

ANGLO-GERMAN RELATIONS PRIOR TO THE GREAT
WAR: THE HALDANE MISSION REVISITED

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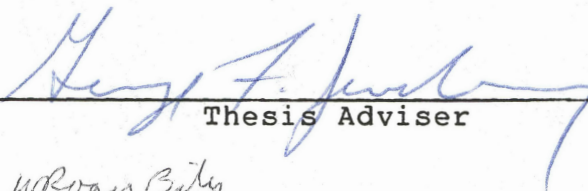
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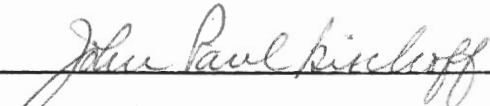
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PREFACE

This thesis has grown out of a long-term interest in arms control and disarmament, and a desire to understand why and how arms control agreements have been reached in the past. My research into pre-World War One Anglo-German relations, dealing in particular with the great battleship race, was motivated by my desire to compare this relationship to Hans Morganthau's postulate as a test of its validity. This political realist argues that a "political settlement must precede disarmament. Without political settlement, disarmament has no chance for success."¹

There is the immediate need to modify at least one point on Morganthau's theory in order for it to have any relevance to prewar Anglo-German relations. There was never any serious attempt made to conclude an actual naval disarmament treaty between Britain and Germany, but statesmen on both sides of the North Sea did desire some form of arms control arrangement at one time or another. For the purposes of my thesis, arms control shall be defined as the regulation of an "armaments race for the purpose of creating a measure of military stability," while disarmament is the "transformation of the international politics by eliminating its destructive and anarchical

tendencies."² The point is that the basic difference between disarmament and arms control is one of elimination versus limitation. However, the main consideration remains: will a great power agree to limit its sovereign right to maintain armaments at a level that it considers necessary for its own security by signing an agreement with another nation that has interests and views different enough to preclude basic political understanding with the first country? Placed in these terms, "arms control" can be used in place of "disarmament," because the principle remains the same; both types of agreement require a limitation on what a state may legitimately do to provide for its own security.

As my research progressed, it quickly became apparent that the Haldane Mission--and the negotiations that followed it during the first quarter of 1912--formed the focal point of the diplomatic relationship between Germany and Great Britain in regard to the naval and political questions during the years prior to the outbreak of the Great War. During this series of talks the fundamental policies of the two states toward each other were refined and focused to the highest degree achieved. The two years that followed the breakdown in the talks, in the words of Paul Kennedy, "form virtually a diplomatic epilogue."³ An examination of the Haldane talks provides the best means for explaining what the policies coming from Berlin and London were, and why the two were unable to settle their

outstanding differences in a manner that was mutually advantageous.

In general terms the naval arms control agreement, which Great Britain considered to be the key to improving relations with Imperial Germany, was unobtainable as long as there was not a basic political agreement between the two states, as sought by Berlin. Morgenthau's theory is valid so long as one realizes that both states had to consider the existing naval balance legitimate in order for a political understanding to be reached. In other words, a nation's armaments policy is indivisible from a nation's foreign policy; to have a basic political understanding between two or more states, each state must consider the other nation's arms policy to be compatible politically with its own. In the case of the Anglo-German battleship race and the corresponding political difficulties, no political understanding--and therefore no arms control agreement either--was possible. This was to remain the case because Great Britain retained the policy of the "two-power standard", which required the Royal Navy to maintain a strength equal to that of the next two most powerful navies, while Germany retained the "risk theory," as the basis for its naval policy. This theory was based on the assumption that if the German navy was powerful enough so that even if the most powerful navy in the world (The Royal Navy) attacked Germany, the attacker's fleet would be so damaged that such an attack would be irrational and

therefore no such assault would be made.⁴

The above is not intended to imply that naval policy was the only political matter that tended to alienate these two states from each other. The Court of St. James, both prior to and during the Haldane Mission, adamantly refused to give Germany any firm reassurances that Britain would not be a party to any French scheme of revanche against Germany, in exchange for naval concessions from Berlin. This remained the case even after German Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg dropped his initial demand for a pledge of absolute neutrality and adopted a position that made any neutrality pledge dependent on which party in any future war was the "aggressor." This concession would have allowed Britain to come to the aid of any country that Germany attacked or provoked.

On a more fundamental level it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that economic rivalry was at the root of the deteriorating relations between Germany and Britain. Although often times couched in different rhetoric, most of the important personalities of the time, as well as recent historians, have reached the same basic conclusion. Paul Kennedy stated that after the turn of the century Britain "looked upon a Germany that kept growing as an unwanted and troublesome intruder on the sanctity of the British supremacy over the commerce and oceans of the world."⁵ Therefore, Britain naturally began to associate with those states not on friendly terms with Germany as a means of

protecting Britain's dominance of world trade. Paul Kennedy argues that the Anglo-German quarrels were "manifestations of the relative shift in economic power of these two countries between 1860 and 1914." He concludes that the root of Anglo-German antagonism is economic; trade rivalries and British fear of German industrial growth drove the two ever farther apart.⁶

Free trade made nice rhetoric until British traders began to encounter German capital interests at nearly every point on the globe. Both states needed, or at least thought that they needed, room to expand their markets and sources of raw materials in order to continue their economic growth. Whether this expansion was territorial, or commercial, was not of vital importance in the final equation. The only way for Germany and Britain to regain a measure of international friendship was for one to withdraw from the economic competition for dominance of the world economic system. The competitive nature of their economic systems naturally made this an impossibility.

One must remember that the political questions, which will be closely examined in the pages that follow, are largely the outgrowths of the economic competition between the two nations. Many historians accept the economic determinist position then veer off looking for "devils," but they simply did not exist, at least as of April, 1912. The statesmen who sat in Berlin and London were neither diabolical war mongers, nor saints. They were often

captives of systems that they neither created, nor controlled to any significant extent.

A long standing misconception, which I hope my thesis will help to put an end to, is the commonly held view that Germany's Chancellor Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg was never willing to retreat from his demand for a pledge of absolute neutrality from Great Britain in exchange for a reduction in Germany's naval buildup. This misleading interpretation continues to find its way into a number of works dealing with prewar Anglo-German relations, thus making Germany's chancellor out to be one of the "devils." The earliest secondary source that I have found that makes this "absolute neutrality" mistake is Sidney B. Fay's The Origins of the World War, published in 1928, and even Paul Kennedy's recent work, The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914 (1980), still continues to argue the same position. Other authors who subscribe to this view include Zara Steiner, Peter Padfield and Fritz Fischer.⁷ Although the Haldane Mission represents only a relatively small part of each of the works by the authors mentioned, the fact that Germany's position continues to be misinterpreted by a number of different authors suggests that a review of what Germany's policy was toward Britain, is needed. It seems that this should proceed before more work is done on why Germany adopted the policies it did. We need to know what German policy was before we can have any hope of understanding why it developed the way it did.

The fact that Bethmann-Hollweg was willing to accept a neutrality formula with an escape clause hinging on which party to a conflict was the "aggressor" does not necessarily mean the whole interpretation of Germany as the initiator of many of the problems between that country and England (as well as other European countries) is entirely wrong. It does suggest that as late as 1912, Germany was less aggressive and unreasonable than a number of prominent historians have been willing to acknowledge. On the other side of the story, because Germany was in fact more reasonable in its desires than the historiography of Anglo-German relations suggests, Britain was less reasonable than some historians have posited, in what it hoped to work out with Germany. Thus it is only logical to conclude that the behavioral and motivational differences between "liberal" Britain and "conservative" Germany were not as great as many historians to date have argued.

I wish to conclude by expressing my sincere gratitude to those persons whose assistance made the completion of this thesis possible. A great deal of thanks belongs to my major adviser Dr. George F. Jewsbury, whose patience, guidance, and tolerance have been of invaluable help and inspiration. To the other two members of my committee, Dr. John Paul Bischoff and Dr. W. Roger Biles, I also wish to express my appreciation for the time and council they contributed to this project. Thanks also to the various faculty members with whom I have had the privilege of

studying under during my stay at Oklahoma State University. Much of the credit for any value that this work has belongs to those mentioned above, and naturally the blame for any mistakes or shortcomings rests entirely with the author.

The number of persons who contributed to my academic progress are certainly too numerous to list here, but I would like to mention a few of those who come to mind. The financial and emotional support of my parents and grandparents have done much to lighten the burdens of my chosen career. I must also put forth a word of appreciation to my close friend and most constant critic Eric Hazell. Finally, I wish to thank my wife Stephanie whose support deserves a greater reward than simply a line in a preface.

PREFACE NOTES

¹Hans Morgenthau, Politics Among Nations: The Struggle for Power and Peace, 5th ed. revised (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1978), pp. 406-07.

²Ibid., p. 393.

³Paul Kennedy, The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914 (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 452.

⁴Archibald Hurd and Henry Castle, German Sea-Power: Its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis (London: John Murray, 1913; reprint ed., Westport Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971), Appendix II; also see Chapter I of this thesis.

⁵Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, Reflections on the World War, 2 vols., trans. George Young (London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 1920) I: 66.

⁶Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, pp. 464-66.

⁷Sidney B. Fay, The Origins of the World War, 2nd ed., two vols. in one, vol. I (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930) p. 307; Kennedy, p. 451; Peter Padfield, The Great Naval Race: The Anglo-Germany Naval Rivalry 1900-1914 (New York: D. McKay Company, 1974), pp. 279-80; Zara Steiner, Britain and the Origins of the First World War (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1977), p. 96; Fritz Fischer, Germany's Aims in the First World War (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1967) pp. 27, 28; Fritz Fischer, War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914, trans. by Marian Jackson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), pp. 124-130.

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CHAPTER I
GERMANY, GREAT BRITAIN AND THEIR
RELATIONSHIP TO 1912

As a bottle of champagne crashed against the bow of His Majesty's ship Dreadnought and that mighty vessel slid down the ramp into the sea, a new era in armaments competition began. Five years into the twentieth century this new vessel and the class of battleships based on its model of construction made every other battleship in all of the European navies obsolete. Prior to the construction of H.M.S. Dreadnought, the Royal Navy had such a preponderance in numbers of battleships that it was nearly impossible for any other European great power, or combination of powers, to threaten Britain's control of the seas. In antiquating its own war-ships along with everyone else, Britain inadvertently provided Germany with the opportunity, and to a degree the necessity, to begin building dreadnought class vessels from a position only slightly behind that of the British. Since the passage of the German Naval Law of 1900, London had become increasingly anxious about naval construction on the far side of the North Sea; however, it took the "Dreadnought Revolution" to turn the nervousness of the years directly following the Law of 1900, into the

open arms race that marked the decade just prior to the outbreak of the war.

The conflicting naval programs of Great Britain and Germany, which spawned the battleship race, were only one part of the general competition between these two powers that tended to drive them apart. Indeed, Britain as an established player in the world arena and Germany as the "newcomer" had much more to dispute than the degree of certainty His Majesty's Government should have about the Royal Navy's ability to control the seas. Before an adequate examination can be undertaken of the Haldane Mission, which represents the last ambitious attempt to bring the two nations to a general understanding, an analysis of Anglo-German relations prior to the Winter of 1912 is required.

It is difficult to reach a definite conclusion about what German foreign policy was during the early-twentieth century. Commonly used terms such as Weltmacht and Realpolitik often serve only to intensify confusion when trying to distinguish what the erratic Kaiser Wilhelm II and his ministers were thinking at any time. Yet there is an identifiable outline of German policy.

Faced with constructing a new policy after the dismissal of Bismarck, Wilhelm II and his cadre of secretaries spent the years up to 1897 developing a policy that intended to make Germany the fourth world power (England, Russia and the United States had supposedly

already reached this position according to German planners). In order to achieve this new status, Germany planned to establish a large overseas empire made up of territories formally under the rule of Berlin along with a neocolonial empire controlled by German trade and capital. In order to protect the overseas empire and trade, Germany required the construction of a large fleet. The fleet was also to be used as a tool for placing pressure on those states that resisted Germany's expansion. This plan to achieve Weltmacht status naturally put Germany at odds with Great Britain, since both colonial expansion and the increase in the German navy would place it at odds with the nation then preponderant in both of these categories. Germany's ever expanding foreign trade interests had already come to concern many in Great Britain, prior to the naval and colonial bids initiated in Berlin.¹

Many Germans viewed their nation as rising inevitably toward an important worldwide position and in typical Social-Darwinistic terms concluded that this expansion could not be halted even if Germany itself tried to do so. European conquest was not the goal, at least not during the time frame of this study.² Germany needed outlets for its surplus production and population, not more industrialized and densely populated territory in Europe.³

In regard to the naval policy, Germany adopted what is commonly referred to as the "risk theory." This theory was first printed in the memorandum attached to the Naval Law

of 1900, and its key elements state that Germany must have, in order to protect her colonies and overseas trade, "a battle fleet so strong that even for the adversary with the greatest seapower a war against it would involve such dangers as to imperil his position in the world."

Obviously the "greatest seapower" was England and, therefore, there was no real question as to whose navy the German fleet would be gauged by. The memorandum continues to say it was not essential that:

the German Battle Fleet should be as strong as that of the greatest naval Power, for a great naval Power will not, as a rule, be in a position to concentrate all its striking forces against us. But even if it should succeed in meeting us with considerable superiority of strength, the defeat of a strong German Fleet would so substantially weaken the enemy that, in spite of the victory he might have obtained, his own position in the world would no longer be secured by an adequate fleet.

The implementation of this theory was to ensure "peace with honor."⁴

In translating this into practical terms, Germany's leading naval authority Admiral Alfred von Tirpitz concluded that the Imperial Navy needed to maintain a fleet of approximately two-thirds the strength of that of the Royal Navy.⁵ During this time, the common rule of thumb among military authorities was that a nation had to have at least a seventy percent chance of success before a high command could recommend going to war. One may assume that by maintaining a naval strength ratio of two to three, Tirpitz could safely say that British naval authorities

could not tell the Cabinet that Britain had a seventy percent chance of success against Germany and still would have a large enough fleet at the end of hostilities to deal with other sea powers, if need be. Although Paul Kennedy's assertion that Tirpitz appears to have desired absolute parity with Great Britain may be true in an abstract sense, the ratio that the Admiral was willing to agree to in the event of a political agreement shows that strict equality was not considered an absolute must by any means. Kennedy then states that if his assumption is true, then British and German naval aims were entirely irreconcilable. In fact, their naval aims were never reconciled, but the irreconcilable ratios were Germany's desire to possess a navy that approximated two-thirds that of Britain's, and Britain's refusal to abandon the "two power standard," or its strategic equivalent.⁶

Britain had initially adopted the "two power" standard in the nineteenth century when France and Russia possessed the second and third largest navies. It made sense for the Royal Navy to maintain its force at a level equal to these two powers, because it was conceivable that Britain might end up fighting them both. However, shortly after the turn-of-the-century the United States and Germany had become the possessors of the second and third largest navies in the world. Because it was all but inconceivable that Britain would find itself at war with both of these rising powers, the old formula for calculating the strength

of the Royal Navy was largely impractical from about 1903 onward. The admiralty and cabinet began to calculate naval estimates with an eye on reasonable possibilities, such as a possible war pitting Great Britain against members of the Triple Alliance. After 1908-09 the British navy generally subscribed to the rule that it should be 60 percent superior to the German navy.⁷ In practice this translated into keeping a ratio of about 1 to 1.6, after the naval programs of the two powers began to level out in about 1912.⁸ Thus the difference between Germany's desired ratio, and that which Britain satisfied itself with in principle were quite similar. One may conclude that the fact that the naval question was never solved is more a reflection of poor relations on other levels than it is a reflection of the two countries inability to reach a mutually agreed upon ratio for their naval forces.

