deal, especially on Kiderlen when he came to the office, it is certain that the direction of policy was Bethmann's, not Kiderlen's, as the latter's biographer, Jaeckh, maintains. The Chancellor has generally been described as a weak, vacillating, dependent individual. Of these characteristics there is little evidence in this part of his diplomacy. But he is also described as being completely unadaptable, and this characteristic is illustrated to perfection in the Anglo-German negotiations from 1909 to 1911.

involved in an agreement which we could accept....We also must make allowances for the precarious position of the Liberal government." (D. G. P., XXVIII, #10369, pp. 282-84.) Yet he did not follow his own advice. His conclusion was that, in view of the state of British public opinion, a political agreement was all the more vital.
CHAPTER II

THE AGADIR "COUP" AND ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS

When, in 1908, Chancellor Buelow had attempted to re­dress what he considered Germany's increasingly dangerous international position, an important part of his efforts consisted of a planned détente with France. In Franco-German relations, the Morocco question was the problem which seemed to admit solution; for Germany, very important results could be expected from a reasonable adjustment of that question. In every dispute with France over Morocco, the European powers had supported France and had left Germany virtually isolated. For that reason alone, an adjustment of the problem was desirable; but the German Ambassador in Great Britain furnished another reason; if Germany desired British friendship as Buelow claimed, then she must improve her relations with France. This was a precondition for an approach to Great Britain.¹

¹In April 1904, Great Britain and France had signed and published a "Declaration" which was, in fact, an alliance, although it did not provide for definite military co-operation. The agreement settled a number of colonial disputes and recognized Morocco as a French sphere of influence. The German Foreign Office thus knew of the Anglo-French Morocco connection, though they did not fully realize its extent, for the declaration included a secret clause providing for an extension of French authority in the event of the Sultan's collapse.
took the form of a treaty, signed at Casablanca in February of 1909.² Germany recognized France's special political interests in Morocco. France, on the other hand, re-affirmed the principle or the "open door" in matters of commerce, and specifically undertook not to place obstacles in the way of German commerce in that country. The two parties re-affirmed the Act of Algeciras and the integrity and independence of the "Shereefian Empire."

Though the agreement caused a great deal of public rejoicing at the outset, it contained basic weaknesses which rendered its permanent success very doubtful.³ Its clauses were extremely vague and admitted of many conflicting interpretations. To what degree did it recognize France's special political interests? How could such interests be reconciled with the declared independence and territorial integrity of Morocco? Was France obligated to assure concessions for German commerce, must she support German attempts to gain such concessions, or did she merely have to avoid active opposition to them? What was the economic position of the other powers? To these questions the treaty provided no specific answers, and it was thus unlikely that it could

²D. G. P., XXIV, #8410, pp. 379-81. For Germany's reasons for concluding the Morocco agreement with France, #8424, 8476, 8499, pp. 395, 369-73, 494-98.

³Ima C. Barlow, The Agadir Crisis. (Chapel Hill, 1940) pp. 77-79.
produce the expected thaw in Franco-German relations. Indeed, from the beginning, the two countries mistrusted each other's intention. Germany expected France to subvert the independence of Morocco, to attempt to gain a protectorate over the country; France refused to believe in Germany's political and territorial disinterest.

Bethmann Hollweg personally made every effort to live up to Germany's ill-defined promises. In December 1909, he delivered a conciliatory speech in the Reichstag, commenting on the improvement in Franco-German relations as a result of the Casablanca treaty. Just two days after this date, the Sultan, evidently feeling French political pressure, offered Germany a coaling station on Morocco's Atlantic coast, with the explanation that such a step could help him to resist the growing political incursion of the "Western Powers." Bethmann had no desire to be played against France for the Sultan's benefit, and he instructed the Foreign Office to inform France of the offer, which should be rejected. While Bethmann intended to keep the agreement, certain commercial concerns and imperially-minded societies in Germany certainly had other intentions.

In February 1910 the French government, faced with the

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4 D. G. P., XXIX, #10492, p. 39, editors' footnote.
5 Ibid., XXIX, #10488, p. 37.
6 Ibid., XXIX, #10489, pp. 37-40, editors' footnote.
Sultan's refusal to accept the conditions of the French loan which should help him to meet his international obligations, decided to apply diplomatic pressure to assure acceptance of the loan's terms. The pressure was to take the form of a withdrawal of diplomatic representatives from the Sultan's capital. Again, Bethmann advised cooperation with France; he explained that Germany had no political interest and would consequently make no difficulties if France thought such a step advisable. On March 10, Bethmann moved against the demands of commercial interests; he stated unequivocally that his government would not go beyond its international obligations to secure economic benefits for concerns like Mannesmann Bros.

Despite the Chancellor's goodwill, it soon appeared that the Franco-German Casablanca agreement, far from liquidating the Moroccan problem, had actually aggravated it. German commercial interests besieged the Foreign Office with complaints that the French were violating the "open door" clause. Mannesmann Bros., unable to secure the cooperation of the German government for a protectorate scheme

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7 Ibid., XXIX, #10501, p. 46.

8 Barlow, Agadir, p. 137. Sultan Mulay Hafid had granted the firm of Mannesmann Bros. extensive mining concessions in South Morocco. The French government questioned the validity of these concessions on the basis of the Act of Algeciras, and the German government concurred with the French view. Mannesmann Bros. obtained extensive support from German public opinion, and insisted that the Government support their claim. Bethmann and Kiderlen consistently refused such support.
in south-west Morocco, combined forces with the Pan-German League to buy or influence newspapers for the purpose of converting public opinion to an acceptance of German political adventures in the area of their interest. Meanwhile, French penetration, which should have been expected to a degree from the terms of the Casablanca agreement, proceeded to turn Morocco into a virtual French protectorate.

Sultan Mulay Hafid endeavoured to shore up Morocco's finances, but became increasingly entangled in financial obligations to France. Since this made him very unpopular, French authorities soon had to protect him and his officials from the Moroccan people. The very vocal French militarist and expansionist circles regarded this as a great opportunity. Their ardor at times produced surprising indiscretions; for example, a colonial official, in a public New Year's address, told his countrymen that Morocco was well on the way to becoming French, that France would soon exercise sovereignty. Throughout 1910, German representatives reported a series of small French military advances and a

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10 For example, the question of his French loan in February of 1910, the terms of which he accepted only under duress. D. G. P., XXIX, #10502, pp. 46-7.

11 Ibid., XXIX, #10493, p. 40. The speech, reported in Germany, brought an official German protest, and a French disavowal.
consequent spread of French authority. Moreover, every French advance produced a renewed outburst of unrest in Morocco, which the French were obliged to quell. Thus, while French authority extended itself, trade stagnated and travel became nearly impossible for Europeans because of the hostility of the populace.

Each French advance, taken singly, was so small and so plausibly justified that Germany could not make official protests, but the German government was fully aware that the spread of French authority, when taken as a whole, was a violation of both the Act of Algeciras and the Casablanca Treaty. Under the circumstances, the German government had to be content with vague expressions of uneasiness. In diplomatic language, these took the form of expressions of hope that France would not take actions which might increase the unrest in Morocco to the further detriment of trade.13

This background lends significance to reports from the German representative in Tangiers, dated March 1911, that there were growing disturbances in the vicinity of the Moroccan capital.14 He attributed the unrest to three factors: the increased taxation and the attempted strengthening of

12 Ibid., XXIX, #10498, 10522, pp. 43, 73-74, and others in chapters CCXXVI and CCXXVII.

13 Ibid., XXIX, #10513, pp. 58-59, represents such a warning from Kiderlen to the French government.

14 Ibid., XXIX, #10524, pp. 75-76.
of government authority through the formation of a regular army were partly responsible. The main factor, however, was the recent action of Major Mangin, French commandant of the Sultan's troops, who had ordered the public execution of two Moslem soldiers for the crime of desertion. Offended Moslem religious sensibility had actually triggered the present disturbances.

The situation brought immediate action from the French government which, on the fifth and sixth of April, notified Great Britain and Germany that a French military expedition to Fez might soon be necessary for the protection of Europeans in that city. The notification to Britain more clearly revealed French intentions, probably because it was delivered verbally. In fact, Sir Arthur Nicolson, who received the message, gathered that the support of the Sultan was a far greater factor than assurance of the safety of Europeans in Fez. If that were the case, Sir Arthur feared that this military expedition might assume the character of a rather extended occupation.

The French communication prompted a more direct warning from the German Foreign Office. "Happily," Kiderlen said, ...the latest news from Fez is of a more favourable nature, and it does not appear that there is imminent

\[\text{\underline{\text{\textsuperscript{15}Ibid.}, XXIX, \#10526, pp. 78-79. B. D. D., VII, \#202, pp. 186-87.}}\]

\[\text{\underline{\text{\textsuperscript{16}Ibid.}, XXIX, \#10527, pp. 79-80.}}\]
danger (to European residents)....An expedition such as is contemplated by the French government can only produce further agitation...it is unnecessary to repeat the experience of Casablanca.

Bethmann issued a similar warning to France on April 19. He told the French Ambassador Jules Cambon that, in his opinion, the French action could only excite more unrest, and that the military expedition, once in Fez, would find it very difficult to withdraw from there. Cambon then raised this question: in a case of absolute necessity, could Bethmann refuse permission to rescue the Europeans? The Chancellor's answer was determined by the nature of the question. He could not give a categoric "no" to such a question, but he urgently hoped that the situation would not arise.Apparently the French Foreign Office regarded the Chancellor's statement as a concession; in the French government's estimate of the situation, the case of "absolute necessity" happened to arise the very next day.

On April 25, Bethmann made a summary of developments for the Emperor. Reports from Fez, he wrote, continued

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17 Ibid., XXIX, #10535, pp. 85-86.
18 In a later interview, reported by Sir E. Goschen, Cambon claimed that he had held out to Bethmann the example of Gladstone, who had tarried in the case of the expedition to save Gordon in Khartoum, and who was subsequently blamed for Gordon's death. Cambon gave no indication of the Chancellor's reply to this lesson from the pages of history. B. D. P., VII, #234, pp. 211-212.
19 Ibid., XXIX, #10537, pp. 86-88.
20 Ibid., XXIX, #10542, pp. 92-93.
to be contradictory; French sources painted the situation "black on black," while German and Austrian sources saw little danger to Europeans in the city, though they admitted that Sultan Mulay Hafid was in trouble. The French press, largely supported by the British press, sought to convince the French government to advance troops to the city; the German press seemed quite reasonable, with the exception of Pan-German papers. The French Ambassador had come to Bethmann's office repeatedly, and the Chancellor had given him to understand that the contemplated expedition could bring international complications.

Meanwhile, the conflicting reports and diplomatic jockeyings brought to the surface the undercurrent of Anglo-German distrust, which was particularly evident in the British Foreign Office. From the British Ambassador in Austria came a warning that Germany intended to create a Franco-Spanish quarrel out of the Moroccan developments, and that she had already taken action to achieve this end. Sir Eyre Crowe and Sir Arthur Nicolson annotated this document with the observations that Germany most likely intended to create "the maximum mischief," that she would then urge upon Britain and Russia a political agreement.

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21 B. D. D., VII, #214, pp. 197-98.
designed to separate the Entente. Other reports from British ambassadors and from French sources portrayed Germany as lying in ambush, waiting for France to entangle herself irredeemably before coming forth to "make trouble" in some mysterious and dastardly fashion. These reports all implied that Great Britain should give maximum support to France.

German documents indicate a similar, if less intense suspicion of Great Britain. Early in spring, Bethmann received two reports of alleged Anglo-French staff talks on the problems of a British expeditionary force in the event of war against Germany. One report, from Ambassador Metternich, made the point that France might soon demand concrete proof from Great Britain that the Entente was still solid. The Chancellor was aware of the importance of the British government's stand on the Morocco question. In June, he had occasion to recommend to Admiral Tirpitz a prompt acceptance of the British changes in the information exchange

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22 Ibid., VII, #214, pp. 197-98. At this time, negotiations were in progress over the exchange of naval information between Britain and Germany. The Foreign Office had just rejected Bethmann's offers of a neutrality agreement, and the place was still abuzz with indignation.

23 Ibid., VII, #208-11, p.230.

24 D. G. E., XXIX, #10520, 10521, pp. 66-69, 69-70. The editors' footnote to #10520 gives a surprisingly accurate analysis by the German military attache in Britain, Major Winterfeldt, of the extent and the problems of a British expeditionary force.
agreement. The present political situations, he told Tirpitz, made it very desirable to achieve a positive result in the Anglo-German talks.

On May 15, the French government gave official notice in the capitals of Europe that it intended to "relieve" the city of Fez with a French military column. The action was not unexpected, and the German Foreign Office had already planned a move in reply. From the heightened concern of the British and French officials it is obvious that they also expected a German reply. Given Germany's position in Morocco by virtue of the Casablanca agreement, she could not very well continue with vague expressions of apprehension; the French move demanded a substantial counter-move. In view of this, two incidents take on a heightened significance: on May 18, Sir Edward Grey explained to Metternich that the British government supported the French expedition, and would continue this support even if a lengthy occupation of Fez should prove necessary. A week later, the British Ambassador made substantially the

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25 Ibid., XXVIII, #10449, p. 420.
26 Ibid., XXIX, #10559, pp. 118-19.
27 For various expressions of suspicion of or expectation of German action in reply to a French march to Fez, see B. D. D., VII, chapter LIII.
same statement in a conversation with Bethmann. The Chancellor could have little doubt that Great Britain intended thereby to strengthen the French government's position for the expected showdown with Germany. Such an action fitted precisely into Bethmann's concept of the anti-German direction of British diplomacy.

Because of the great subtlety of the French penetration of Morocco, Germany's freedom of action was quite limited. She could permit the French march to Fez, making it clear that, once the Europeans were no longer in danger, France must withdraw from the area. This step would undoubtedly produce French assurances that such was indeed the government's intention. Then, unavoidable incidents could be counted on to delay a withdrawal of troops, and Germany would be faced with the same diplomatic situation again and again. Public opinion in Germany and foreign expectation of German action was a guarantee that such procedure would be considered a German diplomatic defeat.

Or, Germany could insist on strict enforcement of the Act of Algeciras and of the Franco-German understanding. This condition was impossible of fulfillment, and insistence on it must have led to war. A third alternative was a

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German surrender of claims in Morocco with adequate compensation for Germany's commercial interests in that country. But since there were very few separate instances of French penetration of sufficient import to justify strong diplomatic action, it was imperative to avoid postponement of a decision through vague negotiations.

