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Edited by Norman Rich and M. H. Fisher

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THE HOLSTEIN PAPERS

THE MEMOIRS, DIARIES AND
CORRESPONDENCE OF

FRIEDRICH VON HOLSTEIN

1837–1909

I

MEMOIRS

AND POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS

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NORMAN RICH & M. H. FISHER

VOLUME I
*
MEMOIRS
AND
POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS



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PLATES

Holstein at the age of 69 in his office at the German
Foreign Ministry, shortly before his dismissal.
facing page ix

The first page of the Memoirs (written in 1906).
facing page 1

PREFACE

THE editors have made every effort to include in the present volumes all that is of historical significance in the Holstein Papers. The sheer bulk of the material made it necessary to make a rigid selection of the documents to be printed.

The memoirs and diaries have been cut very little; only repetitions and anecdotes of little historical interest have been omitted. A large proportion of the letters written by Holstein has also been selected for publication. On the other hand, the majority of the letters written to Holstein have been omitted. For the most part these were letters from friends in diplomatic posts outside the main stream of policy, including the small German states, or letters which add nothing further to our knowledge of the period. From the letters selected for publication, details of private life (when these did not affect policy) have usually been omitted, as well as some material that is fully covered by other document publications, such as the *Grosse Politik*. Even so, we have tried to err on the side of a generous selection. All omissions have been marked thus: [. . .]. Spelling and punctuation have been standardized. The correspondence has been arranged chronologically, and the date has been uniformly written at the head of each document for the sake of clarity.

We have refrained from any attempt to correct interpretations of Holstein's policy or personality current in other historical literature. Wherever necessary, we have elucidated the text by reference to the files of the German Foreign Ministry, to printed documents or memoir literature, or to works based on unpublished documents. We have tried to correct errors of fact, but apart from that, Holstein and his correspondents have been allowed to speak for themselves.

We have included in the present publication all Holstein documents of historical interest which we have found in the files of the German Foreign Ministry or in other collections deposited in the Foreign Ministry archives. When the originals of documents were found, of which there were only copies in the Holstein Papers, the text of the original has been printed. Any important textual

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differences have been footnoted. Whenever such documents have been used, their origin has been indicated.

In addition to the volumes here presented, we have prepared a corrected typewritten transcript of all the Holstein Papers. This, together with the original documents, has been microfilmed, and the films will be placed at the disposal of scholars by the Foreign Office in the Public Record Office in England and by the Department of State in the National Archives in the United States by stages as the material is published.

NORMAN RICH
M. H. FISHER

WHADDON HALL
BUCKINGHAMSHIRE
1954

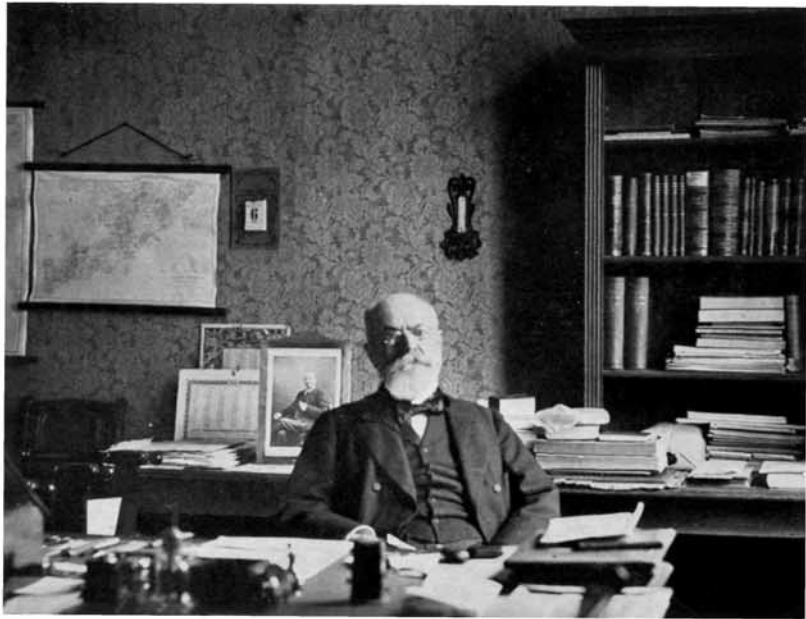
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FRIEDRICH VON HOLSTEIN IN 1906

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INTRODUCTION

I. FRIEDRICH VON HOLSTEIN

FEW men in recent times can have given rise to so much speculation based on so little fact as Friedrich von Holstein. In the flood of memoir literature which swept over Germany after the First World War, there was remarkable unanimity in the way writers singled out Holstein as the evil genius in the development which culminated in Germany's defeat. The choice of scapegoat was an excellent one. The picture of a sinister intriguer, motivated by personal vindictiveness and ambition, who retained office and influence by an uncanny knowledge of diplomatic secrets if not by downright blackmail of his superiors, appealed to the popular imagination. Moreover, Holstein was dead and his papers, on which a more balanced interpretation of his policy might have been based, were not available. Historians like Johannes Haller, in his effort to restore Eulenburg's reputation,¹ or Adalbert Wahl, in his attempt to explain the downfall of the German Empire,² lost what remnants of impartiality and detachment they tried to preserve when writing about Holstein. G.P. Gooch's study of Holstein,³ though free from invective and wild speculation, could not but reflect the mass of memoir evidence against him.