A more traditional element of German policy than that of aiming to achieve the status of a world and naval power was visible in the measures taken that were intended to prevent the formation of an anti-German coalition. This policy, which the successive ministries during the reign of Wilhelm II bungled to incredible proportions, can be traced back to Bismarck's push for unification in the 1860s. With a quick glance at a map of prewar Europe one can quickly understand Germany's fear of encirclement; the Empire had extended land borders with three great powers and England dominated the sea approaches to Germany's few port cities.

Starting with the refusal of Wilhelm II to renew the Reinsurance Treaty with Russia, which culminated in the Franco-Russian alliance, and ending with the consolidation of the Entente Cordiale during the two Moroccan crises, Berlin's policy of preventing an anti-German coalition had the ironic effect of helping to produce one.⁹ During the chancellorship of Bernhard von Bülow the worst fears of the Imperial government came true through the forging of the ententes between, first Britain and France, and then between Britain and Russia.

Regardless of whose fault it was that this situation arose, Germany was in a position of having no choice but to maintain its relationship with Austria by the end of the Second Moroccan Crisis. The only conceivable way out of this virtual isolation was to split Britain from France and Russia, which would certainly have been the preferred method from Germany's point of view, or to have found some position between the alliance systems that would have been acceptable to both Berlin and London.

The center piece of Great Britain's foreign policy was based on two related strategic goals. The first was to maintain a balance of power on the continent; the second was to make sure that none of the continental powers ever became militarily secure enough to be able to direct its full attention to its navy. So long as these two conditions were maintained, the Royal Navy could easily maintain its overwhelming superiority in comparison to all

potential rivals.¹⁰

Directly after the turn of the century, London began to conclude that Germany was becoming a threat. Robert Haldane, British Minister of War during the Asquith Ministry, argued that the Ententes became necessary because the Central Powers had continued to increase in power in relation to the rest of Europe. Germany's growing naval and military might made it necessary for Britain, as Haldane explained, to abandon "splendid isolation" in order to "preserve our margine [sic] of strength at sea, but [also] to make ourselves able... to help our friends in case of aggression, thereby securing ourselves."¹¹ The policy of the Liberal, Asquith ministry toward Germany became one that was supposed to preserve the peace between the two countries, and the rest of Europe, by removing "difficulties" and misunderstandings, and by preparing for war in such a way as not to provoke one. Thus, the ultimate reason for London's binding of Great Britain to France and Russia was its view that Germany was becoming too strong.¹²

The changes that brought about the shift in British policy that culminated in the ententes corresponded with the increasing number of persons within the British Foreign Office who were Francophiles--or at least were more disposed to be friendly to France than Germany. Sir Edward Grey was the prime example of this trend. His policy of diplomatic and if necessary military and naval support for

France was endorsed by such important Whitehall figures as Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (1906-1910) Charles Hardinge, Ambassador at Paris Francis Bertie, Senior Clerk and later Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Eyre Crowe, Louis Mallett and Sir Edward Grey's personal secretary William Tyrell. Some of these men were true "cold warriors" with Germany being little short of incarnate evil and others, such as Grey, were willing to try to deal with Germany, so long as it did not in any way impair the Entente Cordiale.¹³

Recently the argument has emerged that maintains the "anti-Germanism" exhibited by the British Foreign Office during the decade prior to the outbreak of the war "was simply the face of this Anglomania [exhibited by the Germans] that was turned towards Germany." The foreign office saw Germany as constantly trying to isolate Britain and "to the Germans it was a perfectly legitimate activity which they openly admitted." In light of Germany's policy of preventing the formation of a hostile coalition, or any combination that could serve as the foundation for one, the above thesis holds up; probably the British diplomats did see the situation in this manner. In keeping with long standing policy, Germany did repeatedly try to break up, or weaken the Entente Cordiale. Where this argument falls short is that it does not deal with the fact that Whitehall was unwilling to give Germany any meaningful reassurances that the ententes would not form the basis of an

"aggressive" coalition against Germany.¹⁴

Thus, London's concern for the safety of France was in fact a concern for maintaining Britain's position in the world, should the former country cease to be a great power. Germany would quickly outclass Britain in every conceivable category if all of central and western Europe were to come under the sway of the Hohenzollern crown. The battleship race was simply the most visible aspect of a competition that took place between Britain and Germany on a variety of levels.

It is difficult to assess the positions taken by the various major figures at the German Foreign Office (commonly referred to as Wilhelmstrasse) and even more difficult to ascertain how influential any one person was within the broader framework of German foreign policy. Several persons do, however, need to be mentioned briefly because of their influence in forming German policy toward Britain. In "setting the cast" an explanation will also be given of the constitutional framework of the foreign office.

It is of course only fitting to start with a look at the highly intelligent, yet erratic Kaiser Wilhelm II. Constitutionally all matters of foreign affairs were controlled by the emperor.¹⁵ Unlike his grandfather, who was virtually always overshadowed by his chancellor, Wilhelm II took an active role in the shaping of German policy. In regard to Great Britain, he had a "love-hate

relationship"¹⁶ that he apparently could never settle in his own mind. His obsession with the navy provided the momentum for its expansion without which it could never have reached the size it did. The navy was one area of policy about which Wilhelm would tolerate no hint of criticism from his ministers and officials.¹⁷ In other areas of policy the Emperor was often more flexible; in a number of cases he found himself carried along on ventures pushed by one of his chancellors or senior diplomats that was against his better judgment.¹⁸

The Emperor appointed a chancellor to head the government, and was also free to dismiss him, along with any other appointed official. During the period under examination the chancellor was Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg. He had been appointed to this office in 1909, after having served first a Prussian Minister of the Interior and then as German Minister of Interior. Due to his lack of experience in matters of foreign affairs, as was also true of Edward Grey when he assumed control of the British foreign office, it is questionable as to the wisdom of his being chosen. But in regard to Anglo-German relations, the Emperor chose Bethmann-Hollweg knowing that he favored rapprochement with the Court of St. James.¹⁹

The German ambassador in London during the first twelve years of the twentieth century was Count Paul von Wolff Metternich. In his duties in Great Britain, he fully realized that the most visible cause of Anglo-German

It is difficult to overstate Great Britain's dependence on foreign trade. Although the island nation was self sufficient in several critical areas, such as coal, it was subject to foreign sources for most of its food supply. For example, Britain had to import approximately four-fifths of that most critical of commodities--wheat, one-fourth of its oats, and one-third of its Barley throughout the first decade of the twentieth century (TABLE I).

TABLE I
 QUANTITIES OF VARIOUS AGRICULTURAL GOODS PRODUCED²¹
 AND CONSUMED IN THE UNITED KINGDOM, 1910
 (in thousands of bushels)

Commodity	Consumed	-	Produced	= Imported
Wheat	273,559		56,593	216,966
Barley	99,008		63,044	35,964
Oats	226,324		175,794	50,530
Maize	73,607		0	73,607
Total	672,498		295,431	377,067

Such figures make it easy to understand the British assertion that controlling the seas was a "matter of life and death," for England.

Britain continually maintained an unfavorable balance of trade in the decades leading up to the Great War, but international trade continued to provide the foundation for the economy of the United Kingdom. In 1910, British imports were valued at 536 million pounds, while exports totaled only 418 million pounds.²² However, when one

tension was the ever expanding Imperial navy. Most of the officials at Wilhelmstrasse agreed and did not want to continue with the comparatively rapid expansion of the navy; what made Metternich different was the fact that he continued to voice his concerns about the navy even when the Emperor lashed out at him for doing so. Asquith described Metternich as being "not very genial and he led a retired and almost isolated life in London....He was, however, a shrewd and dispassionate observer both of men and events."²⁰ One of the most obvious signs that the negotiations following the Haldane Mission represented the last ambitious attempt by Germany to reach an accord with Great Britain was the fact that Metternich left London after the talks collapsed. The cause of peace certainly did not benefit from his absence.

Although this thesis deals mostly with political matters it seems prudent to examine briefly the economic factors that were largely responsible for Germany and Great Britain adopting the policies that they did. The demands of the expanding German economy were as responsible for that nation's bid for Weltmacht status as the economic needs in Great Britain were for London's continued policy of striving to maintain the balance of power in Europe. The fact that these two countries adopted policies that tended to increase tensions between them coincides with the fact that the two nations were increasingly at odds in trade and commercial matters.

considers "invisible" trade, such as interest on foreign loans, insurance, dividends and shipping fees Britain probably did still maintain a favorable trade balance.²³ The fact that so much of the worlds ocean going trade was carried in British bottoms, was just one more reason for the demand that the Royal Navy maintain its maritime dominance.

In regard to Anglo-German trade, the two countries had very nearly reached an equilibrium around 1910, with Britain having only a slight advantage. During that year Germany was Britain's largest single customer, and the only nation that sold more to the United Kingdom than Germany did, was the United States.²⁴ This fact should have tended to lessen tensions on both sides of the North Sea, but the larger economic picture was not as favorable.

In absolute terms Britain's share of world trade had grown along with the gross volume of worldwide trade; however, Britain's relative share dropped from 23 percent of world trade in 1880 to only 17 percent in 1913. During the same period Germany's percentage of world trade grew from 10 percent to 13 percent.²⁵ In manufacturing capacity Britain was also losing ground, as is shown by its decline from 1880 when the United Kingdom produced 22.9 percent of world manufacturing output to 1913 when it contributed only 13.6 percent. In the same thirty-three years Germany grew from its early position of 8.5 percent to 14.8 percent, thereby, surpassing its North Sea rival.²⁶

It is more difficult to gain an accurate appraisal of German trade in specific goods, but the fact becomes clear that it too was becoming quite dependent on foreign sources for vital commodities.²⁷ For example, Germany imported 2,924 million marks worth of food and foodstuff more than was exported during 1910.²⁸ Germany produced 3,861,479 tonnes (1000 kg) of wheat during the same year, and imported another 2,092,442 tonnes. From that quantity of imported wheat 1,495,799 tonnes came from Russia and another 324,910 tonnes came from Argentina.²⁹ During that year Britain continued to be Germany's best customer, while Russia was the number one supplier of goods and commodities to the Reich.³⁰ Germany too maintained a trade deficit with imports valued at 19,400 million marks and exports of 16,077 million marks for 1910.³¹

This relatively simple picture of Germany within the world economy is one that shows that country becoming ever more dependent on the outside world for its continued economic development. Foodstuffs, the most basic of requirements, had to be obtained from outside; they either had to come over water from the Western Hemisphere (and past the United Kingdom), or from Russia. Under the alliance system of the time Germany's economic predicament in a war against the Entente powers was a grave one, as the events of the World War demonstrated.

It seems relatively clear that the United Kingdom and Germany had to deal with very similar economic

circumstances. Both were at the mercy of foreign sources of raw materials and food, and both suffered from a lack of overseas markets in relation to their demands for imports. Germany had originally entered the colonial scramble largely out of fear that the world markets and sources of raw materials would be "gobbled up" by the other powers of western Europe.³² As the trade rivalry intensified after 1890, groups advocating colonial expansion, trade restrictions and, later on, big navies grew up in both states largely as a response to the economic rivalries of the time. The British pressure groups and government were largely trying to defend an eroding world position, while the Germans were struggling to continue their growth relative to the rest of the world. Yet the difference between them was one of degree, not of kind; they both were struggling to shape the outside world in such a way as to benefit themselves economically.

The political-economic situation of 1911 placed Germany in an encircled position. Partially this was a trick of geography and Berlin brought about many of its own problems, but a number of key persons in Britain as well as France worked to contain Germany. Wilhelmstrasse tried repeatedly from 1907 to 1914, to break out of this uncomfortable situation. Germany basically had two options to choose from to form a policy towards Britain that would get Germany out of its precarious position. It could continue in the spirit of the risk theory to build up its

navy in the hope that it would eventually be able effectively to keep Britain out of any European war and thereby, keep the sea lanes at least partially open. The other option was to entice London to distance itself politically from its entente partners. As later developments revealed, Germany never conclusively chose either path.

CHAPTER I NOTES

¹Paul Kennedy, The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914 (London: Allen and Unwin, 1980), Chapter 13 and pp. 308-09.

²Fritz Fischer's basic argument is that by the time of the Haldane mission Germany's leaders were bent on war, and at the very latest the decision to go to war was made during a high level staff meeting during December 1912. However this does not seem credible because Chancellor Bethmann-Hollweg was not notified about the meeting until much later. Compare Fritz Fischer, War of Illusions: German Policies From 1911 to 1914, trans. Marian Jackson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), with Wolfgang Mommsen, "Domestic Factors in German Foreign Policy Before 1914" Central European History 6 (1973):3-43.

³Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Bismarck's Imperialism 1862-1890," Past and Present 48 (August 1970):119-55; Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, pp. 166-68, 174, 181, 311.

⁴Archibald Hurd and Henry Castle, German Sea-Power: Its Rise Progress, and Economic Basis (London: John Murray, 1913; reprinted ed. Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971): p. 348.

⁵In the documents collection Deutschland, Auswärtige Amt, Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, 28:10325 Enclosure to Memorandum by Bethmann-Hollweg 8-13-09, Tirpitz layed out a plan in which Germany would get a ratio of three "new" vessels for every four that Britain built, and an overall ratio of five to nine in Britain's favor. Less than a month later Tirpitz modified his proposal to one which would allow Germany to build dreadnought type vessels at a rate of two for every three that Britain built, Grosse Politik, 28:10339 Tirpitz to Bethmann-Hollweg 9-1-09.

⁶Ibid.; compare to Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, pp. 422-23.

⁷Peter Padfield, Rule Britannia: The Victorian and Edwardian Navy (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981), pp. 213-15; Ernest Woodward, Great Britain and the German Navy (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), pp. 53, 368-69, 403, 455-73.

⁸See Appendix I of this thesis.