It is difficult to determine the precise origin of the plan to dispatch a warship to the Port of Agadir on Morocco's west coast. Even more difficult is it to trace the Chancellor's personal responsibility for the plan; in this instance, Bethmann's direct role was much smaller than it had been in the Anglo-German negotiations. At any rate, there is little evidence to support the widely-held assumption that Bethmann disapproved of the plan to dispatch warships. For one thing, it is simply not in keeping with the man's character to defend an action which in his opinion

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31 This is evident in D. G. P., XXIX. If the editors' selection of documents is unbiased, Bethmann produced far fewer communications than he had produced on the subject of naval negotiations. Kiderlen emerges as the dominant force in this volume.

32 Wolff cites a short, obscure reference by Kiderlen about Bethmann's interference as indicative of the latter's displeasure at the proposed dispatch of warships. But it is by no means clear what Bethmann disapproved of, and there is no reason to assume that it was the idea of the ship dispatch. Wolff, Eve, p. 43. E. L. Woodward's few cryptic remarks also imply that Bethmann was the unwilling follower in this case. Woodward, Great Britain and the German Navy, pp. 309-12. G. P. Gooch is of the same opinion. Gooch, Before the War, II, Studies in Diplomacy and Statecraft, p. 276.
could endanger world peace. Then, Bethmann had himself contemplated the dispatch of warships to Moroccan ports in the Loan Crisis of 1910, and he had actually approached the Emperor with this idea.\(^{33}\) True, the situation was a different one. Bethmann had intended only a protection of German citizens, and presumably he would have dispatched ships to ports where there actually were such citizens to protect; moreover, he took no steps to develop this tentative suggestion. But it seems very unlikely that he now objected to the idea of the ship dispatch as a type of "pistol point diplomacy." Nor could he have been much impressed by the fact that Agadir was, by the Act of Algeciras, a "closed harbour," for he knew that the French had used closed harbors for the purpose of troop supply.\(^{34}\) The attempts to dissociate the Chancellor from the decision to dispatch the Panther are based on the questionable assumption that this was a sinister, saber-rattling move with which a man of Bethmann's undoubted integrity could not well be connected. It is easier to portray the Chancellor as a reluctant pawn than as a reckless adventurer. Both pictures are equally distorted by the original assumption about the "Panther's spring."

On May 3, Kiderlen presented the Chancellor with a

\(^{33}\) D. G. P., XXIX, #10502, pp. 46-47.

\(^{34}\) Ibid., XXIX, #10566, pp. 124-27.
memorandum reviewing the Moroccan situation and the expected impact of the Fez expedition. The most important part of the memorandum proposed the dispatch of warships to Agadir and Mogador with the intention of inducing the French government to negotiate on a serious compensation offer. Kiderlen wished to grasp this opportunity to solve the dilemma which faced German diplomacy in the form of the gradual but continuous French advance in Morocco. The fact that Bethmann supported this position in an audience with the Emperor is sufficient proof that he did not regard the plan as being in any way sinister, and that he gave it his full approval.

But, while the Chancellor was in touch with and approved of the broad outlines of the plan, some important details were arranged without his knowledge. The aide-memoire which was sent to the European capitals on June 30 was based on a collective complaint from eleven German firms with interests in the south of Morocco, and this collective complaint was solicited by the Foreign Office, without Bethmann's knowledge, from Dr. Regendanz, managing director of the Hamburg-Marokko Gesellschaft. Thus, the occasion and


36 There was, indeed, not a single German to protect at Agadir, and Dr. Regendanz even arranged for a German to go posthaste from Mogador to be on hand when his protection arrived. However, he got there two days after the Panther's arrival. For details of the Regendanz arrangements, see F. W. Pick, "New Light on Agadir," The Contemporary Review (Sept., 1937), pp. 325-34. The editors of D. G. F. devoted
the ostensible reason for the ship dispatch were arranged without the Chancellor's previous approval. But, when he heard of the plan, he gave it his support and helped to convince the Emperor of its suitability. William II gave his approval, and Kiderlen set the plan in motion with the laconic telegram: "Ships approved." \(^{37}\)

The attitude of the powers immediately following the dispatch gave Bethmann no cause to fear a violent reaction. While the aide-memoire of June 30 had used only the spurious justification produced by Dr. Regendanz, the Ambassadors had been instructed to make a verbal explanation mentioning breaches of the Algeciras Act and Franco-German compensation talks. \(^{38}\) On July 3, Bethmann wrote to William II that European public opinion was, on the whole, favorable. "This is true even of the English press," he stated, "with exception of a few conservative papers." \(^{39}\) Apparently, he had expected a more violent outburst from that quarter. Nor did the ambassadorial reports indicate any danger from Great Britain. Sir Edward Grey only expressed concern over the possibility of a settlement among France, Germany, [\textit{\textsuperscript{------------------------}}]

*only a short footnote to the incident, explaining that it was merely a matter of the ostensible, not the real reason for the dispatch of the ship. D. G. F., XXIX, #10576, p. 152, editors' footnote.*

\(^{37}\) D. G. F., XXIX, #10576, p. 152.

\(^{38}\) Ibid., XXIX, #10578, p. 153.

\(^{39}\) Ibid., XXIX, #10587, pp. 163-64.
and Spain, to the exclusion of British interests. Metternich assured him that Germany had no such intentions.

Aware of the potential danger from Great Britain, Bethmann at once sent instructions to his Ambassador.\textsuperscript{40} Germany, he was to explain, fully realized that Great Britain might need to take similar steps in order to ensure consideration of her interests. He added that he interpreted Great Britain's concern over her own interests as a form of approval of Germany's action, which had been taken for precisely analogous reasons. Metternich did not get a chance to make this statement, for Sir Edward Grey gave official notice of Great Britain's determination not to be excluded from a Moroccan settlement. Metternich therefore confined himself to another assurance that Germany did not intend to exclude Great Britain, or to encroach upon her "legitimate interests."\textsuperscript{41}

While the diplomatic reactions seemed entirely satisfactory, Bethmann was hard-pressed to avoid a domestic crisis over the Franco-German negotiations which the Panther's presence at Agadir had set in motion. The Emperor was on a northern holiday when he received Bethmann's reports of the unhurried procedure of these negotiations. Now he became anxious, for he feared that "third parties" would intervene

\textsuperscript{40} Ibid., XXIX, #10590, p. 166.
\textsuperscript{41} Ibid., XXIX, #10592, p. 167.
if negotiations dragged on too long. He was particularly worried about England. In footnotes to Bethmann's reports and in a separate telegram, William II voiced his displeasure in a lively manner. What annoyed him most was the statement that "energetic bearing" might become necessary to achieve results with France. "The monarch amuses himself! And in the meantime we steer directly for mobilization! Without me that must not happen." Here were the seeds of an internal crisis; not only did the Emperor threaten to return home to interfere in the delicate negotiations, but Kiderlen sent Bethmann his resignation on the grounds that the Emperor's comments were intended as a censure of his proceedings. 

Bethmann kept his head, and thereby undoubtedly averted an internal crisis with serious diplomatic overtones; the hasty return of William II coupled with the resignation of the Foreign Secretary would have been interpreted as a German panic. The Chancellor sent William II a soothing telegram, explaining that no threats had been made to France or to any foreign power, and that no such threats would be made as long as he headed the government; the Emperor's

42 Ibid., XXIX, #10600, 10601, 10607, 10608, pp. 177-78, 184-88.

43 Jaeckh, Kiderlen-Waechter, II, first resignation, pp. 128-29, second resignation, pp. 132-34.
return was therefore not required. Following this, he sent off a lengthy explanation in which he defended Kiderlen's handling of the situation as based on mandates given by William II himself. Meanwhile, he held Kiderlen off by sending him a copy of the same statement with the explanation that his policy had the Chancellor's full support. He asked him not to take further steps until he had discussed the matter with him personally. This delaying action worked; three days later William II gave permission to carry on negotiations on the "lines previously agreed upon," thus removing all cause for Kiderlen's resignation.

Diplomatically, things were deceptively quiet after the initial ripple caused by the Panther's dispatch. Certainly, no indication of British displeasure came to Bethmann's attention before July 20. During an interval of twenty days from the Panther's dispatch to the outbreak of the Anglo-German crisis, the British Ambassador made only one appearance at the German Foreign Office. On that occasion, Kiderlen gave him yet another assurance that

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44 D. G. P., XXIX, #10611, pp. 189-90.
Germany did not wish to negotiate with France and Spain to the exclusion of Great Britain. Bethmann hoped that the refusal to permit Spanish participation in the Franco-German negotiations would lend credibility to this assurance.

On July 20 came the first hint of a change in Britain's apparent quiescence. Metternich reported on an article in the *Times*, in which alleged German territorial demands were outlined on a map of the Congo area of Africa. The article stressed the British interests involved in the area and the immense size of the German "demand." In view of this, the writer doubted if the demand had been made with serious intentions to negotiate; it seemed more likely that Germany wished to bring about a French rejection, in which case she would claim territory in the vicinity of Agadir. The following day, Metternich reported a meeting with Sir Edward Grey in which the Foreign Secretary voiced fears which were very similar to those expressed in the *Times* article. Grey could not go so far as to accuse Germany of deliberately making impossible demands, but Metternich reported him saying essentially that, in diplomatic language:

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48 D. G. P., XXIX, #10616, p. 198.

49 Ibid., XXIX, #10617, pp. 199-203. For Sir Edward Grey's version of the conversation, which is essentially the same as that here reported, see B. D. D., VII, #411, pp. 390-91.
Since France obviously could not grant the cession of French Congo territory to the Sangha River, including French purchase options on the Belgian Congo, it seemed likely that the talks would return to the Moroccan territory, where there were strong British interests. Consequently, the question of German intentions in Agadir arose again.

It is unlikely that Bethmann was unduly disturbed by this report; he knew that Grey's fears were groundless, that Germany desired no territory in Morocco. Since Metternich had asked for instructions, Bethmann could assume that no drastic action would be taken in Great Britain until the German reply was known.

Long before Metternich received the instructions of his government, Lloyd George, Chancellor of the Exchequer, made his Mansion House speech, which turned the delicate diplomatic situation into an Anglo-German crisis. The offending passage was very obscurely worded, but the situation then prevailing made it applicable only to one nation:

> If a situation were to be forced upon us in which peace could only be preserved by the surrender of the great and beneficent position Britain has won by centuries of effort and achievement, by allowing Britain to be treated where her interests are vitally affected as if she were of no account in the cabinet of nations, then I say emphatically that peace at that price would be a humiliation intolerable for a great nation like ours to endure.

The intention of the speech is not obvious. Sir Edward Grey had already indicated his concern over the fact that the German government had not chosen to reveal its intention

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and official position more clearly; in view of the impend­
ing discussion of foreign policy in the House of Commons,
Grey needed specific information on German activities and
designs in Agadir and southern Morocco.\textsuperscript{51} Presumably, this
was the reason for his talk with Metternich on July 21. If
this also explains the warning contained in the Mansion
House speech, if that speech was only a demand for more
complete information, then the diplomacy of Sir Edward Grey
was in this instance dangerously inconsistent. On the other
hand, the French government had just indicated its need for
diplomatic support; the French found it difficult to under­
stand Great Britain's silence, and doubted the solidarity
of the Entente.\textsuperscript{52} As dear as the Entente was to the Foreign
Office staff, it is still hard to believe that the Mansion
House speech was Sir Edward Grey's answer to that French
plea. After all, such important aspects of diplomacy are
not decided on in the casual manner in which Lloyd George's
speech was approved.\textsuperscript{53} Probably Gooch comes closest to an
answer, that Sir Edward Grey simply did not realize the

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext{51} Ibid., VII, \#399, p. 377.
\footnotetext{52} Ibid., VII, \#408-9, pp. 385-86.
\footnotetext{53} Viscount Grey of Fallodon, Twenty-Five Years 1892-1916.
In his memoirs, page 225-26, Grey made the surprisingly
naive comment that the speech had done much to prevent a war
in 1911. It is almost certain that such was not its intention;
it is certain that such was not its effect.
\end{footnotes}
explosive nature of such a statement in that diplomatic setting. In this light, the speech appears as a diplomatic blunder which, because of reactions from the press and public opinion, could not be disavowed or mitigated with explanatory statements.

Some time after the event, in a Reichstag speech of November 9, Bethmann claimed that it was not the speech itself which was significant, but the subsequent jingoistic interpretation of it by the European press which the British government made no move to disavow, so that it was generally assumed to be the official one. The Chancellor continued:

I found myself constrained to instruct the Imperial Ambassador in London to speak about the matter. My representation was to the effect that we were discussing the Morocco question with France; that England's interests were not so far affected thereby; and that if England should consider her interests to be affected by the discussions, we expected the British government to urge those interests upon the two contracting governments only through the usual diplomatic channels.

In this version of Bethmann's position during the Mansion House crisis, it appears as if he was himself responsible for the sharp German protest delivered by Metternich on July 25. But the Ambassador's instruction had Kiderlen's signature, and was clearly in his style. Since the Secretary had been left in complete control of Franco-German


negotiations following the Panther's dispatch, he was probably the real author of the protest; Bethmann's part may have been limited to one of official consent. The German government's failure to exploit this strong protest to disprove the charges of weakness made by its domestic critics can, on the other hand, be attributed to Bethmann, since he was particularly concerned with domestic politics and with British reactions. Friedrich Thimme made the very plausible suggestion that the Chancellor intentionally avoided such a use of the protest in order to prevent further deterioration of Anglo-German relations. Throughout the crisis, Bethmann endeavored to keep anti-British feeling at a minimum. He considered the newspapers largely responsible for the impact of the Lloyd George speech, and in the Reichstag on November 9, he made a definite accusation against the European press. The Reichstag members themselves received a similar lecture: the language which had been used was unsuitable in a "Parliament conscious of responsibility."

Turning directly to the prominent conservative Heydebrandt, Bethmann remarked that a strong man does not "carry his


57 Thimme, Kriegsreden, XIX.
sword in his mouth." He obviously had no intention of permitting jingoistic public opinion to dictate his foreign policy. Not even the Imperial family could escape his censure. The Crown Prince had ostentatiously applauded a particularly fire-eating Reichstag speech, and this earned him a reprimand from the Chancellor in the presence of William II. To the Emperor's military mentality, troop and fleet movements represented the essence of a crisis, a fact which Bethmann knew very well. He answered his monarch's anxious queries about British fleet concentrations with what appears today somewhat exaggerated confidence: Sir Edward Grey had denied any connection between the crisis and fleet movements, and he found no reason to doubt the Foreign Secretary's word!