It was not until 1932, when Helmuth Rogge published the letters from Holstein to his cousin Ida von Stülpnagel, that reliable evidence became available for long periods of Holstein's life and work.⁴ As Rogge pointed out in his introduction, a final assessment of Holstein could only become possible if his personal papers, at that time in the possession of Paul von Schwabach, were made available to historians. It is these papers which the present editors now bring before the public. Not all questions are answered

¹ *Aus dem Leben des Fürsten Philipp zu Eulenburg-Hertefeld* (Berlin-Leipzig, 1926).

² *Deutsche Geschichte. Von der Reichsgründung bis zum Ausbruch des Weltkriegs* (1871 bis 1914), 4 vols. (Stuttgart, 1926-36).

³ 'Holstein: Oracle of the Wilhelmstrasse,' *Studies in German History* (London, New York, Toronto, 1948; first published 1931).

⁴ *Friedrich von Holstein, Lebensbekenntnis in Briefen an eine Frau* (Berlin, 1932). The reader is referred to Rogge for a more detailed account of Holstein's life.

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by them. Two sources in particular must still be fully exploited, provided they have survived the Second World War: the letters written by Holstein to Herbert and Wilhelm von Bismarck, and his letters to Paul von Hatzfeldt. But the interpretation of the material here presented can henceforth only be affected in some points of detail. It should put an end both to irresponsible and unfruitful speculation and to downright travesty of fact to which Holstein's personality and policy have been so long subjected.

Friedrich von Holstein was born in 1837 at Schwedt au der Oder, the son of a retired Prussian officer, who after the death of his first wife, the daughter of a wealthy landed family, had married her elder sister. It was this second wife who at the age of 46 gave birth to Friedrich, the only child.

For the first eleven years of his life Holstein lived in the country, with some sojourns in Berlin at the time of the 'season'. The outbreak of the revolution of 1848 caused the family to travel for several years in France, Switzerland and Italy. It was there that Holstein, privately tutored until he went to university, learned to speak and write French and Italian fluently.

In 1853 he began his studies at Berlin University, where he read law. He was rejected in his army medical examination because of a 'weak chest and general bodily weakness'.¹ The only career now open to one of his background was in the service of the Prussian state. After his final law examination, he automatically entered the civil service.

In 1860 Holstein applied for a transfer from the home civil to the diplomatic service. Bismarck already knew Holstein at this time and was prepared to further his career. Holstein's transfer was opposed by the Foreign Minister, von Schleinitz, but, supported by Bismarck, he addressed a successful appeal to the Prince Regent (the later Kaiser Wilhelm I) and in December 1860 was appointed Attaché at the Prussian Legation in St Petersburg, where Bismarck was Minister. There is no doubt that Holstein was on excellent terms with Bismarck, for the latter spoke highly of him in his correspondence;² in his report to the Foreign Ministry

¹ From the personnel files of the German Foreign Ministry.

² Otto von Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke* (Berlin, 1923–35), vol. xiv/1, nos. 815, 827, pp. 567–8, 576.

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on the young attaché, he recommended him as a young man who promised to be of great use in the foreign service.¹

Holstein left St Petersburg in 1862, passed his examinations for the diplomatic service in 1863, and was posted to Rio de Janeiro. It was Bismarck's intervention which brought him back to Europe from the unpromising South American post. He participated as a Foreign Ministry attaché in the early part of the Danish campaign, and was then sent to the London Conference, called to settle the Schleswig-Holstein question, as a member of the Prussian delegation. He remained in London on the regular Prussian diplomatic staff for over a year. From August 1865 to June 1867 he stayed in the United States, first in a private capacity, later as a member of the Prussian Legation in Washington. After his return to Europe he held several temporary posts of minor importance.

From April 1868 to 1870 Holstein took leave from the service in order to devote his time to an undertaking to provide a mechanized towing system for canal transport. In this enterprise he appears to have invested heavily. The success of the venture cannot be discovered from Holstein's papers, although his simple way of life later and the fact that he died penniless tend to show that his experiment in the world of commerce proved financially fruitless.

The outbreak of the Franco-Prussian War brought Holstein back to the diplomatic service. His duties during the war afford evidence of the high regard in which Bismarck held him, for he was immediately sent on a confidential and delicate mission to Italy, and was later attached to the diplomatic staff attending Bismarck at his headquarters in France. After the end of the war, he remained in France with the occupation authorities until, in November 1871, he became Second Secretary at the newly established German Legation in Paris under Count Harry von Arnim.

While Holstein served under him in Paris, Arnim became one of Bismarck's bitterest rivals for imperial favour, and at the same time tried to pursue an independent foreign policy with regard to France. Bismarck eventually persuaded Wilhelm I to transfer Arnim to Constantinople. Arnim was recalled from Paris in

¹ Johann Sass, 'Bismarcks Petersburger Bericht über Holstein vom 28. April 1862.' *Preussische Jahrbücher*, vol. CCXIX, pp. 232-4.

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February 1874, but before leaving he removed secret diplomatic documents from the archives, which he subsequently allowed to be used in the press to attack Bismarckian policy. In the ensuing trial of Arnim for unauthorized removal of official documents, Holstein was called upon to give evidence.

Holstein's role in the Arnim case is usually described as a turning-point in his career. He is alleged to have played the part of Bismarck's spy in Paris, and the evidence he gave against Arnim is cited as the reason which caused him to be shunned henceforth by decent society. The Arnim case is said to have turned Holstein into a bitter recluse for the rest of his life.

There is no evidence in the published records of the Arnim trials¹ or in the relevant Foreign Ministry files² to show that Holstein's part in the affair was dishonourable, nor is there any indication that his life was much affected thereby. Holstein continued in his Paris post and enjoyed the high regard of the new Ambassador, Prince Hohenlohe. His social difficulties were no greater than those of any other German in Paris after the Franco-Prussian War, or of other convinced adherents of Bismarck at the time of the *Kulturkampf*. It was not so much that society shunned him, but that he shunned society, an attitude his father had already deplored when Holstein was Attaché in St Petersburg.