⁹George Kennan's recent book The Fateful Alliance: France, Russia, and the Coming of the First World War (New York: Pantheon Books, 1984) gives a good account of the consequences of Germany's not renewing the Reinsurance Treaty; Samuel R. Williamson, Jr. book The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969) examines the forging of the Entente Cordiale into what would serve as the foundation for an anti-German coalition.

¹⁰This basic strategic idea dates back to at least the mid-eighteenth century, Paul Kennedy, The Rise and Fall of the Great Powers: Economic Change and Military Conflict from 1500 to 2000 (New York: Random House, 1987), p. 98; Haldane later claimed that actively persuing a policy of balance of power was "forced" on the British Government, Richard Burdon Haldane, Before the War (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1920), p. 10.

¹¹Haldane, Before the War, pp. 7-10; Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, p. 251.

¹²Haldane, Before the War, p. 1; Kennedy lists the three major reasons for Britain's abandoning "splendid isolation" as (1) Britain became diplomatically tied to France over the Entente agreements, (2) Germany was more powerful in comparison to its neighbors that it had been previously, (3) Germany was more hostile under the reign of Wilhelm II toward Great Britain than had been the case during the Bismarckian era, Anglo-German Antagonism, p.423.

¹³Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, pp. 253, 282-83; K. M. Wilson, "Question of Anti-Germanism at the Foreign Office Before the First World War," Canadian Journal of History 18 (April 1983):29.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 28, 29, 42; it may also be noted that Wilson tends to ignor some of the more grandiose schemes that certain foreign office officials atributed to Germany.

¹⁵L. Cecil, The German Diplomatic Service 1871-1914. (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976) pp. 190-91.

¹⁶Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, p. 406.

¹⁷Any single note on this would entirely underrate Wilhelm on this point. However, a quick scan of the notes that the Emperor added to a number of dispatches that dealt with naval matters in the first three chapters of Grosse Politik volume 31, will hammer home this point.

- ¹⁸ Cecil, German Diplomatic Service, Ch. 9.
- ¹⁹ E. T. S. Dugdale, ed., German Diplomatic Documents 1871-1914, 4 vols. (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1931), 3:205.
- ²⁰ Herbert Henry Asquith, The Genesis of the War (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), pp. 161-62.
- ²¹ Great Britain, Board of Trade, Statistical Abstracts for the British Empire (1911), pp. 231-36, 263-70.
- ²² Ibid., pp. 35-38.
- ²³ Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, p. 295.
- ²⁴ Statistical Abstracts (1911), pp. 7,8,11,12.
- ²⁵ Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, p. 292.
- ²⁶ Kennedy, Rise and Fall of Great Powers, p.202.
- ²⁷ Germany divided its trade into two categories, "Regular" and "Special" trade. It is often times difficult to calculate what the trade in a certain item was, because there was often a certain amount of it listed under both categories.
- ²⁸ Deutschland, Kaiserlichen Statistischen Amt, Statistisches Jahrbuch fur das Deutsche Reich (1911), p. 205.
- ²⁹ Statistisches Jahrbuch (1911), pp. 47, 225, 266-67.
- ³⁰ Ibid., pp. 278-83.
- ³¹ Ibid., p. 205.
- ³² Kennedy, Anglo-German Antagonism, pp. 166-68; Hans-Ulrich Wehler, "Bismarck's Imperialism," Past and Present 48:119-55.

CHAPTER II

THE MISSION

In the months following the war scares during the Agadir Crisis of 1911,¹ it became increasingly obvious to statesmen in both Great Britain and Germany that if they did not reach some form of understanding on their outstanding differences, war might soon be the result. The pressures to move towards improved relations came from a wide variety of sources and different individuals and groups had widely varying opinions on the shape any agreement should take. The basic problem remained how to reconcile the interests of the two states; one being the great status quo power, the other being the great rising power in Europe and the world.

The fact that war had appeared to be so close during the summer had caused a number of politically conscious persons in Britain to question the direction of British foreign policy, and more specifically the wisdom of keeping Edward Grey as the foreign minister. By the end of 1911, Grey's support in Parliament came largely from Conservatives, with the rank and file of the Liberal party growing increasingly restive about his policy.² The Radical wing of the Liberal party was openly calling for

Grey's resignation by January 1912, and even the Radicals within the cabinet desired a reevaluation of Grey's supposedly anti-German policy. According to his opponents, Grey was in fact abandoning the Gladstonian traditions of the party and steering the country along a course obviously against the national interest. At the same time even the Conservatives who normally supported him began to show some signs of unrest and a desire to improve relations with Germany.³

It would be incorrect to say that Grey's political position was gravely threatened at that point; however, he reasoned that if he did not make some effort to improve relations with Germany, while remaining vigilant, his remaining support might desert him. In order to preserve the Liberal cabinet and the entente with France, Grey realized that he needed to make what would at least appear to be a strong effort to improve relations with Berlin, but he certainly was not willing to do anything that might weaken or breakup the Entente.⁴ With the continued support of Asquith, Haldane, and Churchill, Grey remained in a position that did not require compromise with the elements that desired closer political ties to Germany.⁵

In Germany the usual intragovernmental struggles became more heated, with certain elements calling loudly for yet another increase in the Imperial Navy. Tirpitz and the big navy advocates took the opportunity that the war scares presented to begin working on a Nouvelle to be

introduced in 1912. In November 1911, the naval authorities once again convinced the Kaiser that the navy had to be expanded.⁶ The supplement was to correct the problems that the navy had during the fall of each year when new conscripts were introduced to replace the almost one-third of all personnel who mustered out. Under the new system Germany would change its naval organization to three squadrons in full commission year round as opposed to the two squadrons that existed under the pre-1912 naval law. The new squadron would relieve the other two from training duties and thereby prevent Germany from being vulnerable to attack during the fall. In order to form the new squadron Tirpitz originally asked for authorization to construct six new battleships over six years. Under strong pressure from Bethmann-Hollweg the number was reduced to three new ships, with several vessels taken from what had previously been reserves to provide the remaining number of battleships necessary for the third squadron.⁷

At Wilhelmstrasse there was much opposition to any naval expansion that would threaten an improvement in relations with London. Britain's ties to France and Russia made the job of convincing the rest of the Imperial government and country that Germany would be more secure and capable of carrying on its program of colonial expansion by not expanding the navy a very difficult one. Bethmann-Hollweg concluded that the only way to avoid a large scale increase in the navy was to reach an agreement

with Britain that was nearly a neutrality treaty.⁸ In early December 1911, the Kaiser agreed to a policy of seeking a rapprochement under the stipulation that a political understanding had to be reached prior to any agreement on specifics (presumably the naval race). Germany would not consent to confining the growth of its navy until Great Britain gave effective assurances that Germany would not have to face an attack by two great powers from the west.⁹

With both governments desiring to have negotiations, the problem then became one of how to initiate them without either country appearing to be appealing to the other or presenting an ultimatum. In January 1912, British financier Ernest Cassel and German shipping magnate Albert Ballin solved the problem without either government having full knowledge of these outsiders' actions. Each of these two men had high ranking contacts in their respective countries and desired to see an improvement in relations.¹⁰

The motives of Ballin and Cassel in this affair seem fairly clear and logical. An Anglo-German war would threaten Cassel's investments in Germany and elsewhere. Any such conflict would have equally disastrous effects on Ballin's shipping business, because the Royal Navy would quickly sweep the Hamburg-America Line off of the high seas. Their long standing friendship and the contacts that each had in London and Berlin gave them the means actively to protect their own interests, and in this case provide

their governments with the means to initiate negotiations without either one having to appear to be the supplicant.

Apparently the two men decided to approach their respective governments in such a way as to make it appear that the other nation was desiring to initiate the conversations. Churchill was first approached by Cassel in early January, but the first sea lord gently rebuffed his friend's idea.¹¹ Later that month Ballin sent another note through Cassel to Churchill, which informed him that Berlin would like to have a meeting between the authorities of the two states at the highest level. This note also conveyed the ominous news that Germany was planning to propose increases both in its army and navy during the next session of the Reichstag.¹² Churchill then conveyed the message to Grey.

The foreign minister was placed in the position of deciding on the next move. He did not know exactly where the invitation had originated, nor did he think that there was much chance that a visit would lead to anything worthwhile. However, to refuse this move would have appeared to be an undiplomatic rebuff. If it were to become public knowledge this would hurt Britain in the eyes of the world and would also give Grey's domestic critics another item to use in calling for his resignation. In the end he had no choice but to make a guarded reply, which the inner cabinet supported.¹³

Whitehall decided to send Cassel directly to Berlin

with a memorandum prepared by Grey, which outlined Britain's basis for entering into talks. The memo read:

1. Fundamental. Naval superiority as essential to Great Britain. German naval programme not to be increased, but if possible retarded and reduced.

2. England sincerely desires not to interfere with German colonial expansion. To give effect to this she is prepared forthwith to discuss whatever the German aspirations in that direction may be. England will be glad to know that there is a field or special points where she can help Germany.

3. Proposals for reciprocal assurances debarring either power from joining in aggressive designs or combinations against the other would be welcome.¹⁴

Bethmann-Hollweg conveyed his government's acceptance of the British conditions to Cassel, with a note of clarification stating that Germany would consider the Novelle to be part of her naval program. The chancellor then invited Edward Grey to visit Berlin as soon as would be practical. Cassel also brought back from Berlin an outline of the new German supplement to the Naval Law.¹⁵

Upon receiving the reply from Berlin along with the sketch of the Novelle, the Admiralty quickly realized that Germany had in mind a large increase in her navy that in turn would require a large increase in the British naval program. Grey was informed that Britain would need to build approximately six additional capital ships in as many years, along with an increase in manpower approximately double that which Churchill had originally planned to ask Parliament for. The first lord mentioned that it might be necessary to "bring home the Mediterranean battleships," in response to the German increases. He made it very clear

that such an action would mean that France had to be counted on to protect British interests in the Mediterranean and that no "exchange of systems [the Entente] would be possible, even if desired by you."¹⁶

Churchill advised Grey that the only chance they had to prevent Britain from becoming directly dependent on France and thereby preserve both freedom of action, and of course the entente, was to adopt the following course of action:

They will announce their new programme, and we will make an immediate and effective reply. Then if they care to slow down the 'tempo' so that their fleet law is accomplished in twelve and not six years, friendly relations would ensue, and we, though I should be reluctant to bargain about it, could slow down too.... Twelve years of tranquility would be assured in naval policy. The attempt ought to be made.¹⁷

On February 3, a note drafted by Cassel, Churchill, Haldane, and Grey was sent to Ballin, which stated that Germany's naval increases made negotiations difficult, if not impossible. The note then went on to say, in the spirit of Churchill's aforementioned recommendations, that if Germany retarded the "tempo... so as to render any serious increase unnecessary" by the British government, then negotiations could begin so long as naval expenditures were open to discussion. If Germany agreed to this then Whitehall thought that the next step should be a "private and unofficial" visit by a British minister to Berlin. Lastly the note informed Berlin that Lord Haldane would be sent, as opposed to Edward Grey.¹⁸

The decision to send Haldane to Berlin arose from several considerations. Grey's pessimism in regard to the chances of success made him less than willing to go himself. If he were to go it would be impossible to hide the meetings, and public expectations would be unreasonably increased. Grey had no knowledge of the German language either. Haldane on the other hand could speak German and had a number of acquaintances in Berlin. He was on a commission with his brother that was charged with studying Germany's methods of scientific education. The two brothers could travel to Berlin under the pretext of their commission duties, and the press would take little notice of it. Haldane also had friends in Berlin who would enable him to be a better judge of whether or not a rapprochement was possible.¹⁹

The Auswärtiges Amt began developing a plan that would be satisfactory in Berlin, and hopefully in London too, several weeks prior to Haldane's arrival. Paul von Metternich pointed out that reinsurance against aggressive designs or combinations would be worthless, because of the difficulty in defining aggression. He argued that the elastic clause hinged on such wording should be dropped and instead an agreement should be drafted that prevented either power from making "combinations" or war against the other. This would prevent the Entente from being used against Germany and provide Great Britain with the security that it sought. From his vantage point in London

Metternich made perfectly clear, as he had for almost a decade, that Britain could not come to terms unless Germany compromised on the navy.²⁰ His apprehension about the interference in political matters by the navy was revealed in a private letter to Bethmann-Hollweg, in which he asked how much should be told to naval attache Widenmann.²¹

Bethmann-Hollweg, with the agreement of the Emperor, informed Metternich that the navy was not to be informed of the impending negotiations. The chancellor still did not know that London would accept the German's conditions for negotiations as of February 4; however, at this point he said that Germany would accommodate Britain's desires concerning the reduction in capital ship building tempo if a political agreement could be reached.²² With the arrival of Haldane several days later, signifying that at least the fundamentals for an agreement might be possible, the difficult work of attempting a rapprochement began.