Bethmann showed more concern over the progress of Kiderlen's negotiations with France. Evidently, the latter's procedures aroused his anxiety to such a degree that he went to question him on July 28. The following day, Kiderlen accompanied the Chancellor to an audience with William II; on that journey, Bethmann's fears were dispelled, and he left Kiderlen a free hand in the talks with France. Following this interview, he never doubted the peaceful conclusion

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of the whole affair. Anglo-German incidents were by no means over, but both the Cartwright "interview" and the Faber disclosures brought only routine inquiries from the Chancellor as to the British government's stand; they produced no diplomatic crises, although they brought further anti-British agitation in the German press.\(^{60}\)

In view of Bethmann's undoubtedly sincere desire to create an Anglo-German understanding, how can his approval of the Agadir "coup" be justified? Does this represent an incomprehensible anomaly in Bethmann's long-range diplomatic plans, as Theodor Wolff claims?\(^{61}\) The Chancellor's own explanation after the event placed the development of the second Morocco crisis in an entirely different light.\(^{62}\)

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\(^{60}\) On August 25, an article in the Neue Freie Presse of Vienna contained charges against Germany's Morocco diplomacy. The article was popularly attributed to the British Ambassador in Austria, Sir Fairfax Cartwright. The Chancellor's query to England brought, at first, only an unsatisfactory explanation. After further exchanges, the British and German governments worked out a statement which closed the question for purposes of diplomacy, but it continued to produce heated press exchanges. D. G. P., XXIX, #10643-9, pp. 237-44.

On November 17, Captain Faber, in a speech at Andover, disclosed alleged British naval preparations during the crisis. According to the Captain, British ships had been given instructions to repel with fire the approach of German ships. Grey made only a weak denial of the allegation, which did not satisfy Bethmann, but he thought it wise not to press the matter further. Ibid., XXIX, #10657, pp. 261-66 and editors' footnote, #10661, pp. 271-72.


\(^{62}\) B. D. D., VII, #674, pp. 665-76.
"Morocco," he said in November 1911, was like a continually festering wound in our relations not only with France but also with England....I would say one more word thereto. In virtue of treaty stipulations, England stood ever on the side of France. Our understanding with France accordingly also cleans the slate between us and England.

After the war, he gave this explanation for the decision to dispatch the Panther:

he (Kiderlen) came to the conclusion that France would not even be brought to negotiate except by drastic means. That is how the dispatch of the Panther to Agadir came about....It was a defensive rejoinder to an aggressive act.

The important question in this connection is: did Bethmann realize that Great Britain would support France when he gave permission for the Panther's dispatch to Agadir? The question cannot be answered with a direct quote from the Chancellor's statements, but the evidence indicates that he fully expected it. Kiderlen had no illusions about British neutrality in the affair. A memorandum from the hand of Zimmermann, Under-Secretary in the Foreign Office, expressly stated that British support of France was to be expected. Bethmann used this memorandum as a basis for his last audience with the Emperor before the dispatch of the ship to Agadir. Thereafter, Bethmann gave particular attention to press and government reaction in Great Britain. It is safe to assume that he


64D. G. P., XXIX, #10549, pp. 101-8, editors' footnote.
expected Great Britain to give France diplomatic support. This would, moreover, fit very well into his general conception of the British role in Germany's diplomatic isolation. The crisis came, in Bethmann's opinion, not because of British support of France, but because of the unorthodox nature of that support. The press reaction to the Mansion House speech brought the crisis, not the Panther's appearance at Agadir.

The press campaign had a profound effect on German public opinion. The negotiations were Franco-German, yet the crisis was an Anglo-German one! To the public, this was additional evidence that Germany's real enemy was not France, but Great Britain. The crisis had a similar effect on Bethmann; for him, the entire history of the Moroccan affair provided an illustration of his basic diplomatic assumption: that, everywhere in the world, Germany would find Great Britain in active diplomatic opposition, in solid front with her Entente partners. On November 28, 1911, he wrote to William II about Sir Edward Grey's speech in parliament.

(it) begins with a lengthy attempt to indict us for the acknowledged (British) suspicion against us. The specific

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facts quoted for this purpose are in some cases inaccurate, in other cases presented in a biased light. Although the well-known expression, that England followed our negotiations with goodwill, recurs a number of times, Grey still admits such an open support of the French case that a furthering of negotiations thereby is out of the question. Moreover, the speech contains the admission that England supported France even in areas where British interests were not at all in question.

The clue to the lesson Bethmann drew from the crisis is the phrase "supported France even in areas where British interests were not at all in question." This analysis deepened the Chancellor's inherent pessimism and prompted him to take two steps in response. One step was a vigorous support for the proposed increases to the German army. He felt that Germany's diplomatic position held such dangers of war that he could not be responsible for a failure to make adequate preparations for the country's safety. At the same time, he still adhered to his plan for an eventual Anglo-German understanding, and he refused to jeopardize the chances for such an understanding by a further increase in the German navy. The other step which devolved from the Agadir crisis was a renewed effort at improvement of Anglo-German relations. The legacy of Agadir played an important part in the failure of that effort. Bethmann made the most determined political stand of his career in an attempt to prevent further increases to the German navy, but the anti-British tone of public opinion defeated him.

67 Thimme, Kriegsreden, XX.
The Chancellor's procedures during the Haldane mission provided an interesting sequel to the Agadir crisis. During the crisis, Kiderlen had practically a free hand in diplomacy; the Chancellor worked behind the scenes and generally supported his Secretary. But Kiderlen found himself practically excluded from participation in the Haldane talks. Could it be that the Kaiser's prediction had come true, that Bethmann finally found Kiderlen's methods to be too abrupt? Bethmann does not answer this question in his memoirs.
How did the 1911 Morocco crisis affect Germany's diplomatic situation? In the German government, we find again the two competing interpretations. The Chancellor and the Foreign Office defended the view that Germany had cleared an obstacle from her diplomatic path, and that the adjustment was both politically and territorially favourable. In Admiralty circles, quite a different interpretation became current. Navy Secretary Tirpitz, the main exponent of this line, thought that Germany had received an échec from England and France, which must be countered by a stiffening of the military posture if Germany wished to remain a "great power."¹ The current anti-British sentiments of press and public opinion seemed very convenient for this purpose. "If it turns out that we have received a diplomatic setback," wrote Tirpitz to his immediate subordinate, "there will be a violent public indignation. The chances of a Novelle will thereby be increased."²

It was an easy matter for the Admiral to convince William

¹Tirpitz, Aufbau, pp. 199ff.

²Ibid., p. 200. In this case, the term Novelle refers to an amendment of or supplement to the existing navy law, a law which governed the rate of shipbuilding of and financial allotments to the German navy.
II, in whom the Morocco crisis had awakened resentment against France and England. The Emperor thought it a pity not to make use of the existing feeling in Germany to secure a naval increase from the Reichstag; at other times, that body could be so inconveniently parsimonious. On August 27, the Emperor began to prepare the ground by hinting in a banquet address that he favoured an expansion of the German fleet.\(^3\) The press immediately took up this statement; throughout Germany it was taken as an indication that a Novelle was necessary. He told the Chancellor that the important considerations were the atmosphere of disillusionment in Germany and the German loss of prestige abroad, both brought about by the unfortunate course of the Moroccan affair. Only a fleet increase could remedy the situation. Tirpitz outlined a plan for an increase in the present naval construction plans of six capital ships over a period of six years. In addition, there were to be increases in various other naval armaments, of a nature designed to enhance the fighting efficiency of the navy.\(^4\) Since the Admiral justified the increase with an interpretation of the Moroccan crisis direct-

\(^3\)D. G. P., XXXI, #11307. Editors' footnote. pp. 3-5.

\(^4\)Tirpitz, Aufbau, pp. 208ff. During the Anglo-German confrontation triggered by the Morocco crisis, a practice concentration of the British Navy had prompted German counter-movements, during which the Admirals had discovered serious manpower and supply deficiencies. These were to be remedied by the Novelle. Walther Hubatsch, Die Era Tirpitz, (Goettingen, 1955) p. 90.
ly opposed to Bethmann's, the latter could not have been very favourably impressed. He made no immediate reply, but on receipt of a memorandum from the Admiral on August 30, he consulted the Foreign Office on the question, whereupon he made objections on two grounds: that such a Novelle would increase the danger of war with Great Britain, and that the existing tax structure could not support the additional financial burden. He and Tirpitz agreed to wait until the conclusion of the Franco-German Morocco talks.  

On September 26, on the occasion of his annual report to the Emperor, Tirpitz again presented his views of the diplomatic situation and of the German navy's role in world politics. The significance of the report is that Tirpitz advocated a new strategy of naval construction. Previously, he had defended the "risk" concept, which called for a German navy of such strength that, if the British navy engaged it in all-out battle, Great Britain's great-power status relative to other naval powers would be endangered. Now he desired a fleet which would have at least a "defensive chance" of victory against the British fleet. Such a strategy required a three-to-two ratio in the capital ships of the two navies. He saw two alternatives for the achievement of this ratio:

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5Tirpitz, Aufbau, p. 209. Tirpitz here used the incident to develop the impression of Bethmann's weakness and indecision by picturing him as grasping with evident relief for this temporary respite.
a mutual construction limitation to conform to the formula, or an independent German program to close the gap regardless of Great Britain's plans. Tirpitz claimed to prefer the first alternative, but his language betrays that he did not consider it to be the likely one. Both alternatives would permit the passage of the Novelle which he contemplated. At any rate, Germany could publicly offer the two-to-three ratio to Great Britain, thereby placing the "onus of rejection" on that nation.⁶

The Admiral's plan evidently made a most favourable impression on William II, who immediately wrote the Chancellor in support of the idea. At this time, he still admitted the gravity of Bethmann's objections and promised to keep them in mind. Four days later, he sent the Chancellor another letter on the same subject, but this time he adopted the Tirpitz plan as his own personal solution, and relegated the Admiral to the role of an enthusiastic supporter of the Imperial idea.⁷ Since Bethmann knew who had originated the idea, he must have realized that William II's adoption of it as his own was the strongest form of support for a Novelle. On November 11, the Emperor directed him to discuss the plan with Tirpitz, who, he claimed, had already been "acquainted

⁷Ibid., pp. 217-18.
with its outlines.\textsuperscript{8}

The discussion took place as directed on November 16.\textsuperscript{9} According to Tirpitz, the Chancellor agreed to accept a formal proposal of the expansion plan which should be incorporated into the 1912 navy estimates. The compilation of these estimates was to be retarded long enough to permit this inclusion. But Bethmann made it clear that his agreement to accept the proposal did not indicate personal approval of the plan; on the contrary, he reserved the right to withhold his support from it in the Reichstag debates. Tirpitz interpreted this to mean that Bethmann might resign rather than support this aspect of the Emperor's policy, if the Emperor pressed him on the issue. This interpretation was substantially correct. Fleet expansion so obviously contradicted the Chancellor's goals in foreign policy that he could not support it under any circumstances. Meanwhile, he contemplated no resignation, but vigorous political resistance.

The internal struggle which resulted from Bethmann's decision was another contest between the civilian and the military interpretations of Anglo-German relations. Part of the reason for the bitterness of the struggle was the fact that each side had its own representatives in England.

\textsuperscript{8}D. G. P., XXXI, #11319, pp. 28-9.
\textsuperscript{9}Tirpitz, \textit{Aufbau}, pp. 257-8.
Almost every report from Ambassador Metternich stressed the danger to Anglo-German relations of a Novelle such as was then contemplated. In fact, Metternich felt obliged to repeat this warning so often that it caused him some embarrassment. Bethmann and Kiderlen fully accepted his interpretation. The Chancellor had by no means given up his plan to bring about a rapprochement between the two countries, but, as he explained to Metternich on November 22, the Emperor was so strongly determined on a Novelle that he might even accept a change in Chancellors to secure its passage.\textsuperscript{10} He saw only one way to avoid the naval expansion and the consequent deterioration of Anglo-German relations:

The government can withstand the pressure for presentation of a supplementary navy law, and likely for an army increase, only if England decides to work for a positive understanding with us, and proves this decision with actions....I can convince His Majesty of the inopportunity of the Novelle only if the English government actually negotiates with us on the subject of a political understanding. Otherwise, His Majesty, as well as our public, will see in England's friendly assurances only an attempt to lull us to sleep for the moment, and thus to prevent our fleet increases.

Metternich thought he could discern a change in the British attitude towards Germany following the Morocco crisis. The nearness of war and the disclosure of Great Britain's commitments to France had convinced many people that Anglo-German relations must be improved. In particular,

\textsuperscript{10}D. G. P., XXI, #11321. pp. 31-3.
there was an outcry against the policies of Sir Edward Grey. Metternich told his Chancellor that opportunities for negotiations seemed excellent, but that any naval expansion at the present time would certainly wreck these opportunities.

The Naval Attaché, Captain Wilhelm Widenmann, made a very similar estimate of the English mood. He also recognized a reaction against the diplomacy of Sir Edward Grey and a desire to avoid further crises which could lead to a European war. Yet he interpreted this mood in a peculiarly military manner; it meant to him only that the German fleet expansion could proceed at this time without fear of British countermeasures. The same atmosphere which suggested to the diplomats the possibility of and need for negotiations, meant to the military an opportunity to increase armaments.

Bethmann used Metternich's reports to develop his case; Tirpitz used those of Widenmann. It was a question of which interpretation would gain favour with William II. The Emperor's choice was unambiguous, as the following example shows: in a despatch to Bethmann prompted by a particularly disagreeable Attaché report, Metternich count-

11 The naval Attaché could not be directly controlled by the civilian government. He made his reports not to the Ambassador, but to the Secretary of the Navy, who also issued his instructions. He had almost the position of an ambassador for the naval expansion party. Jaeckh, Kiderlen-Waechter, II, pp. 85-6.
ered Widenmann's position on every point. To the Attaché's conclusion that the fleet should be expanded now to exclude the possibility of a "Copenhagen" in the future, he opposed his own conclusion that the Novelle was a step towards war. The Emperor decorated the Ambassador's report with twenty-nine sarcastic comments. "Twaddle and nonsense," he wrote, "I agree entirely with the Attaché." Widenmann's report he labelled: "outstanding."