When Bismarck recalled Holstein in 1876 to work in the Foreign Ministry in Berlin, where he was to serve until the end of his career, it was not to save him from social disgrace, but because of his appreciation of Holstein's outstanding gifts. It must not be forgotten that Bismarck's bitter strictures of Holstein came from the time after his resignation, when he was savagely attacking all whom he suspected of bringing about that event. Throughout the 1870's and the early 1880's Holstein was on terms of friendship and intimacy with the whole Bismarck family. He was full of

¹ *Darstellung der in der Untersuchungssache wider den Wirklichen Geheimen Rath Grafen von Arnim vor dem Königlichen Stadtgericht zu Berlin im Dezember 1874 stattgehabten öffentlichen Verhandlungen* (Berlin, 1875).

² Akta betr. das gegen den K. Botschafter Grafen Harry von Arnim eingeleitete Verfahren, 9 Bde., Generalia I.A. A.a. 52; Akta betr. das Verfahren gegen den eheml. Botschafter Wirkl. Geh. Rath Grafen Harry von Arnim aus Anlass der Herausgabe der Denkschrift 'Pro Nihilo', 6 Bde. Generalia I.A. A.a. 58; I.A. A.a. 58 adhibend I & II; Akta betr. die Disziplinar-Untersuchung gegen den eheml. Botschafter Wirkl. Geh. Rath Grafen Harry von Arnim, 1 Bd., Generalia I.A. A.a. 59; Akta betr. des Verhalten des Botschafters Gf. Arnim, I.A. B.c. 75 & 78 adhibend.

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admiration for the Chancellor's policy and recognized his greatness. He was trusted by Bismarck, in so far as Bismarck ever trusted anyone. The Arnim affair had not made Holstein unacceptable abroad, as has been often maintained, for he was subsequently proposed for foreign posts; but he preferred to stay in Berlin, at the centre of affairs. He had few but good friends, and he was contented in his work.

It was in the mid-1880's that Holstein's attitude toward the Bismarck family underwent a change. He was unable to understand Bismarck's policy in these years. He saw only the complication of Bismarck's structure of treaties and alliances, the apparent fickleness and rapid change in method and tactics; he failed to appreciate the singleness of purpose which lay behind them. As Holstein's respect for Bismarck's political ability waned, so his criticism of the policies as well as the personalities of Bismarck and his son Herbert sharpened. By 1886, as Helmut Krausnick has shown for the first time,¹ he had arrived at the stage where he was prepared to pursue an independent policy, in the firm belief that he was actually carrying out the Chancellor's inmost wishes, and that Bismarck, in his dotage and under the fanatically Russophile influence of Herbert, did not realize the full implications of his actions. In this activity Holstein enjoyed not only the approval but the steady support of Count Paul von Hatzfeldt in London, whom Bismarck regarded as his best ambassador. Holstein and Hatzfeldt are striking examples of Bismarck's failure to give his subordinates insight into his policy.

By this time Holstein had become the most important man in the Foreign Ministry apart from the State Secretary, Herbert von Bismarck. His voluminous private correspondence, conducted with the Chancellor's approval and often submitted to him, kept him excellently informed on matters which did not always find their way into the files. During leave periods he regularly deputised for the Under State Secretary and on occasion for the State Secretary, a sure sign of Bismarck's confidence, and he continued to do so until the latter's resignation.

To what extent Holstein contributed to Bismarck's fall is difficult to assess. As has been stated, he had gone so far in Bismarck's later years of office as to pursue an independent policy on

¹ *Holsteins Geheimpolitik in der Ära Bismarck, 1886–1890* (Hamburg, 1942).

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a number of questions. According to Waldersee and Eulenburg, Holstein had tried to obtain their help to persuade Kaiser Wilhelm II to rectify what Holstein considered to be Bismarck's mistakes.¹ Both Waldersee and Eulenburg are hostile witnesses, however, and it must be remembered that Holstein also attempted to enlist the influence of Herbert and Wilhelm von Bismarck on the Chancellor. It seems fairly certain that Holstein never systematically plotted or even desired the complete exclusion of Bismarck from all affairs of state, especially from foreign policy. After the Chancellor's fall, he tried unsuccessfully to maintain Herbert von Bismarck in his position of State Secretary.

With the increase in Holstein's personal power and influence after 1890, it was inevitable that he should have come to be regarded as one of the men primarily responsible for Bismarck's fall. Perhaps with a view to allaying such suspicions, Holstein stated at the time of Bismarck's resignation that he would never accept any advancement in rank, that is, to the posts of Under State Secretary or State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry.

The situation was thereby created that the man who was generally regarded as the only person capable of maintaining the Bismarckian diplomatic tradition, the man, in fact, who was largely responsible for the planning and direction of German foreign policy from 1890 to 1906, remained in a subordinate position. Holstein was not responsible either to the Reichstag or to public opinion. Even more important, he was in the last resort unable to control the execution of the policy he had planned or to defend it before the Kaiser.

The files of the Foreign Ministry as well as the *Grosse Politik*² show with what devotion and capacity for work Holstein applied himself to his task. His position was no easy one. He himself points out in his memoirs how difficult it sometimes was to curb the fantastic and at the same time infinitely dangerous ideas of Wilhelm II. Time and again he despaired of stiffening the back of responsible ministers or men who enjoyed the Kaiser's confidence sufficiently to prevent irretrievable disasters to Germany's inter-

¹ The evidence has been well summarized by Krausnick (*Holsteins Geheimpolitik* pp. 242–58, 271–89).