Lord Haldane arrived in Berlin on Thursday February 8, 1912, and met with Bethmann-Hollweg that same day. Haldane initiated the discussions "as arranged in a conversation I [Haldane] had with Sir Edward Grey before leaving London." He assured the chancellor that Britain was absolutely unbound by commitments to either France or Russia that were not public knowledge, yet Britain could not afford to let France be crushed. The military preparations that Haldane had personally overseen, in his capacity as minister of war, during the previous summer, were merely precautionary

and only intended to "bring the capacity of the British army in point of mobilisation to something approaching the standard which Germany had long ago reached." He naturally did not mention the military conversations that took place between London and Paris.²³

Bethmann-Hollweg then stated that he found nothing at all wrong with Britain's preparations for self defense, nor did Germany seek to hamper the other state's freedom of action in such cases. He then brought up the subject of a neutrality formula, which he thought would help a great deal in settling the difficulties between the two states. The proposal was similar to what he had wanted as a political agreement since he had first become chancellor in 1909.²⁴

Haldane diplomatically replied that a simple neutrality formula was impractical for several reasons. A pledge of absolute neutrality would stop Britain from fulfilling its treaty obligations if Germany attacked Japan, Portugal, or Belgium. He argued that the same would be true if England were to attack Austria or grab strategically vital Denmark. Bethmann-Hollweg conceded the point to Haldane and went on to request a formula from the English lord.²⁵

After rejecting the German proposal, Haldane initiated a conversation that demonstrated fairly clearly what London desired to have as a political understanding. He inquired whether an agreement "against aggressive or unprovoked

attacks and against all combinations, military and naval agreements, and plans directed to the purpose of aggression or unprovoked attack..." would be sufficient. The chancellor replied that "aggression and unprovoked attack" were difficult to define, but he would consider the matter and they could return to this question in their next meeting.²⁶

When the subject turned to the Novelle, Haldane made it clear that Britain could not come to any form of agreement with Germany unless the latter power compromised and reduced its naval buildup. Haldane stated that Britain planned to construct two vessels for each additional vessel that Germany constructed over its existing naval law. Bethmann-Hollweg replied, as did the Emperor and Admiral von Tirpitz during a meeting with Haldane the following day, that Germany had a vital and legitimate need for a third squadron. Because Germany was not willing to abandon the third squadron, which would free the other two squadrons from training duty, Bethmann-Hollweg asked for any ideas Haldane might have on how to reduce Germany's naval plans and retain the new squadron.²⁷

Haldane answered in the spirit of Churchill's earlier recommendations that the tempo of Germany's new ship construction be retarded. He put forth the suggestion that Germany could plan to construct the three new vessels called for in the Novelle so that the final one would not be completed for about twelve years, instead of laying down

one new keel every other year and completing the last one in about seven years. The British minister also suggested in his meeting with Wilhelm II and Tirpitz, that if Germany were to drop one of the three additional ships, London could more readily negotiate on the political question. This type of concession was doubly important, because the British ministry was convinced, and rightfully so, that the other European powers would not take a political understanding between Germany and Great Britain seriously if at the same time they both were expanding their navies to protect themselves from each other.²⁸

Tirpitz vehemently opposed any further reduction in construction for the third squadron. The number of new ships had already been slashed from six to three. Any further reduction was unacceptable to the navy's chief. The Emperor never abandoned the idea of slashing another ship from the program, but the center of discussions was switched back to the possibility of a reduction in building tempo.²⁹

Haldane insisted that an agreement could not be inaugurated by the laying down of an additional vessel in 1912. After much discussion, they tentatively agreed that Germany should lay down one of the additional capital ships called for in the Novelle during 1913, another in 1916, and the last in 1919. This meant that the last vessel was to be completed in approximately ten years. Tirpitz then asked Haldane to "give some undertaking about our own ship

building." The admiral stated that Germany could not recognize the two power standard, but Haldane refused to discuss a definition of standards of allocation. The three then came upon the idea that nothing about the navy be mentioned in an agreement, but as soon as a political understanding was reached the Emperor could announce that a new situation had arisen. Then without changing or abandoning the Novelle the government could slow the rate of construction to that already agreed to.³⁰

The Emperor reminded Haldane that from Germany's perspective a political agreement was the key to everything. Haldane at this point seems to have agreed, as he reported to the British ambassador in Berlin Sir W. Edward Goschen.³¹ The following day, Saturday, Bethmann-Hollweg was to have a draft of a political understanding ready to present to Haldane.

During meetings between Haldane and the chancellor on Friday evening and Saturday, the tentative proposals for a political understanding were arrived at. Bethmann-Hollweg presented a formal draft of an agreement with the vital clause being number three, which stated that if either of the powers became "entangled in a war with one or more other Powers, the other of the... parties will at least observe towards the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality."³² Haldane, in line with his earlier complaints against too binding of formula, stated that Britain could not agree to the German draft as it existed.

Before going further, Haldane's rebuttal of the original German draft should be examined more closely. Clause four of the German Draft stated that "the duty of neutrality which arises from the preceding article has no application, in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements...."³³ Thereby, any existing defensive treaties that either Germany or Great Britain had were excluded from the German plan. This being the case, Haldane's concern could not have logically been for the safety of Japan, Portugal, or Belgium under such an arrangement; instead it was once again a fear that Germany might destroy France. Why Bethmann-Hollweg allowed Haldane to discredit the German formula in such an off-handed manner without further argument is not revealed in the existing record; however, it seems logical to assume that the chancellor saw no point in contesting the point because it was obvious that London would not accept his proposal.³⁴

After Haldane's rejection of the German formula, Bethmann-Hollweg informed him that the extremely elastic formula that Britain desired was inadequate too. Haldane then proceeded to write out a new draft of the original German proposal that took into account the British complaints about the original. The major change took place in clause three, which then read:

If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other will at least observe towards

the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality, and use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict.

Bethmann-Hollweg did not either accept or reject this new draft at this point.³⁵

As the talks proceeded, Haldane returned to the subject of the Novelle. On Friday, he reported in his diary that he had a short talk with Wilhelm von Stumm of the German Foreign Office who told Haldane it would strengthen Bethmann-Hollweg's position if he made it absolutely clear that further naval concessions were necessary before London could come to a political arrangement. This Haldane proceeded to do during his last talk with the chancellor. Bethmann-Hollweg replied that because "the question is of a political nature, the extent of the political agreement will be of decided importance." This of course implies that if a suitable political understanding could be reached, then further naval reductions could also occur.³⁶

After Haldane assured the chancellor that he wanted to go over all matters thoroughly before returning to London,³⁷ the two men then discussed some of the outstanding colonial and neocolonial problems that caused discord in the relations between their two countries. Germany desired to settle the complications over the Baghdad Railway in a way that would allow German control of the Baghdad-Bussorah section with England having an "exceptional position." In return England then would allow

German participation in any railroad ventures in southern Persia, and Germany would recognize England's political control of the area. Germany also pledged to assist England diplomatically in obtaining a concession from Turkey for a harbor in Kuwait.³⁸

In regard to Africa the discussions largely circulated around the secret treaty of 1898, which prepared for the possibility of the collapse of the Portugese African Empire.³⁹ Bethmann-Hollweg stated that Germany desired to have islands of Zanzibar and Pemba in exchange for England's "special position" on the Baghdad Railway. In Africa the two thought that Germany could get the secret treaty amended to give Germany the part of lower Angola that had formerly been reserved for Britain. Bethmann-Hollweg then agreed that Britain should get the island of Timor, and if Germany should be able to work out a friendly arrangement with France and Belgium to get a section of the Lower Congo, England would then get the Katanga Triangle.⁴⁰

This marked the end of Haldane's mission to Berlin. He left with the impression that the discussions had been valuable and the spirit of both parties had been friendly. Now came the tasks of getting the two governments to accept the tentative arrangements and working out the details.

Certainly the high hopes that both Haldane and Bethmann-Hollweg shared at the conclusion of the meetings in Berlin did not mature as the weeks following the visit

showed. Why this was the case cannot be fully explained until an examination of the negotiations that followed is undertaken. However, a careful analysis of the situation to this point is in order. The memoirs written after the Great War by the key participants in the February discussions are of course suspect to a degree, but they do shed some light on the events.

Haldane later records in his book, Before the War, that he left Berlin with several grave concerns. First, it seemed certain that Germany was going to insist on keeping the Novelle. Second, there was much talk in Berlin that Tirpitz might be made chancellor, and finally, and perhaps of greatest concern, Germany had no clear direction to its foreign policy. He said that he never doubted the good intentions of Bethmann-Hollweg, or the Emperor for that matter, but that Tirpitz was becoming the real power in the German government.⁴¹

Tirpitz and Bethmann-Hollweg, although from very different perspectives, both argue against Haldane's first point in each of their post-war memoirs. Bethmann-Hollweg argues that the only way he could have regained control of the naval question in Germany was for there to be a noticeable reduction in the Revanche spirit brought on by Poincare's return to power in France. Probably the only way this could have been brought about was for Britain to have become openly more friendly toward Germany, thereby making the French uncertain as to whether or not Britain

would aid them if war came.⁴² This argument is in keeping with the chancellor's statements to Haldane recorded above, which suggested that if a political arrangement was arrived at then further naval concessions could be forced past the big-navy advocates. Germany could obviously get by with a few ships less, if she only had to worry about the combined navies of the Franco-Russian Alliance, and not the Royal Navy.

Tirpitz states in his Memoirs that he "would have sacrificed the whole bill [Novelle] for a really solid agreement of neutrality, as I had let the Emperor know beforehand."⁴³ Bethmann-Hollweg, who is depicted as a villain throughout the book, had not kept the admiral abreast on the political question so he never knew how great the possibility of an understanding was. Tirpitz claims that he "gave away" the third ship to Haldane after having already sacrificed the original plan for the Novelle. He mentions that it was certainly possible to give more ground later, so he did not want to capitulate until there was evidence of a real agreement being possible. A real agreement would have to have been either a political-neutrality agreement or a naval agreement based on a standard of two-to-three, instead of the two power standard, which Britain refused to abandon in principle.⁴⁴

Tirpitz's argument is not entirely correct, but it needs to be considered. It was not true that the Tirpitz "gave away" the third ship called for in the Novelle during

Haldane's visit. He was correct in stating that Bethmann-Hollweg did purposely try to keep the navy uninformed about the negotiations on political matters. It is also true that the admiral would have been satisfied with a naval agreement of a two to three ratio, as had been the case since 1909.⁴⁵

This tends to at least partially support Haldane's final concern expressed above, that German policy had no clear direction. However, it was not so much that German policy had no identifiable direction, but that the German government was divided about how to achieve its policy goals. Both the chancellor and the Secretary of State for the Navy, feared the Entente might be used against Germany in an "aggressive" manner. Tirpitz thought that to compromise with Britain would make Germany look weak, and Britain did not come to terms with countries it did not fear to a substantial degree. The only way to deal with Britain was to continue to expand the Imperial Navy until London realized that Germany had to be dealt with in an honorable manner.

Bethmann-Hollweg realized that a major reason that Britain continued to maintain its strong ties to the Entente Cordiale was because of the German naval buildup. It was probably true that in the cases of both France and Russia fear played a role in bringing Britain into an understanding with those powers. However, Russia's threat to India and France's threat to Britain's interests in the Mediterranean were insignificant in comparison to a threat

against Britain itself. A German navy large enough to have even a faint chance of nullifying the Royal Navy's control of the seas and quite close geographically to the United Kingdom was too great a threat to be discounted. The opposing issues for the chancellor became how to convince the government and the country that Germany should reduce its naval program while Britain was in the camp of Germany's opponents, and how to convince Britain it should distance itself from its Entente partners while Germany continued to build up its navy. The weeks following the Haldane Mission showed that there was not much compromise to come from either side of the North Sea.

CHAPTER II NOTES

¹For a brief explanation of the Agadir Crisis see Sydney Fay, The Origins of the World War, 2nd ed., 2 vols. in 1 (New York: Macmillan Company, 1930), 1:277-293.

²Samuel R. Williamson, Jr., The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), p. 251.

³Ibid.; Some press reviews that show Grey's standing with the British press are contained in Das Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes England 78 bd. 87 Kühlmann to Auswärtige Amt 1-4-12, Kühlmann to Auswärtige Amt 1-11-12, Kühlmann to Auswärtige Amt 1-17-12, Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 12-22-11, Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 1-22-12; Edward Grey, Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), p. 243.

⁴Ibid.

⁵Deutschland, Auswärtige Amt, Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes, 31:11354 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 2-5-12.

⁶Grosse Politik, 31:11321 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 11-22-11.

⁷Archibald Hurd and Henry Castle, German Sea-Power: Its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis (London: John Murray, 1912; reprint ed., Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, Publishers, 1971), Appendix I, pp. 337-339.

⁸Grosse Politik, 31:11321 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 11-22-11; Ibid., 31:11354 Kühlmann to Bethmann-Hollweg 1-8-12.

⁹Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, Reflections on the World War, 2 vols., trans. George Young (London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 1920) 1:47.

¹⁰It has never been completely settled as to who initiated the exchange between the two governments through the Ballin-Cassel channel. Neither nations' foreign office

ever stopped denying that it initiated the first moves toward negotiations. For a good example of the confusion that surrounded this particular topic during the general period of the Haldane mission see Great Britain, Foreign Office, British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, "The Anglo-German Tension 1907-1912," 6:502 Goschen to Nicolson 2-9-12.

¹¹British Documents, 6:492 Churchill to Cassel 1-7-12.

¹²Ibid., 6:493 Churchill to Grey 1-20-12.

¹³Grey, Twenty-Five Years, p. 241.

¹⁴Grosse Politik, 31:11347 Memorandum by Bethmann-Hollweg 1-29-12, 11348 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 1-30-12.

¹⁵Compare the outline of the Novelle Bethmann-Hollweg sent to London, which is found in Grosse Politik, 31:11348 n., to the actual Novelle, which can be seen in Hurd and Castle, German Sea-Power, Appendix I, pp. 337-339.

¹⁶Winston Churchill, The World Crisis, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923-29), 1:96-98 Churchill to Grey 1-31-12.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Ibid., 1:99-100 Cassil to Ballin 2-3-12; an untranslated reproduction of this letter, which is written in a curious mixture of German, French and English, is in Grosse Politik, 31:11350 Cassil to Ballin 2-3-12.

¹⁹Grosse Politik, 31:11355 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 2-7-12; British Documents, 6:496,497 Grey to Goschen 2-7-12; Grey, Twenty-Five Years, pp. 242-43.

²⁰Grosse Politik, 31:11349 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 1-31-12.

²¹Ibid., 11352 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-3-12.

²²Ibid., 11353 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 2-4-12.

²³British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12.

²⁴Ibid.; compare the formulas discussed by Haldane and Bethmann-Hollweg with the general proposal that the chancellor discussed with Goschen found in the British Documents, 6:284 Goschen to Grey 8-21-12.

²⁵Ibid., 506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12; Richard Haldane,

Before the War (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1920), pp. 57-71.

²⁶British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12.

²⁷Ibid.; Grosse Politik, 31:11359 Wilhelm II to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-9-12.

²⁸British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12; Grosse Politik, 31:11359 Wilhelm II to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-9-12.

²⁹British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12.

³⁰Ibid.

³¹Ibid., 504 Goschen to Nicolson 2-10-12.

³²Ibid., 506 Appendix 4; Grosse Politik, 31:11361 Draft of Anglo-German Agreement [pr. 2-10-12]; see Appendix II of this thesis, where the draft political agreement is reproduced in its entirety.

³³Ibid.

³⁴Fritz Fischer has argued that Wilhelmstrasse continually kept the Schlieffen Plan in mind while trying to trick England into signing a political agreement. Germany was attempting to gain a free hand to destroy French power and dominate the low countries. However, this argument can not survive a careful examination of clause four of Bethmann-Hollweg's proposal. Because the German army's plan to move through Belgium to outflank the French army required the violation of Belgian neutrality, Fischer's argument is obviously wrong. Even if Britain had signed Bethmann-Hollweg's draft, a violation of Belgian territory by Germany would release Britain from its pledge of neutrality, because London had previously pledged to protect Belgium's neutrality. Thus Britain could send any amount of force it desired to stop the German move, without violating the Anglo-German accord as proposed during Lord Haldane's visit to Berlin. Fritz Fischer, War of Illusions: German Policies from 1911 to 1914, trans. Marian Jackson (London: Chatto and Windus, 1975), pp. 124-31.

³⁵Underlines are mine; Grosse Politik, 31:11362 Note by Bethmann-Hollweg 2-12-12; Bethmann-Hollweg, Reflections, 1:52; British Documents, 6:506 Appendix I; Haldane, Before the War, pp. 65,66.