The conviction that the Novelle would seriously impair Anglo-German relations led Bethmann to use every available political pressure to prevent, delay or reduce the contemplated expansion in order to gain time to initiate another series of talks with Great Britain. Once the talks were in progress, he thought, the chance of their success would give him a lever of influence with the Emperor. He suggested to the army chiefs that an expansion of the army's capacity was far more necessary than a new navy law. The army chiefs took the hint and put forward proposals of their own, which they based on the argument that the army, being more directly responsible for the safety of the

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12 D. G. P., XXXI, #11314, 11316, pp. 15-7, 18-20, and marginal notations.

13 Captain Widenmann was aware of his Emperor's feelings and used his position of favour to intrigue against Metternich, even to the point of accusing him of being amenable to influences from the British Admiralty. Tirpitz, Aufbau, p. 250.

14 Ibid., p. 266.
Fatherland, had prior claim to expansion. Bethmann asked
the Prussian War Minister, Josias von Heeringen, to defend
this position vigorously in connection with the Novelle. On November 18, the Imperial Treasury Secretary Adolf
Wermuth, a close collaborator of the Chancellor, rebelled
against the planned double load on finances. Admiral
Tirpitz was probably correct in the assumption that Bethmann
himself instigated the revolt. Ten days later, Wermuth
sent Tirpitz a long memorandum explaining that the present
tax structure could not support the load of both army and
navy increases. On the same day Bethmann informed the
Admiral that the Novelle could not be included in the 1912
Navy estimates as previously planned, but must stand alone,
since it was now not only a question of naval increase, but
of a general increase in armaments. Furthermore, a debate
on the measures in the upper house must await the Emperor's
decision on the question of new taxes.

15Friedrich Haselmayr, Diplomatische Geschichte des
Zweiten Reichs von 1871 bis 1918. (Muenchen, 1963) VI, i, p. 150.

16Graf Westarp, Konservative Politik im letzten Jahrzehnt

17Tirpitz, Aufbau, pp. 227, 258-59, 278-79. It later
became evident that the reason was spurious, that here was
sufficient surplus on hand to finance the Novelle without
more taxes.


19Haselmayr, Geschichte, VI, i, p. 150. Tirpitz, Aufbau,
p. 261.
Under this onslaught, Tirpitz remained intransigent until Wermuth tendered his resignation. In view of the impending Reichstag elections, this could have had serious consequences for the government's working arrangement in that assembly. Tirpitz had no choice but to compromise; he consented to a reduction in the Novelle from six to three capital ships in the same time period. On January 25, the Emperor approved the reduced Novelle. As a further concession to Bethmann's "conspirators," the throne speech in the new Reichstag on February 7 made only general references to a fleet increase, without giving any details.

This was a political triumph for Bethmann, but at the same time it illustrated his lack of willpower in opposition to the Navy Secretary and the Emperor. He had managed to cut the Novelle's shipbuilding program in half, and he had at least kept open the possibility of a further reduction. But even this reduced Novelle was, in his personal judgment, a mistake. He did not resign because he feared that he would be succeeded by an open supporter of naval expansion, perhaps even by Tirpitz. Thus, he began the compromise practice of reluctantly carrying out a policy which he personally thought wrong. Similarly, he agreed to include the announcement of navy increases in the throne speech on the very eve of Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin, though he must have realized what effect that would have on his freedom of
While the Haldane mission originated directly from an intercession by private persons, it was made possible by an officially cultivated climate of reconciliation which became effective in the autumn of 1911. On the German side, Bethmann and Metternich worked for a resumption of Anglo-German negotiations, whereby they hoped to prevent a sharpening of the naval rivalry. The Chancellor thought the situation ripe for a general understanding, and directed his Ambassador to explore the possibilities in that direction. Metternich demurred; he explained that only a colonial settlement seemed possible at the moment, and an attempt to gain a general understanding would only make the British government suspicious. Though he would carry out the instructions if Bethmann insisted, he felt obliged to point this out. Bethmann had complete confidence in the Ambassador (a confidence which his Emperor certainly did not share), and he permitted him to approach Sir Edward Grey in the manner he thought best. The resulting interview revealed no

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20See the interpretation of Heinrich Friedjung, *Das Zeitalter des Imperialismus*. (Berlin, 1922) III, pp. 96ff.

21D. G. P., XXXI, #11341, pp. 78-80.

22Ibid., XXXI, #11342, pp. 81-82.

23See for example his marginal notation, Ibid., #11344, p. 86.
startling change of attitude on Grey's part, but Metternich thought him well-disposed to a reopening of negotiations. Metternich's temporary substitute, Richard von Kuehlmann, came to the same conclusion, and reported it to Bethmann on January 8. Thus, it seems likely that the Chancellor would eventually have initiated another series of Anglo-German talks. In view of Metternich's scruples, these talks would have been on a very limited basis, and consequently would have had a fair chance of success.

The talks were actually resumed on the occasion of Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin, through the arrangement of two international businessmen, Sir Ernest Cassel and Albert Ballin. The manner in which they went about their voluntary mediation led to misunderstanding from the start, for each government believed that the other had taken the first official step. Apparently Albert Ballin made the first move, asking Sir Ernest Cassel to approach the First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill, with an offer to mediate between him and the German Emperor, and, if possible, to arrange for him to meet Tirpitz. Churchill, who thought the offer had emanated from the German Emperor, declined to

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24Ibid., XXXI, #11345, pp. 87-92. This report irritated William II to such a degree that he drafted a note, in his own hand, to inform Kuehlmann of the wrongheadedness of his concepts of the British situation.

visit Berlin, but declared himself in favour of negotiations. Together with Lloyd George and Sir Edward Grey, he prepared a memorandum in answer to the supposed German suggestion. On January 29, Sir Ernest Cassel delivered the "answer" to William II, in the presence of Ballin and Bethmann. In Bethmann's accurate summary, it proposed

...acceptance of English superiority at sea—no augmentation of the German naval programme—a reduction as far as possible of this programme—and, on the part of England, no impediment to our colonial expansion—discussion and promotion of our colonial ambitions—proposals for mutual declarations that the two powers would not take part in aggressive plans and combinations against one another.27

The memorandum contained nothing which had not been the subject of discussion before, but the Emperor received it with an enthusiasm and a sense of triumph which is difficult to explain. He interpreted the contents as "a formal neutrality proposal for the event of German involvement in war, dependent on certain cutbacks in the area of naval construction."28 Such an interpretation was possible only from the viewpoint of the Widenmann-Tirpitz assumption that Great Britain found it nearly impossible to compete financially with Germany's naval construction, and desperate—


ly needed a respite. In this light, the memorandum appeared simply as further proof of England's desperation; it is not surprising that William II thought he could exploit the British offer. Almost immediately he set down an answer in his own hand, accepting the British basis with the proviso that the Novelle, which was then in preparation, should remain intact. Bethmann thereupon gave a brief sketch of the Novelle to Cassel, who believed that the British government would accept the German proviso.

Bethmann shared neither his Emperor's enthusiasm nor his surprise at the contents of the British memorandum though he was probably surprised by the Emperor's reaction. Since he was also under the impression that the British government had taken the first step, he believed that the German proviso would be accepted. He was soon set straight by his Ambassador, who saw no chance of a change of British policy in the direction outlined in the memorandum if Germany insisted on the Novelle. The British answer gave convincing proof of this. While the spirit of the German reply was "cordially appreciated" in England, the German naval programme caused great

\[29\] Ibid., pp. 124ff. In his memoirs, he claimed that Bethmann, Cassel, and Ballin helped him to compose the answer, that he was only the recorder in a group of equals. From the contents, it seems to be mostly his own work.

\[30\] Bethmann's original optimism, D. G. P., XXXI, #11348, pp. 99-100.
concern. The British government was prepared to negotiate "...if...German naval expenditure can be adapted by an alteration of the tempo or otherwise so as to render any serious increase unnecessary to meet the German programme." On that assumption, Haldane, the War Minister, would come to Berlin for an unofficial exploration of the ground for negotiations.

Bethmann knew that William II was intransigent on just that point—that, in other words, there was no basis for the negotiations. Yet he replied on February 4 that Britain's wishes in the area of naval construction could be accommodated in exchange for equivalent political guarantees. Ironically, William II annotated the German copy of this reply with guidelines which directly contradicted Bethmann's offer. He ordered negotiations "for the time being" on the basis of retention of the Novelle. Later, under the Navy Secretary's influence, the provisional decision for retention became absolute. The same day, Bethmann wrote to Metternich explaining the steps he had taken. He believed there was "not the slightest chance" that Sir Edward Grey could accept the German basis for the talks, though he hoped that a Liberal cabinet from which Grey was excluded might take up

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31 Ibid., XXXI, #11350. Editors' footnote. pp. 102-3.
32 Ibid., XXXI, #11351, pp. 103-4.
the offer. Grey's exclusion seemed possible in view of recent severe criticism of his foreign policy. The ambassador had to dispel this hope; Grey's departure, he said, could not be expected, for he had the solid support of Haldane, Prime Minister Herbert Henry Asquith, and Churchill. The German basis would, however, be accepted on the assumption that Bethmann's answer implied a possible dropping of the Novelle. Metternich personally did not believe in this possibility, and called the situation a "vicious circle."

Of the British and German officials connected with this preliminary to the Haldane mission, only Metternich and Bethmann were in a position to appreciate the colossal misunderstanding, to note that the two parties were approaching the talks with contradictory purposes. Bethmann alone realized that the Emperor's whole conception of the affair was a dangerous delusion, yet he took no steps to set him straight. Clearly, he was directly responsible for initiating talks for which there was no common point of origin. A strange action for a moralist like Bethmann! His purpose becomes somewhat clearer from his attempt to keep possible sources of trouble uniformed until the government was committed. Tirpitz, for example, heard of the plans on February 5, the

34Ibid., XXXI, #11353, pp. 105-6.
day after Bethmann sent his accommodating answer. The Admiral was somewhat indignant, and considered this as a fait accompli designed to exclude his objections. "If I had been consulted," he told Bethmann, "I would never have approved of this unofficial procedure of initiating negotiations through international businessmen." Tirpitz knew immediately that his Novelle was in danger, but the Chancellor assured him that it would be mentioned in the throne speech as planned. In the Admiral's opinion, Bethmann was now unsure of himself, and began to doubt the wisdom of his action. "He realized that hesitation at this point might be dangerous."

Kiderlen played a very minor role in all phases of the Haldane negotiations, and Haldane got the impression that it was the Chancellor's intention to keep him out of the talks as much as possible. The reason for this is not clear; either Bethmann no longer trusted Kiderlen after his handling of the Morocco crisis, or he feared that the realistic Kiderlen would disapprove of the initiation of talks on a basis which offered little chance for settlement, but a great possibility of further misunderstanding and annoyance.

What did Bethmann hope to gain from this deliberate

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36 Tirpitz, Aufbau, pp. 280-83.
gamble? Apparently he was conscious of his inability to force his decisions over the objections of the Emperor and the Navy Secretary. Yet he was unwilling to resign in protest, so he decided to place both Tirpitz and William II before a fait accompli. If Haldane seemed inclined to discuss a far-reaching political agreement, Bethmann could use this fact to pry naval concessions from William II. In his Reflections, he indicated that he simply did not accept the latter's decision to maintain the Novelle, but continued to work for its reduction. But to achieve this, he had to bring Haldane to Berlin, even if this could only be done by a misrepresentation of the Emperor's directives. A man of bolder nature, in Bethmann's position, would no doubt have handed in his resignation. The Chancellor took no such demonstrative action, but he still resisted with great persistence and ingenuity this naval policy which he thought wrong. What was fatal to his undertaking was the fact that he did not negotiate alone, but in conjunction with the Emperor and the Navy Secretary. Under those circumstances, it was impossible to hide the lack of unity in the German government.

The Chancellor believed that there was a middle ground on which Great Britain and Germany could settle their differences with approximately equal concessions. In his earlier

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38 Bethmann Hollweg, Reflections, I, p. 54.
efforts, he had sought that middle ground in a formula of this sort: Germany concedes a certain reduction in her planned naval construction, in return for which Great Britain promises neutrality if Germany becomes involved in a war on the Continent; this provision to be reciprocal and not to take effect in the event of aggression by the parties to the agreement. In the past, the policies of both governments had prevented a meeting on this ground. German authorities clung to their right to naval expansion; the British scurried for cover whenever the Entente seemed in danger, and France and Russia saw to it that this was often the case.

In the talks with Haldane, Bethmann was even more restricted than he had hitherto been. William II desired to retain the Novelle and to gain a definite neutrality agreement for Germany, but he mentioned no concessions.\(^{39}\) On Haldane's part, there was a similarly restricting instruction. The British Cabinet directed him to negotiate only on the basis of absolute loyalty to the Entente.\(^{40}\) This meant that he could give assurances of friendliness, and he could offer various parcels of colonial real estate. If a war actually broke out in spite of Britain's peaceful intentions, of which she was willing to give assurances, then Great Britain would be on France's side, regardless

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who was the aggressor. The fact that Bethmann and Haldane found it possible to agree on a political formula must be attributed to their fervent desire for success, which prompted them to exceed their instructions.

They met immediately on Haldane's arrival in Berlin, on February 8. Both negotiators confined themselves in this initial meeting to general explorations. Haldane spent some time convincing Bethmann that Great Britain had no secret agreements with France and Russia. The Chancellor assured his guest that Germany did not intend to "fall upon France" as soon as Great Britain's neutrality was assured. When he went on to propose a neutrality agreement, Haldane illustrated the interpretational difficulties of this, suggesting instead a mutual undertaking in which the parties should assure each other that they had no aggressive intentions. Bethmann was not impressed, but he promised to consider the matter. On his part, he dutifully defended the German intention to form a third active squadron, and he thought he had convinced Haldane of this necessity. That was not the main point of contention, said Haldane. Great Britain's alarm stemmed not from the third squadron proposal, but from the increase in Dreadnought construction.

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which would accompany its formation. On the colonial question, there was more agreement; Haldane outlined areas Great Britain might consider suitable for German expansion. In exchange, Bethmann assured him of German concessions regarding the Baghdad Railway. The negotiators gained the most favourable impressions of each other; Haldane was convinced that Bethmann would do his best to overcome difficulties in other departments of the German government.