² *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914*, 40 vols. (Berlin, 1922–27).

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national position; and frequently he failed. He was not an easy man to work with and his personal relations with his superiors and colleagues were often strained. Successes in foreign policy were usually claimed by those nominally responsible for them; whereas failures, particularly in his later years, were attributed to Holstein. Thus grew the myth of the sinister figure behind the scenes. Yet nothing, neither advancing age nor two cataract operations, seemed to affect his industry or his will to work. The historian may frequently criticize Holstein's policies; his selfless devotion to his task must go unchallenged.

Holstein's resignation came at a time when he appeared to have reached the height of his power. Early in 1906 Chancellor Bülow agreed to make him Director of the Political Department in the Foreign Ministry, a position he had long held in fact if not in name. More important, he was given control of the Press Division. Holstein directed all the more important problems of foreign policy in close co-operation with Bülow, almost to the complete exclusion of State Secretary von Richthofen.

It was the Morocco question that brought about Holstein's downfall. He had tried to use the Morocco crisis to drive a wedge in the recently formed Anglo-French entente, but the resulting threat of war had frightened both the Kaiser and Bülow.

Holstein tendered his resignation, for he had been forced to assume from the attitude of the newly appointed State Secretary, Heinrich von Tschirschky, a temporary favourite of the Kaiser, that he had lost the Kaiser's confidence. The threat of resignation was a method Holstein had frequently used in the past to assert his influence, and, to judge from his later behaviour, he evidently did not expect his resignation to be accepted. Instead, Bülow, while confined to his bed after a collapse in the Reichstag, transmitted instructions to Tschirschky to bring Holstein's resignation before the Kaiser with the recommendation that it be accepted. On 19 April 1906 Holstein left the Foreign Ministry for ever.

Suspiciously he cast about for some explanation for his dismissal. Bülow, realising the continued value of Holstein's advice, constantly sought and freely offered until his death, managed to persuade Holstein that he had been in no way responsible. Holstein's suspicions had in any case fallen on Prince Philipp zu Eulenburg, at one time one of his closest friends, who enjoyed the

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confidence of the Kaiser. Many authorities have suspected that it was Holstein who subsequently furnished Maximilian Harden, editor of the political journal *Die Zukunft*, with material for his attacks on the Kaiser's entourage culminating in the celebrated Eulenburg and Moltke trials. The Holstein papers show the close relationship existing between Holstein and Harden in the last three years before Holstein's death, but there is no positive evidence that it was Holstein who provided Harden with the inspiration or material to launch his journalistic campaign.

The years after Holstein's retirement were spent, as had been almost all his life, in concentration on problems of foreign policy. Both Bülow and Kiderlen-Wächter were constant visitors and correspondents. Holstein lived long enough to witness Germany's 'triumph' in the Bosnian crisis. He died on 9 May 1909.

II. HISTORY OF THE PAPERS¹

After Holstein's death, his collection of personal papers passed to the friend and confidante of his later years, Helene von Lebbin, née von Brandt.

'I leave no negotiable assets,' Holstein wrote in his last will and testament,² 'they have either been spent or become worthless. All that remains is the furniture in my flat and whatever I possess in the way of books, documents of various kinds, notebooks and memoranda; all this is left to Frau von Lebbin. To the best of my knowledge, this includes nothing that should be returned to the Foreign Ministry. On my retirement I removed everything that should have been returned. A case containing papers (letters) is in the safe-keeping of my cousin Frau von Stülpnagel-Dargitz at Karlstein bei Zehden (Neumark). Frau von Lebbin will have to claim this if it has not been sent to me in the meantime.'

Already during his lifetime Holstein had put a great many of his private papers into the hands of Frau von Lebbin for safe-keeping. It is not possible to determine the exact date when he began this practice, but his letters to Frau von Lebbin show that he was certainly doing so by 1897.³

¹ When not otherwise stated, this section is based on documents in a secret file of the Archives Division of the German Foreign Ministry, Pol. Archiv No. 55g, and on documents in vol. 22/15 of the Holstein Papers.

² The will is dated 29 December 1908, and is printed in Rogge, *Friedrich von Holstein*, p. 342.

³ Papers, vol. 79.

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Frau von Lebbin had not been the only guardian of Holstein's papers. As early as 1884 he had begun sending his diary as well as part of his personal correspondence to his cousin, Ida von Stülpnagel. Eight days before his death Holstein had asked Frau von Stülpnagel for the return of these papers, together with a large suitcase containing letters which he had left at Karlstein since 1893.¹ These documents came into Frau von Lebbin's possession a few weeks after Holstein's death.²

In March 1910, the German Foreign Ministry handed over to Frau von Lebbin some letters written to Holstein while he was Attaché in St Petersburg in 1861. These had recently been found in the archives of the St Petersburg Embassy, locked in a metal box—probably the box given to Holstein by his father for his birthday in 1861.³

On 24 May 1913, Frau von Lebbin gave the Holstein Papers to the banker Paul von Schwabach. In her deed of donation she wrote that Holstein had made her the heiress of his 'collected manuscripts'.⁴

'Herewith I make over to you as a gift these same papers, the ones already in your keeping as well as those documents preserved elsewhere. At the same time I stipulate that a publication of Herr von Holstein's papers in whole or in part shall not take place. You will please confirm that you accept the gift on this condition.'⁵

Paul von Schwabach already had an extensive archive collection, and he had the means to take proper care of the documents. It may have been partly with this in mind that Frau von Lebbin put the Holstein Papers into his hands. In the cover letter⁶ to the deed of donation, quoted above, she wrote:

'My Dear Paul,

I enclose the deed of donation duly signed. May you be granted long life and good health in order to sift these documents, sort them and put them in good order. May the task revive many happy memories. That is my sincere and heartfelt wish.'

