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Edited by Norman Rich and M. H. Fisher

Excerpt

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1881, 1882

August, Count zu Eulenburg. Negotiations with the Curia. Gambetta. Bismarck on the *Kulturkampf*. Bismarck and Schorlemer. Bismarck and Orlov. Hatzfeldt. Russian resentment against Austria. The Egyptian question. The position of the Minister for War. Radowitz in Constantinople. Austria and the Turkish railways. Attacks on Hatzfeldt.

28 March 1881

[...] The trouble about politics is that you can never be certain when your policy has been correct.¹ Perhaps our policy after 1866 was in fact mistaken. The Federal Diet had greater means of checking revolutionary movements and tendencies to disaffection in individual states than the modern Reich with its Federal Council and its Reichstag. [...]

9 February 1882²

[...] Eulenburg,³ the Court Marshal, recently showed the Crown Prince a letter from His Majesty to Baron Cohn,⁴ in which the Kaiser confers upon him the Order of the Hohenzollern. Amongst Cohn's services deserving recognition is mentioned the way he straightened out the H[atzefeldt]⁵ affair.⁶ Eulenburg's comments as he showed the letter are said to have been far from kind. I told [Seckendorff]⁷ that nothing could be easier, in view of H.'s touchiness, than to get rid of him. The Crown Prince and Princess, by their treatment of H., could do much to determine whether he went or stayed.

¹ Holstein is quoting Otto von Bismarck, Chancellor of the German Reich, 1871–90.

² Here Holstein begins his own narrative.

³ August, Count zu Eulenburg. Chamberlain and Court Marshal to the Crown Prince, 1868–83; Chief Master of Ceremonies from 1883.

⁴ Baron von Meyer-Cohn. Court Banker to the Kaiser and many members of the German nobility, including Holstein.

⁵ Paul, Count von Hatzfeldt-Wildenburg. Attaché in Paris, 1862–6; Secretary of Legation at The Hague, 1866–8; *Vortragender Rat* in the Foreign Ministry from 1868; on Bismarck's personal Foreign Ministry Staff, 1870–1; head of the French Section in the Foreign Ministry, 1872–4; Minister in Madrid, 1874–8; Ambassador in Constantinople, 1879–81; State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, 1881–5; Ambassador in London, 1885–1901.

⁶ Financial difficulties for a time prevented Paul von Hatzfeldt from accepting the post of State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry.

⁷ In his diaries, Holstein occasionally used the final letters of a name to identify a person. 'ff', a much-used abbreviation, seems to stand for Götz, Count von Seckendorff, Chamberlain to Crown Princess Victoria.

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I did in fact learn the effect of this piece of advice when a few days later H. told me that the Crown Prince and Princess had been extremely kind to him.

I had advised H. to report to the Crown Prince from time to time. He told me the other day that the Crown Prince seemed reluctant, probably to forestall any false interpretations on the part of Their Majesties.¹ He said that His Imperial Highness,² each time he suggested coming to see him to report, always replied with another question: 'So other papers have come in, besides those I have seen?'

[Seckendor]ff confirmed that the Prince felt he had exposed himself too much to the criticism of public opinion in his dealings with the Foreign Ministry over the Eulenburg affair.³ (Probably means, pushed the affair too vigorously.)

10 February 1882

[...] Schlözer⁴ has now been in Rome some days.⁵ How will he get on? Will he still be able to scrape off the thick crust of laziness that has gradually formed during all these years of slacking? Puttkamer⁶ and Friedberg⁷ (the latter only yesterday) both expressed doubts to me on his professional seriousness. At any rate he has an extreme aversion to reading files. I met him in the Central Bureau the day before his departure, glancing through files. When I asked whether he had read the Chief's⁸ dictated memorandum to Busch⁹ yet, he asked in his turn: 'What was in it?'¹⁰

¹ Kaiser Wilhelm I and Kaiserin Augusta.

² The Crown Prince.

³ In order to relieve Count August Eulenburg of his post as Court Marshal, the Crown Prince wished to have him appointed to a Legation. Eulenburg did in fact apply for the post of Minister at The Hague, but the Kaiser decided he was to continue in his present office. See pp. 3–4.

⁴ Kurd von Schlözer, Secretary of Legation in St Petersburg, 1857–62; temporary Chargé d'Affaires in Copenhagen, 1863; Secretary of Legation to the Holy See, 1864–9; Consul-General of the North German Federation in Mexico, 1869–71; Minister in Washington, 1871–82, to the Holy See, 1882–92.

⁵ For negotiations with the Holy See to end the conflict between the Roman Catholic Church and the Prussian Government (the *Kulturkampf*).

⁶ Robert Viktor von Puttkamer. Prussian Minister of the Interior, 1881–8.