In his first talk with the Chancellor, Haldane adhered scrupulously to the limitations placed on him by the exploratory nature of his mission. Next day, his conversations with Tirpitz and William II departed markedly from this pattern, although Haldane stated at the outset that he was not an official negotiator. The Emperor began by explaining that the present format of his Novelle was much reduced from its original form, that this in itself was a concession. But Haldane insisted that even this "reduced" tempo represented an increase in construction of capital ships, which could not be combined with a political understanding. Thereupon, William II and Tirpitz offered a postponement in the construction of Novelle ships from 1912-14-16 to 1913-16-19, which Haldane considered an improvement; in the Emperor's opinion, he had declared himself satisfied. Finally, they

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decided to go ahead with the political agreement alone; upon publication of such an agreement the Emperor could announce the modified naval construction arrangement.

The Navy Secretary and the Emperor made no allowance for the limited authorization of their guest and opened certain lines of discussion which had no place in a preliminary exploration. Bethmann had specifically warned Tirpitz not to propose his two-to-three ratio, but the Admiral saw fit to propose just that, though Haldane quickly disposed of it. Near the end of the discussion, William II gave Haldane a detailed copy of the planned Novelle, evidently in the hope that the latter would quickly glance at the document and give it his blessing. Haldane, however, simply put it in his pocket, explaining that technical navy matters would be checked by the Admiralty. William II immediately informed the Chancellor of his "success," and this report indicates the extent of his misinterpretation of Haldane's role. He spoke of an "accepted" basis and of confidently expected actions of the British government: for him, Haldane had become an official negotiator for the British cabinet. He thought the matter was practically settled.

45 D. G. P., XXXI, #11359, pp. 112-14.
Bethmann and Haldane could not regard William II's ham-handed interference as a success. Haldane confessed to Sir Edward Goschen that he was appalled; toward the end of the talk, he had tried to put on a cheerful face because he hoped to accomplish more with the Chancellor; this, Tirpitz and the Emperor had taken for an expression of satisfaction with the results obtained. When he met the Chancellor next day, Haldane found him also in a disturbed mood. The Chancellor sought to impress on Haldane once more that a complete British rejection of the Novelle would end the negotiations. He certainly did not regard the Emperor's proposals as "accepted."

The next day, however, Bethmann's pessimism disappeared entirely, for, contrary to expectations, he and Haldane worked out a mutually satisfactory political understanding. In its final form, the understanding retained the British offer of assurances against unprovoked attack and aggressive design. To this it added a neutrality agreement in the event of a war in which the contracting party was not an aggressor, a clause which Bethmann particularly desired.

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46 B. D. D., VI, #504, pp. 674-75.
49 Bethmann's original version, Haldane's changes and the final version, see D. G. P., XXXI, #11362, pp. 117-20.
Haldane sought to bring up the question of the Novelle, Bethmann avoided the issue on the grounds that it was a technical question which he was not competent to discuss. He hinted, however, that a strong political agreement would give him leverage to reduce the construction programme. The document ended with a statement of each country's concessions and desires on the colonial and Bagdhad Railway questions.

This last meeting convinced the Chancellor that the preliminary talks would lead to successful negotiations. Thus, when Metternich reported on February 12 that a complete surrender of the Novelle might become necessary, he replied, rather indignantly, that he could not agree at all. He explained his standpoint as follows:

Haldane has admitted here the necessity of a fleet Novelle. He realized that, without a third active squadron, we have no fleet at all for two or three months every year...Haldane therefore directed his requests not to the complete deletion of the Novelle, but to the question of increased Dreadnought construction. The deletion of the Dreadnoughts is at present the only question which is under consideration. Whether or not we can go that far, I cannot say at present. Should England desire this, the chances of our acceptance will depend on the scope of the political agreement.

The Chancellor's position on the Novelle becomes clear: he intended to remove the Dreadnoughts, if possible, and to pass it through the Reichstag simply as a measure designed to increase the efficiency of the existing forces; the fact

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that these would now be organized in three instead of two active squadrons did not cause him concern; he expected no British objections so long as the construction of capital ships was not effected. But he knew that Tirpitz and his followers would put up a stiff resistance to any such attempt to render the Novelle harmless. In the interval between Haldane's departure and the communication of the British reaction, Bethmann made two preliminary advances against the naval construction party. First, he sought to muzzle Widenmann, the troublesome Naval Attaché in London. On a recent occasion, the latter had spoken to a British Admiral about the desire of German "political circles" (Politik) to establish the two-to-three ratio in the navies of the two countries. Bethmann's request to the Navy Secretary not to discuss such a plan had been ignored, but this was a different matter; an Attaché could simply be ordered to refrain from such discussion. The Chancellor reported the incident to William II, and asked permission to reprimand Widenmann. After all, Attachés could not be permitted to contradict the official position of the government! But the Emperor saw the situation in a different light: Widenmann's conversation with the British Admiral was not official; they had merely discussed "what was a common topic of conversation in naval circles." Furthermore, a naval officer could not be re-
primanded by a mere civilian, but only by his "Highest Warlord," and the "Warlord" did not see fit to reprimand him.\footnote{51 \textit{Tirpitz, Aufbau.} pp. 293-94.}

Shortly after this Imperial rebuff, the Chancellor evidently began to doubt the British acceptance of the political agreement, and decided he might after all need the concession of Novelle battleships as a lever with England. In preparation for that eventuality, he sent Kiderlen to the Admiralty to acquaint Tirpitz with this possibility. Tirpitz emphatically declined even to consider the idea, and he informed the Emperor of Kiderlen's proposal.\footnote{52 \textit{Ibid.}, pp. 290-91.} This made it Kiderlen's turn to be enlightened by the Imperial schoolmaster: since Haldane's departure nothing had come to his notice to warrant the conclusion that the capital ships of the Novelle needed to be sacrificed to gain an agreement.\footnote{53 Kiderlen did not accept the reprimand without comment, but answered in an equally sarcastic letter (with ridiculous over-deference to His Imperial Majesty) explaining that he had merely tried to inform the Navy Secretary of the feelings of the Foreign Affairs Department. This serves to illustrate the difference in personalities of Kiderlen and Bethmann. The latter quietly accepted the Imperial displeasure. Jaeckh, \textit{Kiderlen-Waechter}, II, pp. 157-58.}

I cannot understand how your Excellency can come to such a conclusion. Your Excellency must be in possession of new information, probably from a private
source. I venture to remind your Excellency that, on
the specific request of the Chancellor, I have personal-
ly taken a hand in the negotiations—apparently not
without success—and I have the intention to continue
to do so...I order, therefore, that any additional
information in your possession be communicated to me
at once.

The two incidents resulted only in an indication of
the strength of Tirpitz's influence on the Emperor, and
the strength of their determination to realize the fleet
increase.

Expectations of successful negotiations must have
been high in the governments of both countries following
Haldane's return to England. Sir Edward Grey expressed his
personal satisfaction to Metternich; this in itself may
not be very significant, but Prime Minister Asquith expressed
similar sentiments in the House of Commons, much to the
satisfaction of the members. In Germany, Bethmann made
analogous announcements in the Reichstag. Such public
announcements are not lightly made, and certainly not if
it is expected that they will be contradicted by events.
Since the proposed political agreement could be evaluated
at a glance, the British cabinet must at least have believed
that further negotiations were possible on that basis.

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54 D. G. P., XXXI, #11365, 11369 pp. 121, 124-28, and
Editors' Footnote. Haselmayer, Geschichte, VI, i, p. 172.

55 Sir Arthur Nicolson had immediately prepared a critique
which proposed radical changes, but did not entirely reject
the political agreement. Yet he was probably the most anti-
It is therefore likely that the crucial factor was the copy of the Novelle which the Emperor had so generously (and voluntarily) supplied. It required scrutiny, and the Admiralty's objections were certainly not immediately available. That detailed study revealed increases in the size and fighting efficiency of the German navy in addition to the increase in the number of Dreadnoughts, and on that basis, the political agreement, in which Haldane had at any rate overstepped his bounds somewhat, seemed a totally one-sided concession on the part of Great Britain. The original optimism thus appeared unwarranted.

The about-turn came ten days after the first reaction. Grey and Haldane told Metternich that the German naval programme called for a sizable expansion in personnel, which led them to believe that new units, in addition to the announced third squadron, would be formed in the near future. The construction of smaller vessels was to be similarly over-expanded. In consequence, Great Britain would be required to undertake large additional expenditures, and public opinion would under those circumstances refuse to permit far-reaching political agreements. Two days later, Metternich received a memorandum setting down the Admiralty's calculation; on that occasion, Sir Edward Grey doubted if all the colonial territories Haldane had mentioned could

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be given in exchange for much smaller Bagdhad Railway concessions. Moreover, certain international legal complications had appeared. While these were not vital objections, the planned Novelle was an extremely serious one. If that main problem could be solved, the others would not present great difficulties. The two conversations amounted to a complete rejection of the tentative basis established by Haldane.

Bethmann was disappointed, but not surprised. After all, Metternich had warned him of just such a possibility. The Chancellor had at first rejected the warning, but later he sought to prepare the ground for further German concessions, so the possibility of a British rejection must have occurred to him. The failure of this attempt to prepare for further German concession left him only one futile course: to stand firm for the time being on the Haldane basis. Accordingly, he prepared a memorandum which carefully illustrated the British abandonment of the original basis:

England drops part of her colonial offer, is completely silent on the question of the political agreement, criticises our increase of personnel and submarines despite our concessions in the rate of naval construction. We must see in this a complete disavowal of Haldane. We are nevertheless still ready for a political agreement on the Haldane basis, and we will gladly

discuss English proposals in this area.\textsuperscript{58}

The Chancellor's conception of Haldane's role had never been unrealistic, and, as is evident from this statement, the British disavowal of the exploratory talks did not in his opinion preclude further negotiations. Indeed, he continued to agitate against the Novelle, though he officially supported its parliamentary passage.\textsuperscript{59} However, the Emperor's over-expectation now produced a violent overreaction. In fact, had not Bethmann and the Foreign Office put the damper on him, he would have plunged Europe into a crisis in order to appease his injured pride. Fortunately, his more questionable orders were simply not obeyed. This is not to imply that he habitually gave rein to his temper; on the contrary, he had been somewhat subdued since the \textit{Daily Telegraph} incident of the Buelow days. While his language still tended to be somewhat "picturesque" on occasion, his public statements and his actions were generally carefully considered. But this was a special case: he had personally taken a hand in diplomacy, and he flattered himself that such Imperial intervention accomplished much more than similar action by ordinary mortals.\textsuperscript{60} It was

\textsuperscript{58}D. G. P., XXXI, #11376, pp. 140-41.

\textsuperscript{59}Tirpitz, \textit{Aufbau}, pp. 313-14.

\textsuperscript{60}See the dispatch to Kiderlen for his own estimate of the effectiveness of his intervention. Jaeckh, \textit{Kiderlen-Waechter}, II, pp. 155-57.
not Haldane's disavowal or the change in the basis of negotiations that mattered; he felt personally slighted.

As usual, he vented his initial fury against Metternich's report; "Haldane and I are totally disavowed," he noted in the margin.

This is an insolent intervention in the sovereignty of a great nation, and into the decisions of her highest War Lord. That is not negotiation, but blackmail, and the delivery of sommations! I will not become involved in anything of that sort!61

He concluded his note with directions for Bethmann to proceed immediately with a detailed description of the Novelle in the Reichstag, so that it could be used to "soothe the worries and fears of the German people." Bethmann ignored this instruction. Next, William II directed Kiderlen to reprimand Ambassador Metternich for accepting and forwarding such a document. Kiderlen also ignored this.62

A greater shock awaited the Emperor: on March 4, Metternich reported a conversation with Haldane. The cabinet had decided that, depending on the size of the Novelle when actually passed, the Mediterranean fleet could be recalled to the North Sea to meet the increase of German naval power.63 Judging from the structure of his marginal

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62Ibid., XXXI, #11378, pp. 141-42.
comments, William II had difficulty containing himself. Such a move would be regarded as casus belli, would be answered with the original version of the Novelle, and eventually with mobilization! He instructed Bethmann to send a telegram ordering the Ambassador to make representations to that effect in London. In addition, he repeated his order for the immediate publication of the Novelle. 64 If the Chancellor did not publish it immediately, he would have it published by army and navy authorities. "My patience and that of the German people is at an end." That evening, William II personally sent a telegram to Metternich ordering him to make the representation he desired. 65

Such were the consequences of Bethmann's decision to remain in office despite his lack of sympathy for the Emperor's policy. As a result of the Chancellor's repeated circumventions of orders, the Emperor had finally taken things into his own hands. Bethmann now had no choice but to resign. The document justifying this step is of some importance, for it brings out his dedication to the cause of European peace and his sober insight into the German diplomatic situation. 66 Bethmann gives the impression of

64 Ibid., XXXI, #11385, 11386, p. 155.
65 Ibid., XXXI, #11387, p. 156.
a man consciously working against fate: "From various directives given by Your Majesty the last few days, I have concluded that Your Majesty not only disapproves of my conduct of foreign policy, but also mistrusts my actions."

He explained that the constitutional position of the Chancellor did not permit the announcement of policy changes by ministry secretaries without his approval. But the main point concerned the negotiations with Great Britain.

At the moment, these negotiations have taken an unfortunate turn due to England's shifting of the basis of negotiations. Despite this, it is in my humble opinion our duty to carry on the negotiations if only to prevent a sudden, crass disclosure of their failure, or possibly to keep open the chances of renewed negotiations if not now, at least at some time in the future. ...If we do not do this, not only will our relations with England be aggravated in a dangerous fashion, but French chauvinism, which has already been rekindled, will be encouraged to the highest hopes. France will become so provocative that we will have to attack her. In such a war, France will automatically have the assistance of Russia, and no doubt that of England as well, whereas for our allies, the casus foederis will not arise....I cannot be responsible for creating such a situation. If war is forced upon us, we will fight, and with God's help, win. But to unleash such a war without our honour or vital interest being involved would be a crime against Germany's destiny, even if we could look forward to complete victory. Even that is, at least on the sea, not to be expected.

He explained the instructions he had sent to Metternich—to state in London that only the ship construction aspect of the Novelle was under consideration in the present negotiations, but to emphasize German willingness to continue the talks on a political agreement. Into this situation, William II had seen fit to interpose his own decision without
Bethmann's consent. He had thereby removed control of foreign policy from him.