³⁶Bethmann-Hollweg replied that "Soweit die Frage politischer Natur sei, werde der Umfang des politischen agreements von bestimmender Bedeutung sein." Grosse Politik, 31:11362 Note by Bethmann-Hollweg 2-12-12.

³⁷Haldane reports that he was "instructed pretty fully by Harcourt and Grey" on colonial matters prior to coming to Berlin. British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12.

³⁸Ibid., Appendix II; Grosse Politik, 31:11362 Note by Bethmann-Hollweg 2-12-12.

³⁹For the text of the original agreements see British Documents, 1:91 Secret Convention-Enclosure, 92 Secret Note-Enclosure.

⁴⁰Ibid., 6:506 Appendix II, III; Grosse Politik, 31:11362 Note by Bethmann-Hollweg 2-12-12.

⁴¹Haldane later wrote "I entertain no doubt that the German Chancellor was sincerely in earnest in what he said to me on these occasions, and in his desire to improve relations with us and keep the peace. So I think was the Emperor; but he was pulled at by his naval and military advisers, and by the powerful, if then small chauvinist party in Germany. In 1912, when the conversations recorded took place, their party was less potent, I think a good deal less than it appears to have become a year and a half later, when Germany had increased her army still further. But I formed the opinion even then that the power of the Emperor in Germany was a good deal misinterpreted and overestimated. My impression was that the really decisive influence was that of the minister who had managed to secure the strongest following throughout Germany; and it was obvious to me that Admiral von Tirpitz had a powerful and growing following from many directions, due to the backing of the naval party." Haldane, Before the War, pp. 66-67.

⁴²Bethmann-Hollweg, Reflections, 1:47.

⁴³I can find no evidence to support this claim by Tirpitz. He makes this assertion in his two volume work entitled My Memoirs (New York: Dodd, Mead, and Company, 1919), 1:290.

⁴⁴Ibid., 1:289-91.

⁴⁵In Grosse Politik, 28:10325 Enclosure to Memorandum by Bethmann-Hollweg 8-13-09, Tirpitz layed out a plan in which Germany would get a ratio of three "new" vessels for every four that Britain built, and an overall ratio of five to nine in Britain's favor. Less than a month later Tirpitz modified his proposal to one which would allow Germany to build dreadnought type vessels at a rate of two for every three that Britain built, Grosse Politik, 28:10339 Tirpitz to Bethmann-Hollweg 9-1-09.

CHAPTER III

RESPONSES TO THE MISSION:

CAUTIOUS OPTIMISM

AND COLLAPSE

Following Haldane's departure from Berlin, Wilhelmstasse tempered its hopes that an agreement might finally be obtainable with a realization that Germany must be willing to compromise on the naval question. Haldane made it abundantly clear that Great Britain would only agree to a neutrality formula that was in fact a nonaggression pact, and even this was unlikely if Germany made any real increases in its navy within the next three years. This meant, in effect, that the Novelle had to be reduced to a shadow of its original intent.¹

The political question, then, could be identified as the need to find a formula that actually reassured Germany that the Entente was not to be used aggressively, and, at the same time, flexible enough to allow Britain to sign it without giving up its good relations with France. Bethmann-Hollweg thought the British idea for a formula based on which side in a conflict was the aggressor was too narrow; the power that first declares war is not necessarily the aggressive one. A draft needed to be

found, while based on "aggression," that also took into consideration provocation by a third power.² Metternich believed that even if such a formula were found Britain would not sign it unless the Novelle was dropped entirely. The chancellor still thought that a moderate increase to provide for a third squadron was acceptable to London.³ What was to be "acceptable increases" would be revealed soon. For the time being, the chancellor waited to find out London's reaction to the discussions that had just finished in Berlin.

Whitehall's initial response to the tentative agreements discussed in Berlin was mixed. Immediately after Haldane's return to London, Grey informed Metternich that the results of the mission were impressive at first glance; of course, it required some time to go over them in detail. The foreign secretary stated that the spirit in which the talks were conducted, in and of itself, should help to relieve tension between the two powers.⁴

Among the permanent appointees in the Foreign Office and Ambassadors Goschen in Berlin and Bertie in Paris, the news from Berlin was not well received from the very start. Goschen opposed the compromise political formula even with addition of the "aggressor" clause, and thought that a reduction in building tempo by the German navy was not really a concession. He did believe that a construction slowdown was probably all that could be attained under the existing situation.⁵

From his post in Paris, Bertie stated that the Haldane Mission was "a foolish move... to satisfy the Grey-must-go radicals." It created suspicion in Paris, and from this avid Francophile's position anything that might cause a cooling off of Anglo-French relations was undesirable. He was fearful that Britain might not give France proper consideration in any territorial arrangements and that Germany would not observe the "spirit" of any arrangement that might be worked out.⁶

Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Sir Arthur Nicolson, after reviewing Haldane's compromise draft for a political agreement, decided that it was unacceptable. The terms "aggression" and "benevolent neutrality" were problematic, because there was no way to determine precisely the meanings the words would hold in unforeseen future events. The concerns he voiced over the term "aggression" were similar to those expressed in the Germany Foreign Office: "who is in reality the aggressor?" In regard to the phrase "benevolent neutrality" he argued that it is a contradiction in terms; if Britain was benevolent toward one party then it was not being truly neutral.⁷

Nicolson concluded that clauses three and four and part of two (he did not state which part) should be omitted from the draft. He wanted part three omitted because of the above mentioned objections to the terminology and it, along with clause four, would cause Britain's "hands to be

tied" in the future. Four also allowed Germany to continue to maintain its ties with the Triple Alliance, while Britain would be precluded from making such arrangements with third powers. Therefore, Nicolson wanted a political agreement that stated:

The high contracting Powers assure each other mutually of their desire for peace and friendship. [unstated part of the following] 2. They will not either of them make any combination, or join in any combination, which is directed against the other. They declare expressly that they are not bound by any such combination.

5. The high contracting parties declare that they will, in the case of either of them having differences with third Powers, mutually give their diplomatic support for the purposes of settling their differences.

Nicolson stated that even though this would make a very brief document, it would still be more than England had signed with any other European Great Power.⁸

Senior Clerk of the Foreign Office Eyre Crowe made broader comments on the Berlin discussions, but he too was not pleased with the tentative bargain. The assurances of the reduction in naval building tempo were to be given to the German Reichstag and not formally to Great Britain; therefore, it would be easy for the Berlin government to abandon the reduced tempo at any point it decided to. The only alternative to this was to sign a secret agreement between the two powers, but this would be some-thing that His Majesty's Government would probably not wish to do. Public opinion would be outraged if they found out that the government had signed another secret agreement without even

informing Parliament, especially after the recent controversies over the Entente agreements. Also, no major political faction would take a favorable view of any agreement that did not include a naval understanding. If there was to be any agreement it seemed that it would have to be almost purely political and have real advantages for Great Britain. In the colonial talks, Germany would need to make more concessions in order for Britain to go forward with the colonial exchanges that Haldane had suggested to Bethmann-Hollweg.⁹

A matter that needs to be mentioned before proceeding with the examination of the negotiations between the two powers is Winston Churchill's famous, or perhaps infamous, "German luxury fleet" speech. While delivering an address in Glasgow on naval matters, during the exact time when Haldane was in Berlin, the First Lord remarked that while the Royal navy was vital to the very survival of Great Britain, the Imperial Navy was something of a "luxury" to Germany. Churchill later explained that "It appeared that the word 'luxury' had a bad significance when translated into German." Yet the outcry from the Liberal press in Britain, which occurred simultaneously with that from Germany, indicated that the speech had a bad connotation in English too. Churchill later argued quite unconvincingly that Haldane used the speech to good advantage while carrying on discussions in Berlin.¹⁰

The significance of this was not so much what was

said, as when it was said. During the decade and a half prior to the war, politicians and naval officers on both sides of the North Sea constantly sniped at the opposing side's fleet programs; Churchill's speech was nothing new or particularly bombastic. But at a time when the two states were supposedly trying to achieve a rapprochement, it was certainly impolitic for a prominent member of the cabinet needlessly to risk angering the population of the other state. It was now going to be even more difficult for those favoring compromise in Germany to have their way.¹¹

One of the main concerns that London had during its attempt to reach an understanding with Germany was an overriding desire to maintain friendly relations with France, which had been enjoyed over the previous eight years. Grey had been careful to keep both the French and Russian governments informed about the negotiations that were taking place from the very start of the new round of talks.¹² Several days after Haldane's return from Berlin, Grey reassured the French Ambassador in London Paul Cambon that a formal naval agreement might never be reached. Perhaps an agreement might be reached about an exchange of information or a reduced tempo of building, but this was likely to be all.¹³ Grey discovered in his conversations with Cambon that French treaties with Britain and Zanzibar were going to complicate the colonial discussions further still. Grey apparently did not go into any detail about

the political formula at this early stage.¹⁴

Nicolson met with Cambon on February 15, and the full weight of French fears about the renewed Anglo-German negotiations was revealed. Cambon claimed that Germany was hastening its military build up and trying to bind Britain so that it could not help France in a war--at this particular time for one reason in particular. The Russian army was in the middle of a reorganization and was not prepared for war; therefore, with Britain neutralized by treaty and Russia by its current dis-organization, Germany would be able to "face a contest with France with equanimity." Cambon made one of the few diplomatic slips of his highly acclaimed career when he commented to Nicolson that Asquith was overly optimistic about reaching an agreement with Germany. The ministers involved were not terribly impressed by Cambon's argument, much less his questioning of the Prime Minister's understanding of the diplomatic situation, but they still continued to keep the French posted on developments as they progressed.¹⁵

In Paris, Bertie was actively working to subvert the aims of the Liberal government represented in the dispatch of Haldane to Berlin. Specifically, the ambassador prodded French Prime Minister Raymond Poincaré into instructing Cambon to protest any agreement that mentioned neutrality under any circumstances. Cambon was to argue that France had given its military secrets to the British during the staff talks and the British army had a clear understanding

of French strategic planning. As it turned out Cambon never carried out his instructions, because Grey informed him that there was little if any chance of anything coming of the negotiations.¹⁶

The first major exchange of views between the representatives of Germany and Britain after Haldane's return to London occurred between Metternich, Grey, and Haldane on February 22. The British ministers told Metternich that the tentative agreements Haldane reached in Berlin were based on uncertain knowledge of the new German naval supplement; the minister of war only received a full copy of the law as he was leaving Berlin. Because he was not a naval expert, he probably would not have realized the significance of it even if he had the chance to read the full *Novelle* prior to his discussions with the chancellor.¹⁷

Therefore, the naval question needed to be discussed in more detail. Haldane had not realized that the manpower increases called for in the law were important. Also, the decreased tempo that the Germans agreed to would still leave Britain in a position of having to lay down six additional capital ships over the next six to seven years. The British naval authorities had determined that the new fleet law demanded a much larger increase in the German navy than was required to have a training squadron to relieve the High Sea's Fleet of such duties. Germany could man the three new ships with 4000 men, and did not require

the 15,000 additional men called for. The British concluded that if the Germans were only making changes necessary for a training squadron, then something could more easily be worked out. This massive increase in manpower was in fact designed to keep about four-fifths of the German fleet in permanent full commission. The public in both countries would not understand increases of this magnitude, while at the same time the two countries are supposedly reaching a political understanding.¹⁸

In regard to the political agreement, Haldane repeated his former position that Britain could not agree to a neutrality formula that did not consider the problem of which party was the aggressor. The protestations of Metternich, and also of the British permanent secretaries about the difficulty of predetermining who was the aggressor did not seem to influence Haldane or Grey. The minister of war maintained that the value of Haldane's draft would be the spirit that it conveyed.¹⁹

In closing the meeting, the British ministers stated that the territorial questions also needed to be reevaluated. Grey argued that the German concessions on the Baghdad Railway were not enough to exchange for actual territory. He mentioned the fact that Zanzibar and Pemba could not be transferred without French involvement, and that the Dutch had prior rights to Timor ahead of Britain.²⁰ Several days later the British ministry put forth the view that the increasingly complicated

territorial talks might be better left until after the basic political and naval questions were resolved.²¹

Haldane's argument that he did not comprehend the increases that the Novelle represented may have been true, but if so, his ignorance of the topic was inexcusable. Although the note Bethmann-Hollweg sent to London through Cassel and Ballin does not correspond exactly with the text of the 1912 Novelle, it was in fact a good outline of the actual bill.²² Churchill fully realized that there was to be a major increase in the manpower requirements of the German fleet, after having examined the German outline of the bill on January 31. Churchill informed Grey on that same day that in addition to the meeting the German increases in capital ships, the Royal Navy had to meet the "German increase in personnel.... I had intended to ask Parliament for 2000 more men this year and 2000 next. I expect to double these quotas."²³

After having seen the actual draft of the German law, the admiralty drew the same basic conclusions that it had after reviewing the outline sent by the German chancellor. The law would require Britain to increase its manpower by 4000 men per annum, during the six-to-seven year course of the German law. This was just as Churchill had reported prior to Haldane's visit to Berlin.²⁴

The type of reductions that Churchill thought possible prior to the Berlin discussions, as seen in Chapter II, required Germany to spread the naval law out over twelve

years. Under the Novelle the three additional battleships were to be spread over approximately six years, and the increase in manpower was to take place over nine years.²⁵ According to the discussions between Kaiser Wilhelm, Tirpitz, and Haldane, Germany was willing to reduce the building tempo so that the new construction would occur over about ten years.²⁶ Regardless of the fact that manpower was not seriously discussed, the fact that the slowing of the construction rate of capital ships necessitated a corresponding retardation of the personnel increases; the personnel increases would not be completed for about eleven to twelve years. In other words, Berlin had basically agreed with British desires that the Novelle be spread over twelve years, if a political agreement were reached. This does not include the fact that the Imperial government had not flatly rejected the idea of dropping one of the three additional capital ships and the corresponding number of men.

The reasons for Haldane's not realizing the importance of the personnel increases in the German navy are not clear, but it does seem to be a fact. Perhaps Grey and Churchill simply did not know that Haldane was unaware of the significance of this part of the Novelle and therefore did not give him specific instructions in this regard. Perhaps on the other hand Haldane was briefed on the topic, and for some reason did not comprehend what he was told, or he simply forgot. Yet this seems improbable since Haldane

had been responsible for carrying out the military reorganization of the British army and should therefore have understood the significance of any major manpower increases. There is also the possibility that Haldane was simply not politically astute enough to comprehend the significance of the matters he discussed in Berlin; however, the existing record does not give the necessary information to explain adequately with whom the failure lay. Whatever the reason, Haldane's ignoring this important part of the naval question represented a grave lack of communication within the British ministry and presented British policy with a problem that could have been easily avoided.