⁷ Heinrich von Friedberg, Prussian Minister of Justice, 1879–89.

⁸ Otto von Bismarck.

⁹ Dr Klemens August Busch. Under State Secretary in the Foreign Ministry, March 1881–5; Minister in Bucharest, 1885–8.

¹⁰ In a memorandum from Bismarck to the Under State Secretary of 30 November 1881, Busch was instructed to open preliminary discussions with the Curia before the projected establishment of a Prussian Legation to the Holy See. He was to explain in particular that the modification of the May Laws (the 1873 laws directed against the Catholic Church in Prussia during the *Kulturkampf*) must be carried through by means of the discretionary powers conferred on the Prussian Government by the Landtag. Bismarck continued: 'The Prussian Government needs greater freedom of action in its decisions relating to those areas with a

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I told him the main points. 'Oh', said he, 'I've heard lots about that already, verbally and in writing.'

Yesterday Schlözer reported that he had negotiated on questions of principle and had naturally met with a refusal. An assembly of fourteen Cardinals had turned down Prussia's offers and instead made fresh demands of their own. The Chief had written on the telegram alongside their refusal the words 'so they won't' and alongside their demands he put 'cowards'. The gist of his reply was: 'We can bide our time.'¹

11 February 1882

[...] The other day I had just had a meal with Brauer² and Heyking.³ As we were standing outside an art dealer's window, one of them accidentally brushed his cigar-butt against the hand of a poor youth who was also standing there. B. and H. laughed; the boy looked first at his hand, then at the two men, a dejected smile on his pale face. Were they just thoughtless or are their feelings concentrated on their own interests? I must find out.

Princess Bismarck said to-day that the Kaiserin was now most gracious to her on every occasion, but the Crown Prince and Princess were chilly. This last can of course be traced to the failure of the Eulenburg affair, because, according to [Seckendor]ff, Eulenburg told the Crown Prince that the Chancellor was primarily to blame for the misunderstanding. On the contrary the latter had stated from the outset that he was prepared to take on Eulenburg despite the effect on regular promotions, and would bring the matter to the Kaiser's personal attention; he could not, however, exert pressure on the Kaiser; His Imperial Highness must do that himself. Then the Kaiser, on the advice of the

Polish or mixed population, because there Catholicism is bound up with and in part dominated by nationalist and revolutionary aspirations.' (From the Foreign Ministry files.) On 2 December Bismarck dictated a long supplementary memorandum to Busch on which to base negotiations with Jacobini (the papal State Secretary). It contained a biting attack on the leaders and political attitude of the Centre Party and on the attitude of the Catholic clergy in the Polish districts. A continuation of this state of affairs would oblige Bismarck to advise the Kaiser to seek a fresh understanding with the Liberals, with all the consequences for the Catholic Church that would ensue. Bismarck was therefore of the opinion that the Curia should be prepared to reach a *modus vivendi* with the present government. See Otto von Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke* (Berlin, 1923–35), vol. vi c, no. 231, pp. 236–40, also no. 233, p. 241; *Memoirs*, pp. 63–4, and Busch's letter to Holstein of 9 December 1881 (*Correspondence*).

¹ In a telegram of 9 February, Schlözer reported that the commission of fourteen Cardinals convened by the Pope demanded revision of the May Laws. Bismarck telegraphed in reply that the refusal by the Progressives and the Centre Party to vote discretionary powers would have no results other than the continuation of the *status quo*, i.e. of the May Laws. (From the Foreign Ministry files.)

² Arthur von Brauer. *Vortragender Rat* in the Foreign Ministry, 1881–8.

³ Edmund, Baron von Heyking. German diplomat.

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Kaiserin, Stillfried¹ and others, had declared that Eulenburg was indispensable in the Ceremonial office (which in fact would seem to be the case). In any event the Chancellor would probably have preferred to take on Eulenburg some time ago rather than now. On his brother's² departure from office, Eulenburg had tried to persuade the Crown Prince to make some gesture in his favour. Not until he found that his brother had no following did Eulenburg drop the affair; all hopes of finding a place for him further to the Left have no doubt long since evaporated and Eulenburg (the Minister) would probably be encroaching on someone else's well-earned rights. In addition the Chancellor suffered a further disappointment in August Eulenburg as a result of the conversation they had recently about Eulenburg's expectations and pretensions as a diplomat. He had said he sincerely hoped he would not forfeit his status in the change-over. When asked 'What status?' he explained he was on the brink of becoming a *Wirklicher Geheimer Rat* and hoped this would be taken into account. The Chancellor gave an evasive answer; but afterwards he said he had been greatly surprised by this attitude, which showed what a thorough-going courtier Eulenburg had become.