Your Majesty has evidently determined to conduct a policy for which, for reasons just stated, I cannot assume responsibility.... On the strength of the office I hold from Your Majesty, I am responsible before God, country, history and my conscience, for the policy Your Majesty orders. Not even Your Majesty can remove this responsibility from me.

For the events of the brief Chancellor crisis, one must depend heavily on the account of Admiral Tirpitz. The Emperor evidently collapsed under the pressure and conceded rather more than was necessary—namely to leave open all Novelle construction dates in order that these could be used in the negotiations. But now Tirpitz threatened to resign, and William II retracted the concession. The argument began anew, this time with the participation of the Empress, who pleaded with the Chancellor to come to a decision (favourable, of course) and no longer to retreat before English pressure. Bethmann could not have been unduly affected by the Lady's distress, for he made only the minimal concession of dropping his categoric objection to the Novelle. Meanwhile, he would refrain from making announcements of its contents until all hope of a settlement with England had disappeared. He directed Metternich to approach Haldane with this information.  

67 Tirpitz, Aufbau, pp. 318-20, 323-25.

68 D. G. P., XXXI, #11394, pp. 166-67. Haselmayr interprets this "mere postponement" as a victory for Tirpitz. Haselmayr, Geschichte, VI, Part I, pp. 175-77. On this day, the Emperor greeted Tirpitz with the words "we have won" so he evidently considered that Bethmann had retreated. Neither of these views seems justified.
From the test of strength with Tirpitz, Bethmann emerged with something close to a victory. His strength, the Emperor admitted uneasily, lay in the great trust placed in him by foreign officials. Under these circumstances, a more aggressive nature, not satisfied with something only slightly better than a stalemate, might possibly have carried a policy in complete opposition to the Grand Admiral. But Bethmann was not the man to seek total victories.

In consequence of his conviction that the Anglo-German talks must continue, Bethmann sent off another proposal for a political agreement, which he hoped might be favourably considered in view of the postponement of the Novelle publication. After a certain amount of pressure from Ambassador Metternich, the British cabinet announced exactly what it was willing to give in the way of political guarantees in exchange for the complete scrapping of the Novelle. This formula, delivered on March 17, did indeed contain a clause which could be interpreted as a neutrality promise. In Metternich's opinion, the phrase "nor join in any unprovoked attack" implied a neutrality conditional upon Germany not being in any sense the aggressor. It was, of course, a very weak neutrality undertaking, certainly not much better than

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69 Tirpitz, Aufbau, p. 324.
70 D. G. P., XXXI, #11395, pp. 167-69.
71 Ibid., XXXI, #11399, 11400, 11403, pp. 178, 181-3.
the old British offer not to become party to anything which had an unprovoked attack as its object. It was still very far from the formula desired by Germany, which would guarantee British neutrality in case Germany became involved in a war on the continent against her own will.

Metternich further reported Grey stating that he considered Bethmann responsible for the present sensible German diplomacy and that, if he remained Chancellor, future Anglo-German friendship seemed likely. Metternich's wording of these alleged statements definitely implied a slight to the Emperor, who fancied himself responsible for the continuity of Germany policies. He certainly interpreted the matter as a slight. His outburst indicates that he may have found Bethmann's famous integrity difficult to live with:

I have never before in my life heard of concluding an agreement with and on account of a particular statesman. From the report, it is evident that Grey has no idea who rules here, and that I am responsible. He prescribes to me who shall be my minister if I wish to conclude an agreement with England.

This mood may explain why the now obvious collapse of the negotiations gave the Emperor a certain amount of pleasure.

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72Ibid., XXXI, #11403, p. 183. Emperor's marginal notation. Grey's report of these conversations differs substantially in detail though not in spirit, from Metternich's report. Grey makes no mention of the various pro-Bethmann statements which Metternich attributes to him. He reports the Ambassador hinting at the far-reaching consequences of a "change of personnel" in Berlin. Possibly, Metternich deliberately sought to obtain pro-Bethmann statements in order to strengthen the Chancellor's hand. B. D. D., VI, #539, p. 715.

73Tirpitz, Aufbau, pp. 328-30.
William II, wrote Tirpitz, noted with relief that Bethmann had completely collapsed. He had advised him to change the basis of the negotiations completely, to make a public offer of a complete offensive-defensive alliance with the inclusion of France. If Britain rejected this, she would be exposed as the recalcitrant party. "The agreement talks on Haldane's basis are dead."74

The talks were indeed dead, although both parties went through the motions for a few more weeks. Bethmann chose to ignore the Emperor's suggested new basis, and to make one more try on the old basis.75 But he displayed a great deal of impatience at the last British offer, which he mercilessly reduced to platitudes: "Sir Edward Grey wishes to assure us that England will not, in the future, attack us without provocation; we must conclude that, in the past, we had to reckon with that possibility." In his memoirs, he remarked in this connection. "...it was characteristic of the English point of view as to peace and war that renunciation of unprovoked aggression should be considered an especial proof of friendship." All in all, his instruction to Metternich on March 18 was a rather brusque demand for some action on England's part, and of course, this proved futile. On March 22, Bethmann could no longer procrastinate: the publication

75D. G. P., XXXI, #11406, pp. 188-89.
of the Novelle removed the last basis for discussion.

It was characteristic of Bethmann that he did not blame Tirpitz and his followers for the breakdown of the talks; nor did he doubt the integrity of the British statesmen. He made this summary of the reason for this failure:

I...incline to the view that we had to do, with an honourable attempt to come to an understanding on the part of England. It failed because England was not willing to follow out this understanding to its logical consequences. An understanding with us meant that France and Russia might lose the certainty that they could continue to count on the support of England in pursuing an anti-German policy. But that is just what England would not do and just what England could not do in view of its engagements....That is the real reason why the attempt at an understanding was wrecked. The naval question was an important, but not a deciding factor.76

In all fairness, something must be added to make the summary realistic. A British dismantling of the existing security system, (and this was at stake, despite all assurances to the contrary) which was necessary to achieve Bethmann's plan, was unlikely and could not be expected so long as the British mistrust of Germany continued. The fleet increases served only to strengthen this mistrust. In this light, the Novelle appears as the crucial factor in the failure. Bethmann realized this, for he remained implacably opposed to it. In 1919, he could not yet bring himself to admit this.

Events in Germany connected with the Haldane mission

76Bethmann Hollweg, Reflections, I, p. 57.
represented an open clash between the two competing policies toward Great Britain: that of the Chancellor and that of the Grand Admiral. Their exchanges of resignation salvos left the issue in doubt; perhaps Bethmann even had the better of it. There is no doubt, however, who had the final victory. In May, 1913, the Admiral's arch-enemy, Ambassador Metternich, was recalled from his London post. Once again, Bethmann acquiesced in a decision he knew to be wrong.

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77D. G. P., XXXI, #11427, pp. 231-32.
CHAPTER IV

THE BALKAN WARS AND ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS

In his memoirs, Sir Edward Grey traced a sequence from Austria's annexation of Bosnia to the Italian seizure of Tripoli and to the Balkan Wars, creating the impression that it was Austria's action which precipitated the real estate shift which almost wiped out European Turkey.\(^1\) It is at least equally valid to postulate France's Morocco entrenchment as the key to Italy's seizure of Tripoli and as the first event in the sequence. At any rate, shortly after the outbreak of war between Italy and Turkey, the Balkan states, under the leadership of Russia, took steps to realize their territorial ambitions at the expense of Turkey. Russia immediately revealed to her allies the contents of the supposedly secret agreement, and even the Triple Alliance soon had detailed information concerning this Balkan League.\(^2\) It was evident that such an extension of Balkan Slav power, under the leadership of Russia, must soon come in conflict with Austria-Hungary, for this power with her numerous Slav minority groups was generally regarded as the next target for Balkan nationalism.

Diplomats both in England and Germany realized the

\(^1\)Grey, Twenty-Five Years, I, p. 260.

danger of an Austro-Russian confrontation in the Balkans, and from this realization they derived similar conclusions. Such a situation eventually produced, unofficially, the kind of diplomatic accord which had been sought in vain through deliberate stimulation. For Bethmann's foreign policy, these wars and the diplomatic reverberations originating from them were of special importance; they eventually involved him in a choice between his diplomatic goal—friendship with England—and the unquestioned basis of all German diplomacy—solidarity of the alliance with Austria. Ironically, Bethmann's direct role in this development was comparatively small, for Kiderlen-Waechter took charge of Germany's foreign policy in the summer of 1912.

The stage was set for Anglo-German co-operation by the disillusionment of both powers with their alliance partners. In the German government, the Austrian Foreign Minister Leopold Graf Berchtold had a poor reputation. It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that German officials did not really comprehend Austria's Balkan dilemma. When Berchtold proposed collective Great-Power warnings in Constantinople and in Balkan capitals, Kiderlen characterized this merely as an attempt on Berchtold's part to confound domestic critics, who had often pointed out his lack of initiative. The Chancellor added that this was his impression as well.

\[3\text{Ibid., XXXIII, } #12087, \text{ pp. 49-51.}\]
When Berchtold eventually withdrew his proposal because of negative reaction in Constantinople, Kiderlen informed Bethmann of this with gleeful sarcasm. 4

More serious, in Kiderlen's eyes, was the fact that Berchtold had neglected to consult with Germany prior to making his proposals. Since Chancellor Bethmann was to visit Berchtold in Buchlau on September 7 and 8, Kiderlen asked him to bring the matter to his host's attention. 5

In view of the united stand of the Entente powers, Germany could not well follow a policy divergent from that of Austria. For this reason, it was particularly important that Austria consult Germany before taking action. "I would consider it useful," wrote Kiderlen, "if you Excellency could bring this standpoint out in a firm but friendly manner. We are not inclined to play the Austrian satellite in the Orient."

While German diplomats realized the importance of the Austrian alliance, this made them even more impatient with what they considered Austrian blunders. Berchtold fully reciprocated the distrust of his ally. At the Buchlau meeting, he was not impressed by the Chancellor's grasp of foreign policy

4Ibid., XXXIII, #12133, pp. 89-91.

5Ibid., XXXIII, #12135, pp. 92-94. No doubt, the German Foreign Office was inclined to worry about Austria's tendency to take precipitous action without consulting her ally ever since she had plunged into the annexation of Bosnia (1908) without giving adequate warning to Germany. (See D. G. P., XXVI)
details; the latter seemed to agree with Berchtold's summary of Austrian policy mainly because he had neither the firm conviction nor the base of knowledge to disagree. 6

Russian Foreign Minister Sergei O. Sazonov's visit to Great Britain revealed a similar atmosphere of distrust between Great Britain and Russia. Sir Arthur Nicolson reported great disappointment in Russia over Great Britain's apparent lack of sympathy for Russia's Balkan policy. 7

The Russian government's official communique produced negative press assessments of the value of the Entente for Russia. The press felt that England's position as a major "Musselman" power prevented her from appreciating Russia's obligations as the major Slav power. Nicolson feared for the life of the Entente.

To the pressing Balkan problems, the British and German foreign offices offered similar solutions, a fact which did much to further diplomatic co-operation. Sir Edward Grey closed a dispatch to the British Ambassador in Austria with the following guideline: "We must do all we can to keep Austria and Russia co-operating together in Balkan affairs. It is the only way to prevent them from falling out." 8

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6 U. A., VI, #3771, pp. 415-16.
8 Ibid., IX, #769, pp. 729-30.
September 7, Kiderlen suggested to the French Ambassador that Russia and Austria together should take the initiative in Balkan matters. He undertook to use his influence in Vienna to that end, on the assumption that France would act similarly in St. Petersburg.\(^9\)

This Anglo-German community of interest and the rapid deterioration of the Balkan peace led Sir Edward Grey to approach the German Chargé d'Affaires, Richard von Kuehlmann, with an offer to keep the respective foreign offices in close touch during the crisis.\(^10\) Grey's private secretary, Sir William Tyrrel, continued the conversations, explaining that Grey was extremely tired of the long Anglo-German feud, and heartily desired to bring it to an end. The present situation seemed an ideal opportunity to establish relations which might expand to all areas of conflict between the two nations. Kuehlmann, like Nicolson, saw in the Anglo-Russian disenchantment a possibility for the rupture of the Entente, and he promptly informed Bethmann of his discovery. His report was a very optimistic one.

Earlier in his Chancellorship, Bethmann might have greeted such a report with enthusiasm, for the breakup of

\(^9\)D. G. P., XXXIII, #12189, pp. 139-40 and editors' footnote.

\(^10\)Balkan events October 14, peace between Turkey and Italy. October 17, Balkan wars break out. Grey's offer, Ibid., XXXIII, #12284, pp. 238-42.
the Entente was the highest objective of his foreign policy. Now, he took scant notice. Kiderlen sent Kuehlmann a cautiously positive reply, agreeing to the suggested co-operation, but questioning the validity of Sir Edward Grey's "change of heart." Why had he so carefully emphasized the personal and non-official nature of the conversations?

Please be sure to tell Sir Edward Grey that, though we are, as he can see, quite ready to go hand in hand with England, we must place two conditions on our acceptance. One, that the talks shall be absolutely secret, and in particular, shall not be given away by discreet hints... The other, that in case an agreement be achieved, it shall not be treated as a pudendum, but openly represented with the other powers... We are prepared to enter on this action only if we are certain that England will not merely use it to her own personal end and then sacrifice it to other relations.

Bethmann annotated this cynical document with one word: "Agreed." Evidently, he shared fully his Foreign Secretary's suspicions of British motives.

Before the opening of Balkan hostilities, the Great Powers had unanimously and hypocritically decided that the territorial status quo must not be altered by the war. The course of the war made short work of the resolution;

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11 Ibid., XXXIII, #12287, pp. 233-37.

12 Since they were without exception aware of the existence and aims of the Balkan League and of Russia's leadership thereof, they could not well have contemplated military action to prevent territorial aggrandisement of the Balkan powers at the expense of Turkey. Obviously, the declaration was merely to prevent territorial expansion of Turkey, should she prove victorious.
Turkish forces suffered severe defeats on all fronts and fell back almost to Constantinople. Negotiations of the powers therefore began on the basis of some territorial adjustment.