The apparent rejection of much of the tentative arrangement worked out between Haldane and the German authorities by Whitehall and the Liberal Imperialists was not well received in Berlin. The Kaiser flamboyantly refused to accept any deviation from the arrangement that Tirpitz and he had made with the British minister; that is, at least, until some form of political agreement had been reached. Such a document would have to include some form of neutrality clause.²⁷

Bethmann-Hollweg too believed that the British were backing away from much of what had tentatively been arranged in Berlin. Although the meetings were designed to establish a basis for agreements and not actually to conclude anything definite, the German government naturally

assumed that Haldane expressed the opinions of his colleagues. The chancellor viewed the preliminary discussions to have produced a consensus along the following lines: (1) some form of political agreement, which included a neutrality clause, was to be signed and afterwards followed by a slow-down in the tempo of battleship construction by the German navy, (2) the secret treaty of 1898, was to be modified so that Germany would have prior claim to the zone that had formerly been reserved for Great Britain in Angola, and England was to assist Germany in gaining part of the Belgian Congo, (3) a transfer of Zanzibar and Pemba to Germany was not objectionable to Britain and (4) Germany was willing to give up claim to Timor if Britain wanted it, and also grant Britain a special position (Berücksichtigung) on the Baghdad Railway.²⁸

The chancellor stated that he was still prepared to carry on negotiations on the political agreement on the basis of the discussions between himself and Haldane. The political agreement, which still was the most important part of the discussions in his thought, would determine the outcome of the naval and colonial negotiations. The fact that he was willing to continue the political discussions along the line that had come out of the Berlin discussions indicates that he had become reconciled in principle to the inclusion of an "aggressor" clause into the proposed neutrality section of a treaty. The problem still remained

one of the actual wording of a formula that would give Germany the security that it sought.²⁹

Metternich discussed the existing situation with the British Lord President of the Council, Viscount John Morley, on February 29. Morley argued that the Liberal ministry would look foolish if it ceded territory to Germany at a time when German naval expansion forced Britain to increase its naval expenditures. Metternich replied in light of the Chancellor's comments expressed above that Germany had expected that what Haldane had said in Berlin was in keeping with the cabinet's position. He said that it now seemed that Britain was trying to back out of the talks. Morley emphatically denied this, leading Metternich to conclude that even the colonial discussions should continue so long as Berlin was willing to compromise on the naval question.³⁰

In Germany the forces both inside and outside of the government advocating an increase in the navy were stepping up their efforts to push through the Novelle. Tirpitz set out, item by item, to discredit the British complaints about the bill to the Kaiser and push for its introduction to the Reichstag. His argument basically stated that the Novelle was not as drastic as the British were claiming.³¹ The German Naval attache in London, Captain Widenmann, put forth the fanciful claim that Britain could not stand the cost of building two ships for every one that Germany built. He then drew the conclusion that since the

ratio would remain approximately two to three regardless of whether the Novelle is adopted or not, Germany should therefore go ahead with the bill.³² The two naval officers apparently ignored the political consequences of the bill even when it was quite apparent that the overall strength of the two powers' navies were going to remain the same anyway.

The protestations of the chancellor could not stand critical examination by the Kaiser and most within the government until some acceptable form of political arrangement was reached. Whether the British admiralty was right and the Novelle would make four-fifths of the German fleet in permanent full commission, or if the German admiralty was right and three-fourths of the navy was to be kept in that state of readiness was of no real consequence in the chancellor's mind. Britain could and would expand its navy approximately twice as much as Germany did, and the changes were to be major.³³

On February 29, Haldane informed Metternich that the Royal Navy was planning to transfer the Mediterranean squadron home in reply to the German Novelle. The ministry thought that public opinion would demand it, even if the navy did not think it was necessary. Upon receiving word of this, the Kaiser became quite irate. He then ordered the foreign office to instruct Metternich to tell Grey that if such a transfer took place, Germany would regard it as a casus belli (Kriegsfall). Germany would then return to the

original Novelle, calling for six additional battleships in six years, and mobilization.³⁴

Instead of complying with the Kaiser's coarse directive, Bethmann-Hollweg sent a memorandum to London that dealt specifically with the negotiations and made no mention of the proposed transfer of the Mediterranean fleet. Wilhelm then proceeded to address a letter directly to Metternich ordering him to tell Grey that such a transfer would mean a return to the original plan for the Novelle, and eventual mobilization. He did back away from stating that the redeployment was a cause for war.³⁵

The action by the Kaiser in sending a message to an ambassador and not through the chancellor brought about a short crisis in German government. Bethmann-Hollweg informed the Emperor that his actions were unsupportable both on political and constitutional grounds. On March 7, the chancellor submitted his resignation and waited for developments. After weighing the situation, the Kaiser backed down. Bethmann-Hollweg retained his position and continued to try to work out an understanding with Great Britain, but now from a somewhat more solid domestic position. Metternich never delivered the warning to the British foreign office; however, the need to gain more room to compromise on the naval question remained as elusive as ever.³⁶

The British ministry received with disquiet reports from Germany of the growing agitation for the naval

supplement. The news tended to reinforce the view that the German government was divided on the questions dealing with Great Britain and the navy. It seemed that the Kaiser, chancellor, and the State Secretary of Finance Wermuth all favored some form of understanding with Britain, while the navy and the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs Kiderlen-Waechter did not. But it did seem that the naval staff officers did have a great deal of influence over the Kaiser.³⁷

The permanent secretaries in the British foreign office were quite skeptical about certain parts of the reports coming from Berlin. Crowe maintained that it was absurd to think that the naval agitation could be traced to anyone except the Kaiser. He refused to believe that there was any real division in the German government and that Wilhelm ultimately controlled the press. He reflected views that, if the names of the countries were reversed, would fit Tirpitz quite well. In good cold war rhetoric the Assistant Under-Secretary concluded that "good relations with Germany are to be had by any Power with which she is afraid to go to war, and by no other."³⁸ This type of reasoning was quite well adapted to Nicolson, but Haldane and Grey still tended to understand that the German government was indeed not a united one, and there were fissures that could be exploited.³⁹

On March 6, Metternich conveyed a memorandum from Wilhelmstrasse to Whitehall that did show some sign of a

willingness to compromise, but also reflected a degree of resentment over what appeared in Germany as a rejection of the Haldane mission discussions. The memorandum (drafted by Bethmann-Hollweg) stated that Germany was prepared to "refrain from indicating at present any year for the construction of the third [battle] ship," the suggestion being that the third ship might not be constructed at all. This was put forth in the hope that Britain might present Germany with a proposal for a political agreement that both sides could agree on. German policy did still preclude any commitment on its part to place a ceiling on its armaments prior to arranging for German security through political agreement.⁴⁰

The memorandum included a discussion of the colonial talks, as Bethmann-Hollweg understood them, that took place in Berlin, but it was clear from the document that they were of secondary consideration. He had also been the one to suggest to Haldane during the latter's visit that perhaps the colonial discussions should be delayed until after the political and naval questions had been reviewed by London. Haldane had stated that he knew the situation well enough to talk over all of the outstanding questions.⁴¹

Erye Crowe, as the most outspoken critic of Germany in Whitehall, based his critique of the German communication on what Germany considered to be by far of least importance, colonies. He argued that it was dishonorable

to help Germany acquire anything from third powers and placed the blame for even discussing the matter squarely on Wilhelmstrasse. Both honor and treaty obligations required Britain to stop discussing these possibilities. "I am afraid all our experience goes to prove that this is the way not to get better, but to get a perpetuation of worse, relations."⁴² On the other hand, perhaps the way to improve relations would have been to discuss the issues that were of vital importance, instead of offering "bribes" and then becoming indignant when Germany was interested in taking them.⁴³

From his more secure position in the Government, Bethmann-Hollweg renewed his efforts to reach a political understanding with Britain. At this point he accepted in principle the draft for an agreement that Haldane had produced prior to leaving Berlin. The chancellor concluded that even though "aggression" is a vague term, if both states swore against it then the parties that existed in both countries who constantly saw the threat of attack from the other side would be silenced. On the other hand, if Britain refused to sign a neutrality agreement, based on an aggressor clause, then many in Germany would view London as having initiated talks simply to frustrate the passage of the Novelle.⁴⁴

In accepting Haldane's draft for an agreement, Bethmann-Hollweg required an addition that called for action by the other partner in a treaty if one were the

victim of provocation. He did this in reaction to Haldane's assertion that his government sought a formula that did not require Britain to stand aside if Germany "did eat up France." But also, London wanted the formula to be one that told France that it could not count on British help in regaining Alsace-Lorraine.⁴⁵

On March 12 the chancellor informed Metternich that the Novelle had not yet been submitted to the Reichstag and that there was still some time left to reach an understanding with Britain on the armaments question. Berlin had complied with what it had thought Churchill and Haldane had sought in regard to the Novelle. He then requested Metternich to find out if the discussions and information given during the Haldane mission was the position of the British government. If it were not, then it should be known so that the misunderstandings that had occurred over the previous weeks could be cleared up.⁴⁶

Metternich replied that it appeared Haldane had gotten carried away in Berlin by the thrill of getting things settled. The British government unanimously agreed that he should never have offered Zanzibar and Pemba in exchange for Timor. With the Novelle, the Liberal ministry could not agree to much of a political arrangement, and the government's need for Conservative support only compounded this.⁴⁷

On the evening of March 12, the final attempt to work out a naval-political agreement on the basis of the Berlin

talks began. Metternich sent a message to Lord Haldane asking to see him immediately, and he arrived at the German Embassy just before eleven P.M. The British minister was informed that Wilhelmstrasse had instructed Metternich to inform Whitehall that if a satisfactory political agreement could be presented to Germany, the Novelle would be withdrawn. It then had to be replaced by another, but the new one was to be substantially reduced.⁴⁸

Metternich was not able to answer any specific questions as to the nature of the changes that could be made. He did say though that besides the concessions agreed to in Berlin, Germany was willing to reduce personnel. The British political formula was to be considered conditional on London's being satisfied with the reductions made. The Ambassador concluded by saying that time was of the essence, because Bethmann-Hollweg would need to make a statement about the Novelle before the Reichstag in a short time.⁴⁹

After Haldane conversed with other members of the inner cabinet and the permanent secretaries at Whitehall, Nicolson began the drafting of a formula for presentation to Germany. Nicolson proposed to "do my utmost to find a formula we may submit which will be of as noncommittal a character as possible, and one which will not bind our hands in regard to any eventualities...."⁵⁰ The formula that he and Grey produced was nothing if it was not noncommittal.

On the Fourteenth, Grey presented his draft to Metternich. It reads as follows:

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

Metternich immediately informed the foreign minister that his proposal was insufficient. The central point to the "Conceivable Draft" that Haldane produced in Berlin was the third clause, especially the inclusion of the term "neutrality." The ambassador then proposed that Grey's draft be amended by the clause "England will therefore as a matter of course remain neutral if a war is forced upon Germany."

Grey replied that the statement as it existed expressed the British position correctly. London feared that if it "tied its hands" and Germany crushed France, then Britain may one day have to fight Germany alone. Britain had made no commitment to France and the military conversations between the two states had only been held in order to be prepared for unforeseeable circumstances. Grey stated that "On the other hand, I had given France clearly to understand that, if France was aggressive towards Germany or attacked Germany, no support would be forthcoming from us." Thus Grey did not want to sign a more binding agreement, because it might give the impression that more was meant than was actually said on paper.⁵²

The proposed British formula did conform to British policy, but Grey's explanation of it does not give a full representation of that policy. To be sure, Britain would not support open French aggression against Germany, but what would happen if France and Russia entered a war against Germany and France began to lose the war? Britain's basic position, that it could not afford to allow France to be crushed and no longer be a great power, would not have changed regardless of which side started the war. Therefore, London could promise not to participate in any aggressive plans or combinations against Germany, but to promise neutrality in such an event would possibly allow Germany to have too much latitude in dealing with a defeated France.

Bethmann-Hollweg realized that the English formula precluded Britain from attacking Germany; however, it did not prevent "the participation of England in hostilities against Germany in the case of a Franco-Russian attack, [this] could not effectively relieve the world crisis." He argued after the war that Grey's rejection of Metternich's proposed amendments only make sense if Whitehall believed that it must consider the "forcing of a war by the friends of England, and if he [Grey] held himself bound...to give his support to the Allied Powers."⁵³ The chancellor was incorrect in that he inferred that Britain was bound to France, but in fact at the time of the Haldane mission Britain could easily have remained neutral at the start of

any war that France provoked. What Grey was bound to was the British policy that demanded the preservation of France as a counter balance to Germany. Thus Grey was tied to his perception of Britain's interest, not to France.

As the meeting in which Metternich proposed amendments to the British formula drew to a conclusion, the ambassador handed Grey a copy of a new draft formula that Bethmann-Hollweg had written. The document was almost identical to that which Haldane had written in Berlin, with the exception of the critical clause three which now read:

If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more powers in which it can not be said to be the aggressor, the other of the high contracting parties will at least observe towards the power so entangled a benevolent neutrality and use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict. If either of the high contracting parties is forced to go to war by obvious provocation from a third party they bind themselves to enter into an exchange ^{of} views concerning their attitude in such a conflict.

This clause clearly shows that Bethmann-Hollweg did accept the principle of neutrality being contingent upon which side in a conflict was the aggressor. The second sentence, which was the addition to Haldane's original "conceivable draft," was designed to bridge the gap over the difficulty of defining the term, "aggressor." In consulting each other, in the event of "obvious provocation," the power not directly involved in a war could at least listen to the position of the power that was claiming to be the victim of provocation.