¹ Rogge, *Friedrich von Holstein*, p. 340.

² *Ibid.* p. 343, n. 2.

³ See August von Holstein's letter of 18 April 1861 (*Correspondence*).

⁴ The original deed of donation is in vol. 17 of the Holstein Papers.

⁵ Schwabach's letter of 20 May 1913 (quoted in Friedrich von Trotha, *Fritz von Holstein als Mensch und Politiker* (Berlin, 1931), p. 27) probably expresses thanks for the promise of the gift of the papers. It cannot be the acknowledgement of the gift itself, as Trotha assumes.

⁶ Papers, vol. 17.

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The entire collection of Holstein Papers did not pass at once into the hands of Paul von Schwabach. Frau von Lebbin, who was paralysed, had overlooked the fact that some of the letters had been left behind in a cupboard.¹ When Frau von Lebbin died, these papers, which contained the Holstein-Bülow correspondence of 1908 on the naval programme, came into the possession of her nephew, Friedrich von Trotha. Schwabach purchased these letters in order to complete his collection.²

The German Foreign Ministry itself was not unconcerned about the Holstein Papers. In 1913 the Japanese newspaper *Yiji* published two articles, based on the papers of the former Japanese Ambassador in London, Count Hayashi, which contained revelations on the British-Japanese negotiations leading to the alliance of 1902. The articles showed that Eckardstein, Counsellor at the German Embassy in London at that time, had been working for a German-British-Japanese alliance, directed against France and Russia. The resulting investigation in the German Foreign Ministry and in the archives of the London Embassy showed that numerous documents relating to negotiations between London and Berlin in 1901 were missing from the files. Minister von Stumm, who was conducting the search, thought that they might be found in the Holstein Papers. To Stumm's enquiries, Paul von Schwabach replied, according to Stumm's memorandum of 5 January 1914, 'that the Holstein Papers now in the possession of Frau v. Lebbin contain no documents of an official nature'.

On 3 January 1915, State Secretary Jagow ordered all papers left by Frau von Lebbin to be taken into official custody. Schwabach replied on January 15:

'Simson [Frau von Lebbin's brother-in-law and executor of her will] has written to say that he found a number of papers amongst Frau von Lebbin's effects, but he burned every single one. Will you please inform Herr von Mühlberg of this. That is the best

¹ This information comes from a copy of a letter of 5 July 1937 from Schwabach's lawyer, Dr Rudolf Dix, to the Gestapo.

² Trotha does not mention this transaction in his book *Fritz von Holstein*. In his introduction, page x, he only acknowledges the kindness of Paul von Schwabach in putting certain Holstein papers at his disposal. The information about the purchase from Trotha comes from Schwabach's widow. (Foreign Ministry Memorandum of 11 March 1941; Letter of Frau von Schwabach to State Secretary von Weizsäcker of 24 July 1942.)

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solution. People have probably more urgent matters to worry about, otherwise we could perhaps make it known by a notice in one of the newspapers that no Lebbin Papers exist.¹

For the next twenty years Schwabach was no longer disturbed by official enquiries about the Holstein Papers.

In December 1925, the *Berliner Tageblatt* published several letters, supposedly written by Holstein,² which showed that Holstein had used official information to speculate on the stock exchange. Schwabach's name was unpleasantly linked with Holstein's in the affair. Schwabach made no public denial, but in a private letter to State Secretary Dr von Schubert he described his relations to Holstein—and to the Holstein Papers:³

'It is a fact that for some time I was very closely associated with Herr von Holstein. Before the war I kept up a regular correspondence with a number of foreign friends; we discussed important business matters, and occasionally political events. Some of these friends were in more or less close touch with their own governments. Herr von Holstein made use of this circumstance to convey unofficially to the desired quarter the German attitude on pending questions and to obtain information in return by the same method. In this he was continuing an established custom; it is well known that Prince Bismarck used my predecessors, Herr G. von Bleichröder and my father, in the same way. This was no secret between Herr von Holstein and myself; on the contrary the other responsible officials in the Foreign Ministry were aware of what went on and not infrequently called on my services in the same way [. . .]. There has, moreover, been a good deal of discussion, some of it quite unnecessarily heated, about the Holstein Papers, which are in my possession. The truth of the matter is: for many years Herr von Holstein was on terms of friendship with the late Colonel von Brandt and Geheimrat von Lebbin, and transferred this friendship to the lady whose name has been so often mentioned, Frau von Lebbin, who was the Colonel's daughter and von Lebbin's wife. He constituted her his heir; i.e. in addition to some household

¹ This information and the quotations come from two memoranda of 29 August and 14 September 1942 by Professor Rheindorf, temporarily attached to the Foreign Ministry. The original documents have not been found.

² The Holstein Papers throw no light on this incident, but see Thimme's view in his introduction to Trotha's book on Holstein, pp. xvi–xvii.

³ Letter of 22 January 1926. Printed in Paul von Schwabach, *Aus meinen Akten* (Berlin, 1927), pp. 446–8.