At any rate August Eulenburg carried through the affair with the greatest aplomb; in the evening he handed the Crown Prince his resignation; the next day at noon he appeared jauntily before the Crown Prince and Princess and said, as I mentioned above, that it was all the Chancellor's fault.

[Seckendor]ff thinks Eulenburg himself was at the back of all this intrigue, since he did not think The Hague good enough; in his view the Crown Prince on becoming Kaiser will have to provide an embassy for him. I know for a fact that [...],³ who actually told it to the Chancellor, said to Eulenburg: 'You're a fool to be so easily satisfied—you should have waited for the Crown Prince.' [...]

13 February 1882

[...] To me the most characteristic feature in the development of the *Kulturkampf* has always been the fact that the Chancellor

¹ Rudolf, Count von Stillfried-Alcantara. Chief Master of Ceremonies at the Prussian Court and President of the Prussian College of Heraldry.

² Botho, Count zu Eulenburg. Head of the Administration of Hanover, 1873–8; Minister of the Interior (in succession to his uncle Friedrich zu Eulenburg), March 1878–February 1881; later Head of the Administration of Hesse-Nassau; Prussian Minister-President under Caprivi, 1892–4.

³ The abbreviation Holstein used here could not be deciphered by the editors.

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sent a memorandum from Varzin *condemning* civil marriage.¹ The Prussian Cabinet (presided over by Roon²) ignored the memorandum and proceeded with its agenda, sent no reply to the Chancellor and introduced the matter in the Landtag! As a result Bismarck relinquished the post of Prussian Minister-President in favour of Roon;³ admittedly he took it on again a year later because Roon apparently allowed all kinds of things to be removed from his control. Many people have since maintained that compulsory civil marriage has proved harmful to the State in so far as without it the Church would have found itself in still greater embarrassment in those districts where the clergy were suspended.⁴

15 February 1882

Hatzfeldt said the Kaiser told him that at Augustovo⁵ Tsar Alexander complained bitterly of the Austrian occupation of the two provinces. To the objection that such a contingency had surely been provided for at Reichstadt,⁶ the Tsar replied: 'Ah, but on the express condition that Kaiser Franz Joseph support me in the war.'⁷

Friedberg said the other day that the Crown Prince had a morbid fear of attempts on his life. 'Whenever I get out of my coach I wonder whether the shot will come from the right or from the left.'

16 February 1882

On the 14th the Chancellor told the new French Ambassador, Courcel,⁸ during their first meeting, that he had been worried lest France and England should fall out over Egypt. It was far better for them both to have behind them *les burgraves de l'Europe* as a tranquillizing element.

He went on to say that it was time to go all out to establish

¹ In June 1872 the Reichstag adopted a resolution calling for the introduction of compulsory civil marriage. It was not introduced in Prussia until 1874, and in the entire Reich until 1875.

² Albrecht, Count von Roon. Prussian Minister of War, 1859–73; Prussian Minister-President, 20 December 1872–3.

³ See Bismarck, *Die gesammelten Werke*, vol. VI c, no. 36, p. 29.

⁴ A large number of Catholic priests in Prussia had been forbidden to carry out their pastoral duties because they failed to observe the laws introduced during the *Kulturkampf*.

⁵ Holstein probably means Alexandrovo, where a meeting took place between Alexander II and Wilhelm I on 3 and 4 September 1879. See *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914* (Berlin, 1922–7), vol. III, nos. 457 and 460, pp. 36–9, 47–51.

⁶ Austrian and Russian sources give divergent versions of the Reichstadt agreement of 8 July 1876. Not until the Budapest Convention of 15 January 1877 did Russia recognize unequivocally Austria's claim to occupy Bosnia and Herzegovina.

⁷ Against Turkey, 1877–8.

⁸ Alphonse, Baron de Courcel. French Ambassador in Berlin, 1882–6.

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friendly relations with the Sultan. Tissot¹ had probably made rather a hash of things in that direction. Then, pointing to the conference² photograph, a present from Hatzfeldt, he said: 'Look how highly strung that bald-headed fellow (Tissot) must be to have lost all his hair already.'³

I mentioned yesterday evening that the *République Française* was adopting a tone similar to that of the Emperor Napoleon after 2 December 1851. Both turned from the elected representatives, who had failed in their duty, to the electorate, i.e. the masses.

The Chancellor thought the Emperor Napoleon was in a far better position. He had the Napoleonic Legend and thus he had the support of a party; he stepped into something ready-made. But what does Gambetta⁴ have and who is he? A coarse, pot-bellied, one-eyed fellow, self-willed and vain. He has a number of supporters who speculate on his future in the belief he'll pay dividends. He could only have a party if he took up a position on the extreme left wing of the Radicals. He would then have the support of all who hope the future will bring an improvement in their lot—which is always the majority. While he was at the helm he showed that he had no idea of his job, almost like Gladstone.⁵ Instead of starting by showing the Chambers the utmost cordiality and co-operation, he offended them straight away.