The importance of the "new draft" rests in the fact

that each country would still be free to interpret for itself which party in a war was the aggressor. The only way that this document could "tie the hands" of Great Britain was if, for example, France made an attack on Germany in the most blatant and unprovoked fashion. If there was to be even a relatively minor crisis preceding such a war, it would have been quite easy for Britain to obscure the facts, if necessary, and declare Germany to be the aggressor. Were Germany to execute the Schlieffen plan, the violation of Belgian neutrality would release Britain from the confines of clause three, as was shown above, because Germany would naturally be the aggressor and also clause four exempts previous treaties from the pledge contained in clause three.⁵⁵

In the post-war memoirs written by several key cabinet ministers, the two possible formulas that Germany would have agreed to are largely misrepresented. Asquith states that Bethmann-Hollweg's formula would "have precluded us from coming to the help of France, should Germany on any pretext attack her, and aim at getting the Channel ports."⁵⁶ This was of course true of the Chancellor's original formula presented to Haldane, but it was certainly not true of either the Grey formula, as amended by Metternich, or the "new draft" written by Bethmann-Hollweg. Grey later reminisced that political formulas were simply not safe and that a naval agreement could not be obtained; thereby, he omitted the possibility of the Novelle's

alteration and avoided having to explain the various formulas.⁵⁷ Haldane simply states that the chancellor did not commit himself to the "conceivable draft" during the former's visit to Berlin. He carefully avoided mentioning the "new draft" that did include the modifications the British minister had suggested.⁵⁸

In the days following the delivery of the British and German drafts for a political agreement, Bethmann-Hollweg worked diligently, and for a time successfully, to postpone the introduction of the Novelle to the Reichstag. He reminded the Kaiser that only the previous June the admiralty had stated that the existing naval law was sufficient. It was only through what the Imperial government now knew were misunderstandings during the summer of 1911 that the need for an expansion of the navy appeared necessary. If Germany waited a short time longer and was willing to compromise on the naval question, possibly something positive could be worked out with Britain. Also, if Germany revealed the Novelle now, Britain would surely view it as an insult.⁵⁹

The strengthened position that the chancellor temporarily enjoyed in Berlin did not go unnoticed in London, but this did not bring any change in attitude there. Goschen commented that it appeared that Bethmann-Hollweg had finally gotten ahead of Tirpitz. Yet he confessed that it seemed unlikely that this would mean a real possibility of arms reductions, since if that occurred

Tirpitz would threaten to resign and there was no one qualified to replace him.⁶⁰ Grey concluded that despite the chancellor's strengthened position, there was little Britain could do to insure his success and that they could not make an agreement with this one person; Bethmann-Hollweg could be removed from office at any time.⁶¹

The chancellor reminded Grey, through Metternich, that the person of the Kaiser was the guarantee of the continuity of German policy. The chancellor reiterated that he "could recommend...to give up the essential parts of the Novelle...only if we could conclude an agreement guaranteeing neutrality of a far reaching character...." This position had nothing to do with personalities.⁶²

Grey inquired whether the chancellor was then asking for an agreement that amounted to absolute neutrality. Metternich replied, according to Grey, that "the chancellor had not used the word 'absolute,' but in effect his wish amounted to that." The ambassador then confirmed that without an agreement that was in fact a pledge of absolute neutrality the Novelle must proceed.⁶³

Metternich's statements are difficult to reconcile with a number of other facts. Certainly the "new draft" that the chancellor had sent to London did not call for "absolute neutrality." Even the proposed amendments that Metternich had advanced in regard to Grey's proposal left Britain in the position to decide for itself if "war is forced on Germany." This is not to argue that if Britain

did sign either of the versions that were acceptable to Germany, that London would not be making a marked change in policy; however, both formulas did provide legitimate means of escape if Germany did pursue a belligerent policy. Perhaps Metternich was trying to increase German demands and thereby have more room to compromise later; again it is impossible to say with certainty.

After it became apparent that Britain would not substantially revise its proposed political agreement, Metternich informed Grey that Berlin still considered the "new draft" acceptable.⁶⁴ Grey soon rejected this too, stating that this formula could lead to a number of different interpretations. He noted that Britain did not have any such far reaching agreement with either France or Russia. Metternich retorted that such a neutrality agreement with France and Russia would be superfluous since Britain would probably side with these two countries in the event of war.⁶⁵

This impasse in regard to the political formula effectively marked the end of the possibility of reaching a politically meaningful understanding between Germany and Great Britain. Although there were to be intermittent attempts to reach an agreement before the outbreak of the war, nothing could really be accomplished in the political realm without one of the two countries making a fundamental shift in policy. Thus the real effect of the Haldane mission proved to be little more than a medium for

clarifying the policies that each state adopted and continued to hold until the final collapse of 1914.

With the final rejection of the political formulas at the end of March 1912, Germany and Great Britain continued to seek security for themselves in the same manners that had originally produced the feelings of insecurity and soured relations during the preceding decade. Germany passed the naval supplement on June 14, 1912, clinging to the risk theory despite the increasing evidence that it was no longer relevant (if it ever had been) to an international-political system based on power groups instead of individual powers. Britain in the name of keeping a "free hand" politically, tied itself more closely than ever to France through the Mediterranean-North Sea naval exchange. In both Berlin and London the events of the Winter of 1912, served only to prove to each side what they had been saying all along; the other side was trying to upset the balance of power.⁶⁶

Of course, the fact remains that neither the Imperial nor Royal governments was willing to compromise enough to lay even the groundwork for ending the antagonism that had developed over the preceding decades. Yet, the powers' inability to reach an understanding on the naval and political questions merely reflected the divergent interests of the two states on more fundamental grounds. Germany geographically lay between two states that were tied by a military alliance and so long as Britain was not

willing to clarify its relationship with the Dual Alliance, Berlin could never agree to anything that restricted its freedom of action in procuring armaments. Because Britain retained complete freedom to decide on political matters, Berlin too must be free to arrange its own armaments policy. The irony of this, at least from the German perspective, is that the naval race continually pushed Britain toward France and may be held responsible for the naval exchange of 1912, which bound the Entente as tightly as any alliance treaty could have.

From the position of the Liberal ministry in London, it seemed equally incredible that Germany should ask that Britain not interfere in a war in which Germany could bring about a radical alteration of the balance of power, and ask that Britain abandon its policy of maintaining a two power naval standard. Who started a general European war was not the main concern with which London had to deal. The main question was how to prevent Germany from becoming so strong as to dominate the continent. As with Germany, the measures that Britain took to prevent the realization of its most feared possibility, had the effect of prodding Germany to take steps that did threaten the balance.

As things worked out the powers both passed a chance to form a "bridge" between the two power groups through an Anglo-German rapprochement. Grey recognized the advantage that could be gained if one power from each side reached an agreement on major outstanding issues. He told Metternich

that it would be welcomed news if Austria and Russia were to arrive at a far-reaching agreement that prevented war in Balkans. "Such an agreement would not make separate groups, for it would bring together two Powers which belonged to different groups." Grey argued that in time such an event "would have a good influence," by preventing a general war from erupting over a small dispute in the Balkans.⁶⁷

London was not willing to take the risk of being a part of the "bridge" between the two power groups. Had the British cabinet accepted the idea of a neutrality pledge on the condition that the party to the agreement was not the aggressor, London would have held a key position between France and Germany. Paris could not afford to take any action that might make Britain decide France was provoking a war because then Britain would remain neutral. Berlin could likewise ill afford to take any action that Britain may interpret as provocative; London would then surely join France in a war against Germany. Even if France and Britain drifted apart over the signing of an Anglo-German agreement, it is difficult to see how such an arrangement could have been more dangerous to peace and the balance of power than to continue to do nothing as Europe slid toward war.

If any degree of acceptance is to be placed in the idea that Germany had virtually become the prisoner of Austrian ambitions by 1914, then one must consider how an

Anglo-German rapprochement would have affected this. Berlin certainly would be less likely to issue "blank checks" in order to preserve its sole faithful ally. Britain could serve as a second country that Germany could rely on to some degree; thus Austria's influence on Berlin's policy would have decreased.

Prior to April 1912, war was not a scheme seriously contemplated by either party. Although "Copenhagening" of the German fleet was discussed in the British Admiralty, there is no evidence to support the idea that the responsible ministers ever contemplated such an act of naked aggression. The same situation is true of Germany, at least up to the collapse of the Haldane mission negotiations.⁶⁸ As Winston Churchill and more recently Paul Kennedy have argued, the naval race and occasional naval scares along with the Moroccan crises were of the nature of a "cold war." Any shooting war would require a far greater provocation by one of the two sides.⁶⁹

The way the Anglo-German relationship progressed up to July 1914 supports the idea that these two states would not be the first to enter into a European war. Despite their difficulties, London and Berlin had finally worked out an agreement on the Baghdad Railway and tensions between the two had relaxed notably just in time for the Great War to destroy these gains. Perhaps the two states could have avoided war indefinitely if the rest of the European situation had not been so explosive. The antagonism that

had arisen by 1912 between Germany and Great Britain did, however, have the effect of all but insuring that if a general European war did erupt, then these two states would both be involved and on opposite sides. The lack of political compromise between London and Berlin adequately demonstrates the unease and distrust between the two, but does not explain it.

The statesmen who sat in Berlin and London were neither diabolical war mongers nor saints. They were often largely captives of systems that they neither created, nor controlled to any significant extent. The underlying causes of the tension between Germany and Great Britain largely resulted from the ever increasing economic rivalry between the two nations. The constant quest for new markets and sources of raw materials, whether by gaining more territory or through commercial penetration, continually brought the subjects of King George and Kaiser Wilhelm into conflict. Thus it is logical to conclude that the behavioral and motivational differences between "liberal" Britain and "conservative" Germany were not as great as many historians have argued. The competitive nature of these two countries' economic systems would continue to act as a deterrent to a rapprochement between London and Berlin until the final breakdown of August 1914.

CHAPTER III NOTES

¹ Deutschland, Auswärtige Amt, Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette 1871-1914, Sammlung der Diplomatischen Akten des Auswärtigen Amtes, 31:11363 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 2-12-12.

² Ibid., 31:11368 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 2-13-12.

³ Ibid.; Metternich argued that for dropping the Novelle "hierfür sollten wir möglichst teuren Preis zu erhalten suchen." Ibid., 31:11367 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 2-12-12.

⁴ Ibid., 31:11365 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-12-12; Great Britain, Foreign Office, British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898-1914, "The Anglo-German Tension 1907-1912," 6:510 Grey to Goschen 2-12-12.

⁵ Ibid., 6:502 Goschen to Nicolson 2-10-12; Ibid., 6:504 Goschen to Nicolson 2-9-12.

⁶ Ibid., 6:509 Bertie to Nicolson 2-11-12.

⁷ Ibid., 6:507 Notes by Sir A. Nicolson [pr. 2-12-12].

⁸ Ibid.; also see Appendix II of this thesis.

⁹ British Documents, 6:506 Minute by Eyre Crowe 2-12-12.

¹⁰ Winston Churchill, The World Crisis, 1911-1914, 4 vols. (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1923-29), 1:101-03; Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes, England 78 bd. 88 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 2-10-12.

¹¹ For an examination of the way the Haldane Mission was viewed in the German press see Rudolf Meyer-Adams, Die Mission Haldanes im Februar 1912 im Spiegel der deutschen Press (Bochum-Langendreer: Buchdruckerei Ludwig Grabe, 1935) pp. 12-49; also see Oran Hale, Publicity and Diplomacy, with Special Reference to England and Germany, 1890-1914 (New York: D. Appleton-Century Company, Inc., 1940).

¹²British Documents, 6:495 Grey to Buchanan 2-7-12; Ibid., 6:498 Grey to Bertie 2-7-12.

¹³In October of 1910, Germany and Great Britain had entered into discussions in regard to an exchange of information on each other's navies. A major problem that tended to accelerate the naval race came from the fact that Britain based its calculations for deciding how large the Royal Navy should be upon what it believed Germany was building. Without direct information, or on-site inspection, the Admiralty felt compelled to provide for some margin of error. There were several occasions in which Britain believed that the Germans were secretly building more dreadnoughts than the Naval Law called for, or they were accelerating the building of ships approved by the Reichstag. A regular exchange of information could help solve the tensions created by these problems. The British Admiralty said that an exchange of information should include the dimensions of all capital ships laid down, along with their protection, armament, speed, horsepower, when the ship was laid down, and the time of completion. London decided that it would request that any arrangement be kept to an exchange of notes, which they could publish. The Imperial government demanded that any such exchange of information take place simultaneously. The British decided that this would be too rigid, because they could not make an exact list of the ships that they would lay down, without making it conditional upon the number of ships that Germany planned to begin building. This problem was never over-come and the two states never reached an agreement for an exchange of basic naval statistics. See British Documents, 6:418 Admiralty to Foreign Office 12-3-10; Ibid., 6:425 Grey to Goschen 12-16-10; Ibid., 6:433 Goschen to Grey 2-7-11; Ibid., 6:445 Goschen to Grey 3-11-11; Ibid., 6:454 Goschen to Grey 3-24-11; Ibid., 6:457 Enclosure, Goschen to Grey 3-30-11; Ibid., 6:465 Admiralty to Foreign Office 5-16-11; Ibid., 6:469 Enclosure, Grey to Goschen 6-1-11; Ibid., 6:476 Goschen to Grey 9-28-11; Ibid., 6:477 Goschen to Grey 11-3-11; Ibid., 6:478 Admiralty to Foreign Office 12-12-11.

¹⁴Ibid., 6:513 Grey to Bertie 2-13-12; Ibid., 6:514 Grey to Bertie 2-13-12.

¹⁵Ibid., 6:518 Minute by Nicolson 2-15-12.

¹⁶Samuel F. Williamson, Jr., The Politics of Grand Strategy: Britain and France Prepare for War (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1969), pp. 258-29.

¹⁷Grosse Politik, 31:11370 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-22-12; British Documents, 6:523 Grey Memorandum 2-22-12.

¹⁸ Ibid.; Ibid., 6:524 enclosure to Memorandum [undated]; Grosse Politik, 31:11370 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-22-12.

¹⁹ Ibid.

²⁰ Ibid.; British Documents, 6:524 Grey to Goschen 2-24-12.

²¹ Grosse Politik, 31:11373 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-24-12; Ibid., 31:11374 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-24-12.

²² For the original text of the Novelle introduced in 1912 see Archibald Hurd and Henry Castle, German Sea-Power: Its Rise, Progress, and Economic Basis (London: John Murray, 1913; reprint ed., Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1971), Appendix I, pp. 337-45; compare actual text to the outline sent to London which can be seen in Grosse Politik, 31:11348 n. Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 1-30-12.

²³ Churchill, World Crisis, I:96-98 Churchill to Grey 1-31-12.

²⁴ British Documents, 6:524 enclosure, Memorandum Communicated to Count Metternich [undated]; Grosse Politik, 31: 11373 enclosure, Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-24-12.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Ibid., 31:11359 Wilhelm to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-9-12; British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12.

²⁷ Grosse Politik, 31:11378 Wilhelm to Kiderlen 2-28-12.

²⁸ Ibid., 31:11379 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-29-12; Ibid., 31:11376 Memorandum by Bethmann-Hollweg 2-28-12.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid., 31:11379 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-29-12.

³¹ Compare Grosse Politik, 31:11375 Tirpitz to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-27-12; to British Documents, 6:524 enclosure, Grey to Goschen 2-24-12; or compare Tirpitz's note to Grosse Politik, 31:11373 enclosure, Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 2-24-12.

³²Ibid., 31:11392 enclosure, Widenmann to Tirpitz 3-7-12; Ibid., 31:11396 enclosure, Widenmann to Tirpitz 3-11-12.

³³Ibid., 31:11393 Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm 3-12-12; Ibid., 31:11397 Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm 3-14-12.

³⁴Ibid., 31:11380 n. Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 3-1-12.

³⁵Ibid., 31:11385 Wilhelm to Bethmann-Hollweg 3-5-12; Ibid., 31:11386 Wilhelm to Bethmann-Hollweg 3-5-12; Ibid., 31:11387 Wilhelm to Metternich 3-5-12; Ibid., 31:11381 enclosure, Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 3-2-12.