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effects of no great value he left her his Papers. Frau von Lebbin, who was already a close friend of my parents when I was still a child, and always remained a friend of mine, was worried about the fate of these letters after her death, particularly as she herself fell seriously ill soon after Holstein died and was bedridden for the rest of her days. She finally decided, in view of my connections with Herr von Holstein, to rely on my friendship and hand over the Papers to me, whilst stipulating certain conditions to govern the possible use of the Papers. These conditions I accepted on behalf of myself and my heirs. Meanwhile the news had gradually leaked out that I was the owner, or as I would prefer to put it, the custodian, and I have been repeatedly requested by publishers, historians and journalists, to allow them to make use of the Papers. It has been frequently pointed out to me that even though I may formerly have been justified in refusing, this was no longer the case now that conditions were totally different. I am myself aware that times have changed. In my opinion, however, my obligation to keep my promises has remained unchanged. Any talk there may be of memoirs written by Holstein is based on idle speculation. I think it highly improbable that Holstein wrote his memoirs. The fact is that I have never come across them and there is no trace of them in the above-mentioned Papers. So far as the correspondence is concerned, a moment's consideration and a little goodwill should suffice to make it clear that I can hardly possess the letters Holstein wrote, for they are in the hands of the recipients, but only the ones sent to him. Naturally many of the writers of these letters are dead, but others are still alive, as are some of the people mentioned in the letters. I have been on friendly terms for years with so many of the correspondents and the people they mention, that I should find it most repugnant to hand over to any third party documents of this kind which were given to me on a confidential basis. I am therefore determined, in spite of friendly or unfriendly approaches, to leave things exactly as they are.'

Paul von Schwabach did indeed observe the conditions of Frau von Lebbin's bequest until 1930. In that year he gave access to the Holstein Papers to Friedrich von Trotha, the nephew of Frau von Lebbin, and to Dr Friedrich Thimme, the chief editor of the *Grosse Politik*. The documents published in Trotha's *Fritz von Holstein als Mensch und Politiker* came from the Holstein Papers, as Trotha acknowledged.¹ Thimme, in his introduction to Trotha's

¹ Trotha, *Fritz von Holstein*, pp. x, 27.

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book, stated that he (Thimme) had been allowed to have access to the greater part of the Holstein letters, and that he hoped soon to publish Holstein's correspondence with Paul von Hatzfeldt.¹

In 1932, Helmuth Rogge published Holstein's personal letters to Frau von Stülpnagel in *Friedrich von Holstein, Lebensbekenntnis in Briefen an eine Frau*. This book was composed of the letters addressed to Frau von Stülpnagel which she had not considered herself obliged to hand over to Frau von Lebbin in 1909.² In his introduction Rogge pointed out that many problems connected with Holstein remained to be solved:

'Herr von Schwabach holds the key. May he follow up this first step with a second and thus restore that significant unity which existed for decades between the contents of this volume and his Holstein treasures. Only then will the man and the part he played in Germany's fortunes be revealed.'³

Shortly afterward Schwabach granted Rogge's request, and in 1932 Rogge began the preparation of a complete edition of the Holstein Papers with the aid of Schwabach's daughter, Baroness Vera von der Heydt. While this work was in progress, the Nazis came to power. In 1934 Baroness von der Heydt emigrated to England, taking with her typed transcripts of some of the letters in the Holstein Papers.

On 30 April 1935 the Holstein Papers were seized by the Gestapo. Paul von Schwabach was given a receipt which read:

'Dr von Schwabach today handed over to me 210 notebooks and portfolios, which are his property and contain the Papers left by the late *Wirkliche Geheime Rat* von Holstein. I have taken over this material by order of the Secret State Police, which desires to examine it from one particular aspect. I promised that these documents would be returned to the owner as soon as they had been examined.

Berlin, 30 April 1935

TAPLICK
Krim. Ass.'⁴

¹ *Ibid.* p. xii.

² See Frau von Lebbin's letter to Frau von Stülpnagel of 11 June 1909, Rogge, *Friedrich von Holstein*, p. 343.

³ *Ibid.* p. vi.

⁴ From the private papers of Baroness von der Heydt.

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In a letter of 12 July 1935, Schwabach asked for the return of the Papers:

‘Dear Herr Taplick,

You obtained from me the Holstein Papers in my possession in order to discover whether they throw any light on the problem of Freemasonry. Two and a half months have elapsed since then; I therefore assume that the task is concluded, particularly as your interest was limited to the above-mentioned problem and did not extend to the remaining contents of the documents. I should be most grateful if the Papers were returned to me as soon as possible [...].’¹

Schwabach was informed that the Holstein Papers were still being examined; another query by Schwabach in July 1936 seems never to have been answered.²

In 1937 Schwabach’s legal representative, Dr Rudolf Dix, addressed a further enquiry to the Gestapo about the Holstein Papers. He was informed ‘that the Holstein Papers belonging to Dr Paul Schwabach appear to the Secret State Police to be of importance, not only as historical source material but also because of the political use to which they could be put. Moreover, the systematic examination and evaluation of this material, taken over on 30 April 1935, is in no way completed, but will on the contrary still take a considerable time.’ Dr Dix pointed out that these Papers represented a valuable asset, and that Schwabach (who was ‘non-Aryan’) had never in any way threatened the interests of the German Government by the use he had made of them. He therefore voiced Schwabach’s plea ‘to restore the Papers to him after the completion of this task and meanwhile to give him an assurance that there shall be no publication or commercial exploitation of these Papers without his consent.’

The Foreign Ministry does not seem to have had any knowledge of the action taken by the Gestapo until, in April 1939, it received a letter from the publishing firm of E. S. Mittler and Son asking permission for Rogge to finish his edition of the Holstein Papers.

‘Ever since 1933 the publishing firm of E. S. Mittler and Son has been negotiating with Dr Paul von Schwabach, owner of the Papers left by the *Wirkliche Geheime Rat* von Holstein. It

¹ From the private papers of Baroness von der Heydt.