On October 28, Sir Edward Grey assured Kuehlmann that the Anglo-German co-operation, over which he expressed great pleasure, should continue through these dangerous developments. It would be particularly useful, he said, for the two countries to support joint Austro-Russian action.\textsuperscript{13} Russia and France, on the other hand, came up with a proposal on behalf of the Entente: that the Great Powers offer their mediation on the basis of their complete territorial disinterest.\textsuperscript{14} This represented a contradiction of Grey's desire to de-emphasize alliance groups, and he was understandably annoyed with his alliance partners.\textsuperscript{15} Germany and Austria saw the proposal as a trap for Austria, for that nation could not by any stretch of the imagination consider herself territorially disinterested.

Far from expressing disinterest, Austria was firmly determined to prevent a Serbian extension to the Adriatic Sea. To this end, Austria advocated the creation of a new

\textsuperscript{13}Ibid., XXXIII, #12305, pp. 259-60.
\textsuperscript{14}Ibid., XXXIII, #12307, pp. 261-70.
\textsuperscript{15}Ibid., XXXIII, #12346, pp. 300-1.
state, Albania, between Serbia and the Adriatic coast. Though he encountered opposition from a vacillating Emperor, Bethmann succeeded in placing German diplomacy firmly behind this Austrian plan. As usual, the Emperor issued frequent and contradictory directives, which his diplomats did not act on. Finally, he ordered a policy of firm support of Austria along the lines advocated by his Chancellor. This policy was then implemented.

In November, the question of a Serbian port put the German diplomats through a tight-rope act, the object of which was to continue co-operation with England, while at the same time firmly supporting Austria. Grey and Bethmann began by clarifying Austria's official position, which did not exclude fair Serbian territorial compensation elsewhere, but which precluded at the outset any possibility of a port. Russia, on the other hand, supported Serbia's claim to part of the Adriatic coast. The new German Ambassador in London, Prince Karl Max von Lichnowsky, adhered fully to his instructions and gave no hope that German influence could be used to bring about an Austrian retreat. At this point, Sir Edward Grey suggested a Great-Power mediation which would

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16 Ibid., XXXIII, #12346, pp. 300-1.
17 Ibid., XXXIII, #12349, 12405, pp. 302-4, 373-74.
18 Ibid., XXXIII, #12399, pp. 363-64.
treat the port question as part of the general settlement and would avoid an Austro-Russian confrontation on the issue. In this manner, both Austria and Russia managed an honourable disengagement.

When British and German diplomats realized how far co-operation between the two countries had gone, a curious reaction set in. They seemed to search for a new diplomatic balance, a new set of stable relationships. In the process, they delimitied to each other exactly how far they would go in the de-emphasis of existing alliances. On November 25, Kiderlen released a press statement which so strongly emphasized the collective role of the European concert that it was interpreted as a check to Austria. To dispel the notion that Austria and Germany were in disagreement, Bethmann declared in the Reichstag:

Should there be—which we do not hope—insoluble differences, (when it comes to settling the affairs in the Near East) it will be a matter for those powers which are directly interested in that specific case to see that their interests are recognized. That holds also for our allies. If, however, in making good their interests they are unexpectedly attacked by a third party, and their existence is threatened, then we would, true to our alliance obligations, have to step resolutely to the side of our ally.

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19 Helmreich is of the opinion that Bethmann intended the article to correct an erroneous impression given by the Emperor's exuberant statements to Francis Ferdinand on the occasion of the latter's visit to Germany. Ernst Christian Helmreich, The Diplomacy of the Balkan Wars 1912-13. (Cambridge, Mass., 1938) p. 244.

20 Ibid., p. 245.
Clearly, Bethmann thought it inadvisable to leave any doubt concerning the strength of the Dual Alliance, even at the risk of endangering the promising Anglo-German co-operation. He displayed here for the first time the fateful tendency to over-compensate whenever the solidarity of the Dual Alliance was questioned. A rapprochement with England was no doubt still his goal, but he was not disposed to pursue it in a crisis at the risk of jeopardizing long-standing friendships. Sir Edward Grey was indeed somewhat taken aback by the Chancellor's speech, but he also placed limits on the flexibility of his foreign policy. On two occasions he gave Lichnowsky to understand that Germany could not count on British neutrality if a war developed (regardless, how) between Austria and Russia, and Germany joined her ally. These mutual limitations seemed not to produce any resentment. On the contrary, they provided added incentive for a peaceful solution to the real estate squabbles.

On December 4, an armistice ended Balkan hostilities; the former belligerents met in London to discuss peace terms. At the same time, the resident Ambassadors of the Great Powers met in conference to adjust the claims of their protégés without involving Europe in a war. The Triple Alliance entered the conference with demonstratively united

\[\text{\textsuperscript{21}D. G. P., XXXIII, #12447, 12481, pp. 417-20, 451-53.}\]
front, for on December 5, their alliance agreements had been renewed long ahead of schedule. In addition, Austria showed her determination by the re-appointment of the activist Chief of the General Staff, Count Franz Conrad von Hoetzen-dorf. Despite this stage setting of unity, Bethmann issued instructions to avoid procedures which might emphasize the bi-polarity of the Powers.\textsuperscript{22} Proposals were not to be made on behalf of individual nations. Lichnowsky was, however, to support generally the position of his allies, particularly that of Austria. The German desire to avoid undue emphasis on alliances coincided completely with Sir Edward Grey's policy.

In the four days from December 17 to 21, the Conference dealt effectively with the most dangerous question—the matter of a Serbian port.\textsuperscript{23} The solution was favourable to the Triple Alliance, particularly to Austria: Albania was to extend from Montenegro to Greece along the Adriatic Sea, and Serbia was to be compensated with a railway outlet to a neutral Albanian port. The problem of the location of the fortress of Scutari, however, proved more difficult of solution. On Kiderlen's advice, the conference adopted a dilatory procedure to avoid a showdown before the Christmas

\textsuperscript{22}\textit{Ibid.}, XXXIV, #12540, pp. 44-6.

\textsuperscript{23}\textit{Ibid.}, XXXIV, #12545, 12557, pp. 53-4, 63-4.
recess.

Four days were sufficient to reveal the position of the new German Ambassador; despite his instructions, Lichnowsky displayed great sympathy for the positions of Great Britain and Russia. He was particularly impressed by Grey's chairmanship of the conference, which he described as flawlessly neutral. He claimed to detect a pronounced loosening of Entente bonds; Sir Edward Grey, who had to this point supported the position of the Triple Alliance, now had every right to expect Germany to bring Austria around on the Scutari matter—to let this fortress go to Montenegro instead of to Albania as Austria desired.24

Bethmann and the German diplomats were still on their guard; they shared neither Lichnowsky's enthusiasm for Grey nor his estimate of the Entente's troubles. In their view, the quid pro quo suggested by Lichnowsky was not required. Russia had gained substantially through the great success of her Balkan allies, a success which would have been impossible without Austria's great forbearance. The latter now had the right to safeguard her interests in view of the growth of Slav power on her borders. Kiderlen feared that Lichnowsky was "being taken" by Sir Edward Grey.25 He was probably

24Ibid., XXXIV, #12557, 12558, 12561, 12562, pp. 63-74. In his opinion that the Entente bonds were loosening, Lichnowsky was vigorously supported by the enthusiastic Kuehlmann.

right. Judging from the words of the Russian Ambassador Count Paul Benckendorff, Russia was quite satisfied with Sir Edward Grey's attitude: "England does not wish war, therefore she works toward compromise, which will assure a Russian success, consequently a success of the Triple Entente."^26

To this point, Kiderlen, the acknowledged Balkan expert, had directed foreign policy almost singlehandedly; only occasional approvals from Bethmann are in evidence. Kiderlen's death on December 30 forced Bethmann to take once more an active part in the conduct of diplomacy. His first task was to issue instructions for the renewal of the Ambassadors' conference. He told Lichnowsky specifically to co-operate with British diplomats in order to avert a renewal of hostilities in the Balkans.\(^27\) On January 4, 1913, Grey proposed a Great-Power demarche in Constantinople, which Bethmann agreed to support. He refused support for a French proposal of an accompanying naval demonstration, partly because he knew Sir Edward Grey to be in opposition to such a step.\(^28\) While he was thus tenderly concerned with Anglo-German co-operation, he did not fail to support Austria;

\(^{26}\)Ibid., XXXIV, #12561, pp. 70-73. Stieve, Der Diplomatische Schriftwechsel Iswolskys 1911-14. (Berlin, 1924) III, p. 58.

\(^{27}\)D. G. P., XXXIV, #12592, pp. 102-3.

\(^{28}\)Ibid., XXXIV, #12616, pp. 129-31.
when the Russian Ambassador in Berlin complained of Austrian intransigence, he answered with a sharp refusal to put pressure on his ally. He advised Russia to approach Austria directly and to seek a solution by mutual compromise.

As the Conference took up the task of adjusting Albania's borders, there was more difficulty with Lichnowsky, who persistently advocated German pressure to reduce Austria's demands. The same request came from Grey through his Ambassador in Berlin, but Bethmann held fast to his determination not to pressure Austria. In answer to Grey, he suggested British pressure on Russia instead. Meanwhile, Lichnowsky supported his Alliance partners only with ill-concealed reluctance. He reported Russian Ambassador Bencken­ dorff declaring that Russian could no longer yield in the matter of Albania. Lichnowsky was sure this was no bluff; he was thoroughly alarmed. "If we neglect to tell Austria that we do not desire war over Albania and Serbia, war will come." On receipt of this somewhat hysterical plea, Bethmann decided that it was time for a thorough reorientation of his Ambassador, but this proved to be a difficult process.

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29 Ibid., XXXIV, #12635, p. 149.
30 Ibid., XXXIV, #12696, pp. 210-11.
31 Ibid., XXXIV, #12705, p. 223.
32 Ibid., XXXIV, #12708, 12748, 12763, pp. 227-28, 270, 281-83, steps in this process of reorientation.
On January 20, the Chancellor replied to Lichnowsky's warning that he might have reminded the Russian Ambassador of Austria's vital interest in the shaping of Balkan affairs; Russia's interest, on the other hand, was merely a sentimental one. Moreover, Austria had accepted Serbian occupation of the Sandjak of Novi Bazar, a very significant concession which Benckendorff had evidently forgotten. "Our policy," he concluded,

...will support Austria's wishes insofar as necessary to maintain our ally's Great-Power position. If it thereby comes in opposition to Russia, it is because Russian policy aims at a reduction of that Great-Power position. I beg your Excellency to keep these points in mind during the coming negotiations.

Such a lecture from Kiderlen would probably have terminated the discussion. With Bethmann, Lichnowsky chose to make the point again. He could not judge, he said, whether Russia's Balkan interests were indeed only sentimental; nor could he ignore the fact that public opinion could be as easily aroused by sentimental as by rational consideration—vide the Hohenzollern candidature to the Spanish throne.

As for Austria, he feared that influential circles in Vienna were resigned to the inevitability of a war to solve the South Slav dilemma. They could only entertain such hopes with full expectation of German support. Such unconditional support must therefore be denied them.

Once more the Chancellor rejected the viewpoint, this time with the patient irony of a kindly professor. He did
not mind controversial viewpoints on foreign policy, particularly when expounded with Lichnowsky's skillful historical and political excursions, but in the performance of his duties, the Ambassador must set aside his personal feelings in favour of energetic pursuit of the policy laid down by the Chancellor. For the present, "...our task is clear: Solution of the Scurari question through compromise and co-operation with Great Britain, but without undermining our relations with Austria." Like Lichnowsky, he desired closer co-operation with Great Britain, but

...our present co-operation with England, which cannot be nurtured too carefully, is not based on sentimental considerations, nor solely on mutual desire for peace. The English are accustomed to sober calculations and noting the united action of the Triple Alliance, they endeavour to keep their existing connections intact. We must do the same, or expose ourselves to the danger that an England whose ties to us are still rather weak will, under pressure from Russia and France, abandon us. That would have the most disastrous consequences.

There is further evidence of Bethmann's continuing mistrust of Great Britain. From time to time, rumors arose that the Entente powers had an agreement on the disposition of territory in Asia Minor in expectation of a Turkish collapse. Germany had important interests in the area, and could not stand by idly in such an event. When questioned in the Reichstag, Bethmann gave reassuring answers, but privately he felt uneasy over the matter. On January 25, a renewal

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33 D. G. P., XXXIV, #12710, pp. 229-30, and editors' footnote.
of Balkan hostilities seemed imminent, and with this, the possibility of a Turkish collapse reappeared. The Chancellor indicated his doubts in a memorandum. Germany must not be faced with the fait accompli of an Entente agreement for spheres of interest which would in time turn into protectorates. He did not care to have a repetition of Morocco. Germany must indicate to Great Britain that a liquidation of Asia Minor could not take place without her full participation; he instructed Lichnowsky to approach Sir Edward Grey with this information.

In London, the Ambassadors' conference began to seek a solution to the Serbo-Albanian border problem. Since Austria and Russia had adopted completely intransigent attitudes, the question could not safely be taken up in the Conference without preliminary work behind the scenes; otherwise, it might become a matter of national honour for each country. Consequently, Germany and Great Britain acted behind the scenes to arrange compromises in advance in every situation that threatened a showdown. When concessions were not forthcoming, the two go-betweens procrastinated until some room for negotiation appeared. Meanwhile, Lichnowsky continued to complain bitterly. The Foreign Office, he

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34 Ibid., XXXIV, #12337, pp. 255-56.
35 For a description of the modus operandi, see Grey, Twenty-Five Years, I, pp. 266-69.
said, was asking him to be "more Austrian than the Austrian Ambassador," and to defend so-called Austrian "concessions" which were not concessions at all.\textsuperscript{36}

On February 12, Grey admitted privately to Lichnowsky that Scutari was strategically an Albanian city.\textsuperscript{37} In the language of that complicated diplomacy, this meant that Russia would concede the same point in the Conference. This left practically only one town in dispute, a place of 6000 inhabitants called Djakova. In a perfect illustration of the possibilities of the "old diplomacy", the Great Powers of Europe were locked in a struggle over an obscure Balkan town of which the vast majority of Europeans had never heard. Grey and Lichnowsky confronted each other with the embarrassingly small "concessions" they had to bargain with. The differences in question became smaller each time, but would not disappear. Religious and economic concessions were offered, but the town itself remained the desired object of both parties.

At this point, Bethmann decided to apply some slight pressure to Austria. Russia, he said, found it extremely difficult to retreat gracefully in the face of Austrian

\textsuperscript{36}\textit{D. G. P.}, XXXIV, #12794, 12817, 12826, pp. 320, 345-46, 355-56.