³⁶Ibid., 31:11388 n. and Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm 3-6-12.

³⁷British Documents, 6:527 Granville to Grey 2-29-12.

³⁸Ibid., 6:527 Minute by Crowe on Granville to Grey 2-29-12.

³⁹Ibid., 6:532 Haldane's Observations on the Memorandum of March 6, 1912, 3-11-12.

⁴⁰Ibid., 6:529 Memorandum Communicated by Count Metternich, March 6, 1912; same as Grosse Politik, 31:11381 enclosure.

⁴¹Haldane stated in his diary of his visit to Berlin that "He [Bethmann-Hollweg] asked me whether, if we could agree on the two first matters, I would like to return to London and take the sense of [our discussions to] my colleagues before we talked about other questions. I replied in the negative." British Documents, 6:506 Haldane's Diary 2-10-12.

⁴²Ibid., 6:529 Minute by Crowe on Memorandum of March 6, 1912.

⁴³Kaiser Wilhelm came to view the Haldane mission as little more than an attempt by Britain to get Germany to drop the Novelle and get the Empire entangled with third parties over colonies. Thus, the British ministry would have made a huge success by getting Germany to drop the Novelle and England giving nothing in return--obviously the third parties would not give up their colonies. Grosse Politik, 31:11422 n. Bethmann to Wilhelm, 3-28-12. Skepticism about Britain's intentions in "assisting" Germany in achieving colonial goals went back to Berlin's experiences during and just following the signing of the Portuguese partition treaty of 1898. This treaty was signed by Great Britain merely as a facade to keep Germany

out of the turmoil in South Africa. London then quickly signed, in secret, the Treaty of Windsor, which guaranteed Portugal's possessions. Needless to say Berlin was infuriated after it had pieced together what had happened, and Wilhelm II, to name but one, never viewed British intentions with as much trust ever again. Jacques Willequet, "Anglo-German Rivalry in Belgian and Portuguese Africa," in Britain and Germany in Africa: Imperial Rivalry and Colonial Rule, ed. Prosser Gifford and William Roger Lewis (New Haven: Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1967), p. 265.

⁴⁴In coming to an acceptance of the "aggressor" clause, the chancellor wanted an addition, which called for some action by the other party to an agreement if the first party is the victim of aggression ("...dass im Falle drohender Verwicklung mit anderen Staaten ein rechtzeitiges Insbenehmentreten mit dem Partner Platz greift.")Ibid., 31:11391 Memorandum by Bethmann-Hollweg 3-8-12.

⁴⁵Ibid., 31:11380 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 3-1-12.

⁴⁶Ibid., 31:11394 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 3-12-12.

⁴⁷Ibid., 31:11398 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg [pr. 3-14-12].

⁴⁸British Documents, 6:533 Memorandum by Lord Haldane of a Conversation with Count Metternich 3-12-12.

⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Ibid., 6:534 Nicolson to Goschen 3-13-12.

⁵¹Ibid., 6:537 enclosure, Grey to Goschen 3-14-12; Grosse Politik, 31:11399 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 3-14-12.

⁵²Ibid., 31:11400 Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 3-14-12; British Documents, 6:538 Metternich to Grey 3-14-12; Ibid., 6:539 Grey to Goschen 3-15-12.

⁵³Theobald von Bethmann-Hollweg, Reflections on the World War, 2 vols., trans. George Young (London: Thornton Butterworth, Ltd., 1920), 1:55.

⁵⁴British Documents, 6:539 enclosure, Grey to Goschen 3-15-12; same as Grosse Politik, 31:11395 New Draft for an Anglo-German Agreement [undated].

⁵⁵See appendix II of this thesis.

⁵⁶Herbert Henry Asquith, The Genesis of the War (New York: George H. Doran Company, 1923), p. 157.

⁵⁷Edward Grey, Twenty-Five Years, 1892-1916 (New York: Frederick A. Stokes Company, 1925), p.244.

⁵⁸Richard B. Haldane, Before the War (London: Cassell and Company, Ltd., 1920) pp. 57-71.

⁵⁹Grosse Politik, 31:11401 Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm 3-15-12; Ibid., 31:11405 Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm 3-17-12.

⁶⁰British Documents, 6:541 Goschen to Nicolson 3-15-12.

⁶¹Ibid., 6:544 Grey to Goschen 3-16-12; Shortly thereafter Goschen informed Grey that there was little likelihood of Bethmann-Hollweg being dismissed. Even if he was fired there was almost certainly no chance of Tirpitz being named as the new chancellor. Ibid., 6:549 Goschen to Grey 3-22-12; Wilhelm became quite indignant over the whole affair saying "Ich habe noch niemals in meinem Leben gehört, dass man ein Abkommen nur mit einem und auf einen bestimmten Staatsmann hin, unabhängig vom jeweiligen Souverain abschießt....Er schreibt mir bereits vor, wer mein Minister sein soll, falls ich mit England ein Agreement schliesse." Grosse Politik, 31:11403 n. Metternich to Auswärtige Amt 3-17-12; Ibid., 31:11405 n. Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm 3-17-12.

⁶²Ibid., 31:11406 Bethmann-Hollweg to Metternich 3-18-12; British Documents, 6:545 Grey to Goschen 3-19-12.

⁶³Ibid.

⁶⁴Ibid., 6:554 Grey to Goschen 3-26-12; Grosse Politik, 31:11419 Kiderlen to Metternich 3-25-12.

⁶⁵Ibid., 31:11423 Metternich to Bethmann-Hollweg 3-29-12; British Documents, 6:557 Grey to Goschen 3-29-12.

⁶⁶Edward Willis, "Anglo-German Rivalry Before the World War," Southwestern Social Science Quarterly, 19 (December 1938): 302-03; Williamson, The Politics of Grand Strategy, pp. 261-63.

⁶⁷British Documents, 6:544 Grey to Goschen 3-16-12.

⁶⁸The Kaiser put forth the rather absurd suggestion that Germany propose an alliance with Britain that also included France, because London was so concerned about its Entente partner. Naturally nothing ever came of this, but it does demonstrate clearly that at this time the monarchy

and the constitutional political authorities had no serious thoughts of initiating a war with France. The escape clauses already mentioned that Bethmann-Hollweg allowed into his "new draft" for a political agreement, also indicates that he did not think that he had to contemplate leading his country in an aggressive war. Grosse Politik, 31:11405 n. Bethmann-Hollweg to Wilhelm II 3-17-12.

⁶⁹Paul Kennedy, The Rise of Anglo-German Antagonism, 1860-1914, (London: Allen & Unwin, 1980), p. 444.

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APPENDIX A

TABLE SHOWING COMPARATIVE NAVAL
STRENGTHS OF SELECTED POWERS
AND COMBINATIONS OF POWERS

- 1) Battleships not more than fifteen years old from the date of launch and battle cruisers.
- 2) Dreadnought type battleships, or battle cruisers completed.
- 3) Armoured cruisers not more than fifteen years old from the date of launch.
- 4) Dreadnought type battleships, or battle cruisers under construction, or projected (the Triple Alliance powers normally made longer range projections on naval construction than did Great Britain).

March 1907:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	47	1	30	6
Germany	21	0	6	6
France/Russia	23	0	19	0
Triple Alliance	34	0	15	7*
March 1908:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	40	1	34	9
Germany	21	0	8	10
France/Russia	21	0	20	1
Triple Alliance	36*	0	16*	15*
March 1909:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	46	5	38	7
Germany	22	0	8	14
France/Russia	18	0	21	4
Triple Alliance	40*	0	16	19*
March 1910:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	48	8	38	12
Germany	24	3	9	11
France/Russia	17	0	20	4
Triple Alliance	43*	3	18	17*

March 1911:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	47	12	38	15
Germany	26	4	10	12
France/Russia	16	0	21	6
Triple Alliance	43	4	20	20
March 1912:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	47	16	34	16
Germany	28	9	9	14
France/Russia	20	6@	23	14
Triple Alliance	45	9	18	24
January 1913:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	52	22	34	14
Germany	31	13	8	10
France/Russia	20	6@	23	18
Triple Alliance	48	15	17	18
January 1914:	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Great Britain	51	27	34	15
Germany	35	17	8	9
France/Russia	22	8@	30	21
Triple Alliance	53	20	16	16

*Approximately. Austrian naval estimates were not included in British naval reports until 1911.

@The abrupt change in the number of Dreadnought type battleships placed in the France/Russia column is due to the fact that British naval estimates did not consider the French Danton class Battleship to be a Dreadnought type prior to the 1912 estimates.

Appendix I was compiled from information found in Ernest L. Woodward's book Great Britain and the German Navy (Oxford: The Clarendon Press, 1935), Appendix I. The Austrian figures that are added to Woodward's figures to make up the total Triple Alliance estimates for 1907-1910 were taken from Anthony L. Sokol's work The Imperial and Royal Austro-Hungarian Navy (Annapolis: United States Naval Institute, 1968).

APPENDIX B

PROPOSALS FOR POLITICAL FORMULAS
CONSIDERED BY GREAT BRITAIN AND
GERMANY DURING WINTER, 1912

First suggestion by Bethmann-Hollweg to Lord Haldane during the latter's visit to Berlin:

The high contracting Powers assure each other mutually of their desire for peace and friendship.

2. They will not either of them make any combination, or join in any combination, which is directed against the other. They declare expressly that they are not bound by any such combination.

3. If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more other Powers, the other of the high contracting parties will at least observe towards the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality, and use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict.

4. The duty of neutrality which arises from the preceding article has no application, in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made. The making of new agreements which make it impossible for either of the contracting parties to observe neutrality towards the other beyond what is provided by the preceding limitations, is excluded in conformity with the provisions contained in article 2.

5. The high contracting parties declare that they will, in the case of either of them having differences with third Powers, mutually give their diplomatic support for the purposes of settling their differences.@

This is the "Sketch of a Conceivable Formula" that Haldane brought back to London after his meetings in Berlin (underlines are mine and represent alterations from the original proposal by Bethmann-Hollweg):

The high contracting Powers assure each other mutually of their desire for peace and friendship.

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

3. If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other will at least observe towards the Power so entangled a benevolent neutrality, and use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict.

4. The duty of neutrality which arises from the preceding article has no application in so far as it may not be reconcilable with existing agreements which the high contracting parties have already made. The making of new agreements which render it impossible for either of the high contracting parties to observe neutrality towards the others [sic : other] beyond what is provided by the preceding limitation is excluded in conformity with the provision contained in article 2.

5. The high contracting parties declare that they will do all in their power to prevent differences and misunderstanding between either of them and other Powers.@

This is the "New Draft for an Anglo-German Agreement" which was sent to London on March 12 and conveyed to Grey, by Metternich on March 15:

1. The high contracting powers assure each other mutually of their desire of peace and friendship.

2. They will not either of them make or prepare to make any (unprovoked) attack upon the other or join in any combination or design against the other for purposes of aggression or become party to any plan or naval or military enterprise alone or in combination with any other power directed to such an end. And declare not to be bound at present by any such engagement.

3. If either of the high contracting parties becomes entangled in a war with one or more powers in which it cannot be said to be the aggressor, the other of the high contracting parties will at least observe towards the power so entangled a benevolent neutrality and use its utmost endeavour for the localisation of the conflict. If either of the high contracting parties is forced to go to war by obvious provocation from a third party they bind themselves

to enter into an exchange of views concerning their attitude in such a conflict.

4. Their duty of neutrality which arises of the preceding article has no application in so far as it may not be conciliable with existing agreements which the high contracting powers have already made.

5. The making of new agreements which render it impossible for either of the contracting powers to observe neutrality towards the other beyond what is provided by the preceding limitation, is excluded [sic] in conformity with the provision in article 2.

6. The high contracting parties declare that they will do all in their power to prevent differences and misunderstandings arising between either of them and other powers.@

The following is a "Copy of Draft Formula given by Sir Edward Grey to Count Metternich" on March 14:

England will make no unprovoked attack upon Germany and pursue no aggressive policy towards her.

Aggression upon Germany is not the subject and forms no part of any Treaty understanding or combination to which England is now a party nor will she become a party to anything that has such an object.@

@The two proposals that were discussed in Berlin are found in British Documents on the Origin of the War, 1898-1914 volume 6 no. 506. Grey's proposed formula is also found in the British Documents volume 6 no. 537. The "New Draft" is printed in both German and English in Die Grosse Politik der Europaischen Kabinette, 1871-1914 volume 31 no. 11395.

APPENDIX C

MAJOR OFFICIALS DEALING WITH THE FORMATION
AND EXECUTION OF FOREIGN POLICY FOR
THE GOVERNMENTS OF GREAT BRITAIN
AND GERMANY

Asquith, Henry Herbert, British Prime Minister and First Lord of Treasury.

Ballin, Albert, General Director of the Hamburg-America Steamship Company.

Benckendorff, Alexander, Count, Russian Ambassador at London.

Bertie, Sir Francis, British Ambassador at Paris.

Bethmann-Hollweg, Theobald von, German Imperial Chancellor.

Buchanan, George W., British Ambassador at St. Petersburg.

Cambon, Jules, French Ambassador at Berlin.

Cambon, Paul, French Ambassador at London.

Cassel, Ernest, British Financier.

Churchill, Winston, First Lord of Admiralty.

Crewe, 1st Marquess of (Robert O. A. Crewe-Milnes), British Secretary of State for India.

Crowe, Eyre, Senior Clerk, British Foreign Office; Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

H. M. King George V., King of Great Britain and Ireland.

Goschen, W. Edward, British Ambassador at Berlin.

Grey, Edward, British Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Haldane, Robert Burdon (1st Viscount), British Secretary of State for War.

Harcourt, Lewis, British Secretary of State for the Colonies.

Hardinge, Charles, Governor-General of India.

Kiderlen-Waechter, Alfred von, Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Kuhlmann, Richard von, Councillor of German Embassy at London.

Lloyd George, David, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

McKenna, Reginald, (British 1st Lord of the Admiralty until 1911); Secretary of State for Home Affairs.

Mallet, Louis, Assistant Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Metternich, Paul von Wolff-, German Ambassador at London.

Muller, Admiral Georg A. von, Chief of German Marine Cabinet.

Nicolson, Arthur, British Permanent Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs.

Poincare, Raymond, Prime Minister and Minister for Foreign Affairs.

Schoen, Wilhelm von, Ambassador at Paris.

Stumm, Wilhelm von, at German Foreign Office.

Tirpitz, Alfred von, German Secretary of State for Navy.

Tyrrell, William, Private Secretary of Sir Edward Grey.

Widenmann, Wilhelm von, Captain-Lieutenant, German Naval Attache at London.

H.I.M. William II, German Emperor.

VITA ²

Vernon Shelby Archer

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