² *Ibid.*

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was intended to publish these Papers, edited by Reichsarchivrat Dr Helmuth Rogge. The preliminary work for this publication had reached the stage at which Dr Rogge had made a complete set of transcripts of these Papers.¹ As has been established, these Papers were confiscated by the Secret State Police during the lifetime of Dr Paul von Schwabach, who has since died. Presumably the documents are still in their custody [...].'

The Foreign Ministry now asked the Gestapo to hand over the Holstein Papers in their custody, in view of their close connection with secret diplomatic documents. The Secret State Police acknowledged the Foreign Ministry's claim and in August 1939 placed at its disposal the confiscated documents. There never seems to have been any intention of handing the Papers over to Dr Rogge, although the suggestion was put forward that an official publication of the Holstein Papers be made.

Meanwhile Paul von Schwabach's widow, who was 'Aryan', tried to get compensation for the Holstein Papers from the Foreign Ministry. She based her claim on the expenses which had been incurred by her husband while the Papers were in his possession. According to Frau von Schwabach, 10,000 marks had been paid to Trotha for his part of the Bülow-Holstein correspondence, and an annual pension of 12,000 marks had been paid to Frau von Lebbin. The claim lapsed with the death of Frau von Schwabach. Her heirs were 'non-Aryan' and to them there could be no question of payment by the Nazi Government.

After the capture of the files of the German Foreign Ministry by the Allied armies in 1945, the Holstein Papers were claimed by Baroness von der Heydt and were made available to the present editors.

III. THE DOCUMENTS IN THE HOLSTEIN PAPERS

The Holstein Papers may be roughly divided into four parts: memoirs and political observations; diaries; political memoranda; and correspondence.

MEMOIRS AND POLITICAL OBSERVATIONS

Holstein seems to have begun his memoirs with the idea of an autobiography in mind, but personal history soon gave way to

¹ The copies made by Dr Rogge were never found, and it is unlikely that a complete set of transcripts was ever made. The copies in the possession of Baroness von der Heydt form only a small part of the complete Papers.

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Holstein's real muse, politics. The greater part of the memoirs is therefore not an account of Holstein's career, or personal memoirs at all, but rather a collection of recollections and reflections on politics and political personalities.

The Papers contain memoirs written during three periods of Holstein's life. The earliest memoir, dated 26 January 1883, is only a fragment which begins a description of Holstein's career as Attaché in St Petersburg. The later memoirs are much more substantial bodies of material. The second group, according to internal evidence, must have been written in 1898, and the final group was written after Holstein's dismissal in 1906.

There is considerable repetition in the memoirs, due no doubt to the long intervals between their composition. There are, for instance, three separate accounts of Holstein's service in St Petersburg. Holstein's several versions of an incident differ factually very little from one another. The most significant variation is the change in the point of view toward Bismarck. The tone of admiration of 1883 had changed to one of bitter criticism in 1898. This in turn gave way to a more balanced judgement after 1906. (See Appendix I.)

The various essays which make up Holstein's memoirs are anything but closely knit, and the essays themselves are nothing like the tightly reasoned memoranda Holstein used to prepare for official use. Holstein himself best described them while apologizing for a long excursus in one of his later writings: 'These essays of mine do not treat one single theme; they aim at reproducing, not in any logical sequence, but simply as they come into my head, those impressions of my life which have remained clear in my memory [...].'

DIARIES

When Holstein began his diplomatic career as Attaché in St Petersburg, Bismarck warned him that keeping a diary was incompatible with diplomatic discretion. For this reason, Holstein says, he kept no diary during the early part of his career.

In 1881 Holstein jotted down some of Bismarck's anecdotes in a bound notebook. By 1882 he had begun to use this notebook to record day-to-day events. There are large gaps in the entries. Nothing was written from April to November, 1882, and there

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are no entries at all after 27 March 1883. Only about half of the notebook was ever filled.

In 1884 Holstein began the custom of sending his diaries to his cousin, Ida von Stülpnagel. These diaries were written on loose sheets of paper, and continue reasonably consecutively from January 1884 through 1887, when they gradually thin out. There are no entries after 11 November 1888. In the letters written by Holstein to Ida von Stülpnagel during the years 1884 to 1888, references are made to these diaries.¹ After 1888 these references cease, and it seems probable that none were written after that date.

The Papers contain a second set of what might be called diaries, dating from 10 December 1901 to 13 November 1902, and 27 October 1906 to 14 December 1907. These are much more fragmentary than the earlier diaries and consist largely of political jottings. Since they lack all continuity in themselves, they have not been published as a body, but, in so far as they are of historical interest, under the appropriate dates with the correspondence.

POLITICAL MEMORANDA

The great bulk of Holstein's writing was for official use. His official memoranda went into the files of the German Foreign Ministry, as would be expected, and many of them have been printed in the *Grosse Politik*. A few which apparently did not pass through the official channels of the Foreign Ministry were found in the Papers. Those of historical interest have been printed under the appropriate dates with the correspondence.

CORRESPONDENCE

Letters form the largest part of the Holstein Papers (70 out of 91 volumes as filed by the Foreign Ministry). At the time the Foreign Ministry took over the Papers they contained 2809 letters and telegrams addressed to Holstein, and 275 drafts or copies of letters and telegrams sent by him. The Papers contain no letters preserved by Holstein himself earlier than 1880. The editors have found no explanation for this gap.

The greater part of the letters in the Holstein Papers come from regular correspondents like Paul von Hatzfeldt, Herbert and Wilhelm von Bismarck, or Bernhard von Bülow. From this

¹ Rogge, *Friedrich von Holstein*, pp. 135, 144, 148.