\textsuperscript{37}\textit{Ibid.}, XXXIV, #12838, p. 366.
intransigence. The Chancellor touched the dangerous topic: British friendship, which Germany was not seeking only for a selfish purpose, should on no account be jeopardized by unreasonable resistance to compromise. It was only a gentle hint, but it represented a turning point in the Chancellor's attitude toward Austria.

Eventually, Russia and Austria prepared the way for a solution by direct negotiations, as Germany and Great Britain had often advised. As a result of Prince Hohenlohe's mission to St. Petersburg, the two Balkan rivals affected an easing of military tension by agreeing to a demobilization of border forces which had long remained on the alert. In this more relaxed atmosphere, concessions came easier. On March 4, Grey offered full Russian support for other Conference decisions if Austria would concede Djakova to Serbia. The likelihood that force would be needed to evict the Montenegrins from Albania's Scutari convinced Berchtold to accept this offer, but not before Bethmann applied one more touch of German pressure. This represented virtually a solution of the Serbo-Albanian border issue. The London Conference of Ambassadors quickly produced an official decision, and

38 Ibid., XXXIV, #12818, p. 346.
40 Ibid., XXXIV, #13002, pp. 538-39.
on April 15, 1913, the Great Powers acquainted the Balkan states with the future Serbo-Albanian border.41

There is an interesting sequel to the Scutari question, which again shows Great Britain and Germany in full diplomatic accord. King Nikita of Montenegro, unimpressed by the Great-Power decision, continued the siege of Scutari in conjunction with Serbian detachments. The Great Powers decided to put pressure on Montenegro, but Russia proved unwilling to take action against a Slav power.42 In consequence of this delay, Austria prepared to take independent action against Montenegro and Serbia.

To Russia's surprise, Great Britain decided to participate vigorously in proceedings to oust the Montenegrins, an action which was applauded in German diplomatic circles.43 The Conference of Ambassadors, prompted by Grey and Lichnowsky, proposed a collective naval demonstration. It was a foregone conclusion that Russia would not actively participate, but when France also seemed to hesitate, Sir Edward Grey expressed the idea that Austria and Italy alone should be empowered to use force. Shortly thereafter, France announced her full participation, a development which in Germany

41 B. D. D., IX, #847, p. 386.
42 D. G. P., XXXIV, #13029, 13035, pp. 564-65, 569.
43 Ibid., XXXIV, #13038, pp. 571.
was credited to Grey's influence.44

King Nikita was not more impressed by the naval demonstration and by the demands of its British Admiral than he had been by the decision of the Great Powers. He charged the Powers with a breach of neutrality in his war with Turkey, and continued the siege. Emperor William II did not share his royal colleague's strong nerves and he began to doubt, after all this time, the feasibility of establishing an independent Albania. It was all Bethmann could do to prevent him from collapsing under pressure from the King of Montenegro.45 The arguments Bethmann used to convince William II show the former completely confident of continued co-operation with Great Britain. There was no cause for despair over the question of Albania, he said. The key to the issue was England's attitude, and since that country strongly favoured the establishment of Albania, Germany could co-operate with her while at the same time safeguarding the interests of her Austrian ally. For Austria, he continued, the matter was absolutely vital:

The Albanian buffer state is the only positive result which the Danubian Monarchy can save out of the shipwreck of her Balkan aspirations. Should even this modest gain elude her at the last moment, her foreign policy would be faced with a bankruptcy which would endanger her international power status as well as her national

44Ibid., XXXIV, #13081, p. 614.
cohesion. To prevent such a development, which would be a loss not only for Austria but also for her allies, is the most important task of our diplomacy at the moment.

Bethmann's faith in Sir Edward Grey's fortitude was not misplaced. Though Montenegrin troops finally captured Scutari, they were not permitted to remain long in that city. Grey announced publicly that, failing a withdrawal of Montenegrin troops, "any interested power" could reasonably be expected to take independent action.\(^4^6\) (In this case, "interested power" meant "Austria"). Though this further aggravated the difference between Britain and Russia, it finally brought King Nikita to his senses. He preferred "voluntary" withdrawal to expulsion by the Austrian army. On May 4, he surrendered Scutari to a landing party from the demonstrating naval vessels.

There is little doubt that Sir Edward Grey and Bethmann Hollweg were responsible for the preservation of peace in Europe. The former had prevented Russia from stiffening the resistance of Serbia and Montenegro in the face of justified Austrian demands. The latter had prevented premature Austrian action which would have forced Grey's hand. In this manner, Bethmann preserved for Austria that minimum of victory which prevented her collapse in the Balkans. With one or two exceptions, Bethmann was able to combine co-operation with England and scrupulous concern for the

\(^4^6\) *B. D. D.*, IX, #876, 886, 887, 892, 894, 899, pp. 404-428.
After the World War, Bethmann declared that the solidarity of the Dual Alliance had at all time been his primary concern.\(^{47}\) To this point in the Balkan Wars, this is largely true, but during the course of the war between Bulgaria and her former allies, he seems to have departed significantly from this rule. In fact, Austro-German differences developed with the first hint of war. Late in June, Berchtold requested German diplomatic pressure on Rumania.\(^{48}\) That country's territorial demands on Bulgaria were, in his opinion, playing into Russia's hand, and he asked Germany to make this point in Bucharest. The German Foreign Office, however, declined on the grounds that the onus for conciliation was on Bulgaria, since Rumania's demands were quite justified. Hostilities between Serbia and Bulgaria began a few days later, and Rumania mobilized her forces on the Bulgarian frontier to add greater emphasis to her territorial demands. Now Berchtold warned Germany that Austria did not intend to see Bulgaria decisively defeated by the Serbs and their allies. Serbia was the "Piedmont" of the Balkans, and any strengthening of Serbia was a mortal danger to the Dual Monarchy.

\(^{47}\) Bethmann Hollweg, Reflections, I, pp. 78-9.

\(^{48}\) D. G. P., XXXV, #13428, pp. 66-70. Anlage.
This prompted Bethmann to intercede personally. It was, in his opinion, definitely Bulgaria's turn to show evidence of a conciliatory spirit. On no condition should Rumania be alienated from the Alliance by unfair pressure; she would be driven straight into Russia's arms. Moreover, a Serbo-Bulgarian conflict must be favourable to Austria, for regardless of the outcome, both nations would be weakened and dependent upon Austria's goodwill for many years. Even with a complete Serbian victory, "the fat will not be in the fire." On the other hand, he explained, an Austrian attempt to deprive Serbia of the fruits of victory would lead to a European war if attempted by force.

I can only hope, therefore, that Vienna will not be disquieted by the chimera of a Greater Serbia, but will await the decisions of the theater of war. I must advise strongly against any attempt to swallow Serbia, which could only weaken the Monarchy.

It was a noble attempt to keep Austria on a peaceful course, but an attempt based on faulty reasoning! The notion that the war would weaken Serbia and make her dependent on Austria's goodwill was soon refuted by events. Berchtold's "Piedmont" analogy proved to be tragically correct.

In contrast to Bethmann's troubles with Austria, his relations with Great Britain showed continued improvement. Sir Edward Grey chose this moment to answer the Chancellor's

49 Ibid., XXXV, #13491, pp. 130-31.
query concerning Asia Minor. German interests there would, he assured him, receive full consideration in the event of a Turkish collapse.\textsuperscript{50} Grey also made it his business to let the Chancellor know that he disapproved of Austria's attitude in the present crises.\textsuperscript{51} A similar situation existed in the Ambassadors' Conference which, during the summer, was discussing the Greek-Albanian border. Again, Grey found occasion to complain about a lack of co-operation from Austria, and Lichnowsky naturally forwarded these complaints to Bethmann. One can imagine that he reported them with great personal satisfaction.

It was the Bucharest peace conference which revealed the seriousness of Austro-German differences. Here, the Emperor emerged once more as an important factor in the conduct of German diplomacy. The key question was the assignment of Kavala, a town which Austria claimed for Bulgaria, whereas Germany, partly for dynastic reasons, favoured its assignment to Greece.\textsuperscript{52} For once, Germany found herself in agreement with France, a situation which brought applause from England. Equally unique was the fact that

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{50}Ibid., XXXV, #13436, pp. 75-77. Such a collapse was, however, no longer an immediate possibility.
\item \textsuperscript{51}Ibid., XXXV, #13481, p. 121.
\item \textsuperscript{52}The Greek king, Constantine I was the German Emperor's brother-in-law.
\end{itemize}
Russia supported the Austrian position. The German Foreign Office instructed its Ambassador in Austria to make the German position more palatable to Austria by pointing out the desirability of securing Greece as an adherent to the Triple Alliance.

The argument failed to impress Berchtold. He made one last attempt to convince his ally of the folly of supporting Greece. The key to all Balkan possibilities, he explained, was Serbia. Given Serbia's undoubted and (in the foreseeable future) irreconcilable animosity, Bulgaria was the logical counter weight. A reconciliation between Bulgaria and Rumania could be achieved with Germany's support; that was the most useful and the most practical Balkan alignment. Greek friendship, while in itself desirable, could not be depended on because of that country's involvements with Serbia. Moreover, in the event of a war with Russia and her allies, Greece would be of little use to the Triple Alliance.

The lecture was to no avail. On August 7, the peace conference at Bucharest resolved the border question in

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53 Of course, the important matter for each country was the future alignment of Greece or Bulgaria, the cross-alliance support being only a by-product of the jockeying for new allies.

54 D. G. P., XXXV, #13724, p. 364.

55 Ibid., XXXV, #13741, pp. 365-67.
favour of Greece. The German Foreign Office strongly advised Austria not to exercise her right of revision with regard to Kavala. Indeed, if Ambassador Heinrich von Tschirschky followed his instructions, Austrian diplomats must have known that they would, in such an event, stand completely alone.

Any chance of a misunderstanding disappeared with another ham-handed interference by the Emperor. On August 7, King Charles of Rumania wired William II, saying in part, "After important difficulties have been surmounted, the conclusion of peace is assured and, thanks to you, remains certain..." The Emperor expressed "great satisfaction." King Charles thanked him with "pride and genuine gratitude." When William II decided on immediate publication of the telegrams, Bethmann sought to dissuade him from this step; while he approved this direction in diplomacy, he had no desire to make public the Austro-German differences, or to give further offence to the Dual Monarchy. But the Emperor overrode his objections. As Bethmann had anticipated, the Austrian press gave dramatic emphasis to the divergence. The *Neue Freie*

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Press of Vienna phrased it thus: "For the first time in this long crisis, the German Empire is not on our side, and not in favour of our policy."\(^{59}\)

Now, Bethmann found little solace in improved Anglo-German relations. For the first time in his career as Chancellor he had permitted the erosion of what was for him the one unquestionable commandment of German diplomacy: the solidarity of the Dual Alliance! What could be more natural than that he should attempt to repair this breach during the next Balkan crisis?

CONCLUSION

It is a relatively simple matter to pinpoint crucial instances at which a different decision by Bethmann Hollweg might have reversed the drift toward catastrophe: had he gone slower in his initial approach to England, had he not insisted on a formally-negotiated and duly signed reconciliation, he might have established some sort of Anglo-German bond. Such a bond might even have developed naturally had he refused permission for the dispatch of a gunboat to Agadir. In 1912, had he pressed for a complete victory over Tirpitz before withdrawing his resignation, he might have established the superiority of civilian policy over the alleged needs of the military. However, the task of a student of history is not to re-play the diplomatic game, but to understand the reasons for the decisions which were made.

In his attempt to alter Great Britain's position in the alliance structure, Bethmann operated within very narrow bounds. The chief motivation for his efforts was a feeling of insecurity derived from the knowledge that Germany's alliance was weakening, both strategically and structurally relative to that of her rivals. However, any re-alignment had to be achieved without a preliminary dissolution of existing bonds, for the alliances were important not only
in the event of war, but in everyday diplomatic relations. Thus, a weakening of one alliance would have an immediate and increasingly weakening effect on the world positions of countries within that alliance. This explains Bethmann's tedious insistence on official negotiations, on immediate tangible proof of friendship. Certainly, he could not risk alienating an alliance partner on the mere chance of securing a different alignment of powers.

Moreover, Bethmann directed only one of two German foreign policies, and was thus constrained to produce visible results to retain support for his policy. It is ironic that the other policy, directed by Navy Secretary Tirpitz, had the same goal of producing a change in Great Britain's status, though it used an approach completely in contradiction to that of the Chancellor. While Bethmann sought this objective by means of reconciliation and settlement of differences, Tirpitz used the pressure of armaments in an attempt to force a change of position of Great Britain, a procedure we know today as a "cold war." Both policies climaxed in the Haldane visit, and both failed, partly because they cancelled each other.

Following the Haldane mission, Germany really had no policy toward Great Britain, other than an implicit return to reliance on the existing alignment. Bethmann had given up the hope of bringing Germany and Great Britain together,
and he remained stubbornly suspicious of British motives throughout the Balkan Wars. Only in the summer of 1913 did he begin to accept the Anglo-German co-operation which had come about despite his disillusionment.

In August 1913, when Austria claimed that Germany had deserted her, the startled Chancellor found himself drifting away from his firmest ally, but still a long way from England— in other words, at sea. His natural reaction was to grasp for security. In July 1914, he still feared for the solidarity of his one useful alliance. "Our old dilemma in every Austrian move in the Balkans: if we encourage them, they say we pushed them into it; if we discourage them, they say we have deserted them. Then they approach the Western Powers, who are waiting with open arms." Germany, the Chancellor thought, could not afford to further alienate her ally; his support of Austria in 1914 was immediate and unconditional.

The Chancellor could have prevented the war in July of 1914, had he been willing to risk a deterioration of his country's "Great-Power" status. This he was not prepared to do; probably he did not even consider it as a real alternative. Thus, he could easily convince himself that he had now no choice but to support his ally. Precisely the

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same can be said of all the chief executives of the other "Great Powers" of Europe. Their refusal to risk diplomatic status even in view of the well-known and immense dangers involved can be partly explained by their attitude towards war in general. While they all feared and condemned it, they still retained some feeling of "war idealism," a feeling that, despite its horrors, war brought out the supreme virtues of self-sacrifice and national unity. Among the statesmen of Europe, there was not one who would make significant sacrifices to save the peace.
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