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regular correspondence it is possible to see that the collection of letters in the Papers is by no means complete. Nearly all of Holstein's correspondence was political, and much of it was passed into the files of the Foreign Ministry. Some of this correspondence was printed in the *Grosse Politik*, but a great deal remains buried in the Foreign Ministry archives. The editors have searched these archives for Holstein letters, but owing to the enormous mass of the material cannot be sure that all of them have been found.

Many letters in the Papers bear the request 'burn' or 'destroy after reading'. It seems certain that some letters were in fact destroyed. There is also the obvious gap which occurred when the presence of the correspondent in Berlin made letter-writing unnecessary.

Not all the gaps can be accounted for by natural reasons. Some sections of the Holstein correspondence were removed by historians before the Papers were confiscated by the Gestapo. Thimme, for instance, probably removed the Hatzfeldt-Holstein letters of 1897-9 when working on his study of Hatzfeldt.¹ Attempts by the German Foreign Ministry to recover this correspondence after Thimme's death remained fruitless. In view of Thimme's publication in the *Berliner Monatshefte*,² it is possible that the Radolin-Holstein correspondence during the first Morocco Crisis shared the fate of the Hatzfeldt-Holstein letters.

Finally the possibility must be reckoned with that Holstein himself edited his Papers. After his dismissal he spent considerable time in going through them. In the process he may have destroyed many letters or even entire segments of correspondence. The document collection as left by Holstein may consist only of what he wished to be found.

¹ See above, p. xxi.

² 'Aus dem Nachlass des Fürsten Radolin. Fürst Radolin, Holstein und Friedrich Rosen,' *Berliner Monatshefte*, vol. xv, pp. 725 ff., 844 ff.

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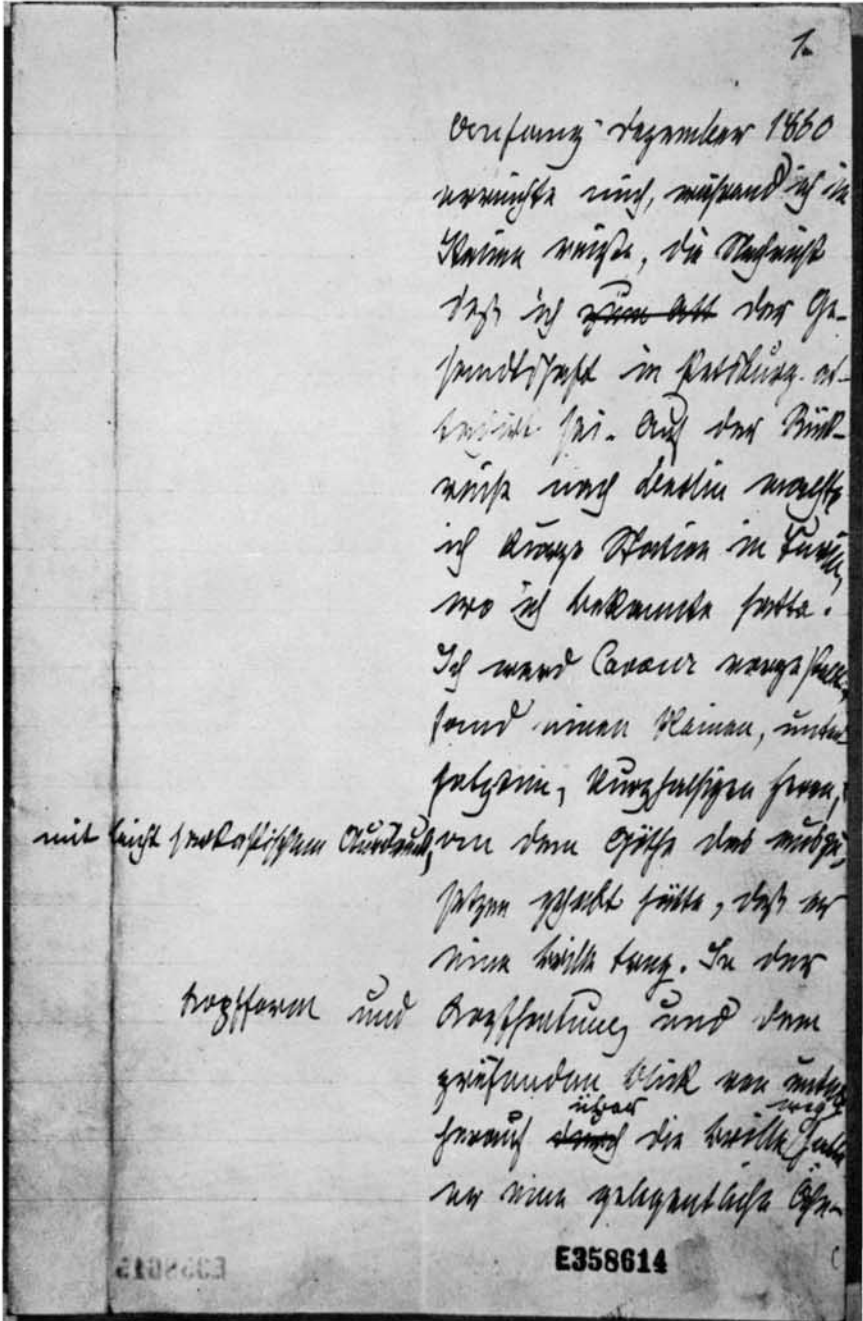
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THE FIRST PAGE OF THE MEMOIRS

The writing habits of a whole official career are carried over even into this personal composition; a wide margin has been left blank for annotation by a ministerial hand.