If I⁶ had been in charge of Russian policy during the Russo-Turkish War, I should have come to an agreement with Austria over the partition of Rumania and settled our friend Karl⁷ in Bulgaria. The Russians are pushing on towards the Danube in the belief they will thereby come nearer to their final goal. The whole thing is a foolish undertaking; they can't even govern the territory they already possess.

18 February 1882

In the summer of '48 I⁸ had arranged to spend some time with

¹ Charles Joseph Tissot. French Ambassador in Constantinople, 1880–2, in London, 1882–3.

² Probably a photograph of the ambassadorial conference held in Constantinople early in 1881 on the territorial dispute between Greece and Montenegro and Turkey.

³ A memorandum of 16 February 1882 in the Foreign Ministry files confirms Holstein's account of the conversation between Bismarck and Courcel. Bismarck stressed that in the case of a disturbance of the peace in Egypt the Sultan, as sovereign of the country, was primarily responsible for restoring order. Any isolated action by France or England would constitute a threat to peace between the two countries.

⁴ Léon Gambetta. French Prime Minister, 1881–2.

⁵ William Ewart Gladstone. British Prime Minister, 1868–74, 1880–5, January–July 1886, 1892–March 1894.

⁶ Holstein is still quoting Bismarck.

⁷ Prince Karl von Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. Prince of Rumania, 1866–81; King, 1881–1914.

⁸ Bismarck.

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my wife and family at the home of my parents-in-law in R[einfeld]. It so happened that Gerlach¹ wrote to say I was needed in Potsdam to make up the King's mind for him. When I proceeded to comply with the request my mother-in-law was furious. 'I'd rather my daughter had married a swineherd, at least he'd stay by her side.' 'My dear Mama, that profession is still open to me.'

I² asked him whether he was going to attend the debate on the *Kulturkampf* in the Landtag.³

Why should I?⁴ The more undecided things are the better. The question is by its very nature an open one, and the conflict will never be resolved because ever since Colchas there has been a group of people in every nation who hold as an axiom: 'We know God's will better than the rest of you.'

If I had been able to conduct the *Kulturkampf* entirely in accordance with my own ideas I should have been satisfied with the inspection of schools and the suspension of the Catholic section of the Ministry for Ecclesiastical Affairs. But the attitude of the Conservatives obliged me to reckon with a majority which liked to beat the *Kulturkampf* drum as loudly as possible.

22 February 1882

A short time ago Schorlemer⁵ inquired through P[aul] H[atze]feldt] whether the Chancellor would see him. Yes. Then followed a letter begging audience. 'In deepest respect' and 'Your most obedient servant'. Turned up in white tie and tails. Surprised the Chief by his well-bred, almost timid behaviour.

Schorlemer began by apologizing for his former attacks. Answer: In such cases there's bound to be plenty of sharp-shooting. He then expressed a lively wish to reach some agreement and in future to ignore confessional differences and vote with the Conservatives.

The Chief also wished to come to an agreement, but said that such an agreement would have to be acceptable to the Free Conservatives and if possible to the National Liberals; he had not yet enough faith in the Centre Party to rely solely on them. The main thing was for the Centre Party not to disintegrate. Sooner or later the time would come when a Progressive government would have to be reckoned with, for a change of ruler would mean a change of system. If the Chancellor wished to remain in office,

¹ Leopold von Gerlach. Prussian General; Adjutant-General to King Friedrich Wilhelm IV from 1850.

² Holstein.

³ On the second bill designed to mitigate the *Kulturkampf* legislation.

⁴ Bismarck.

⁵ Burghard, Baron von Schorlemer-Alst. Member of the Prussian Chamber of Deputies (Centre Party), 1870–89; of the Reichstag, 1875–85.

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things would still go 'fairly well'. But he had lost that combative spirit that enabled him to work with colleagues he could not respect, and who were suspicious of him; men who, like the Kaiser himself,¹ would watch him in the hope of seeing him blunder. At such times it would be useful to have a Centre Party a hundred strong; a purely parliamentary government, prepared to barter honour and salvation for the sake of a majority, would come to terms with the Centre and perhaps make greater concessions to it than the present government. In such circumstances flexible regulations would be of more use than fixed laws, which would make any agreement considerably more difficult.

Schorlemer objected that it was imperative for the Centre Party to be *plus royaliste que le roi*, since the reproach of being lukewarm would lose them many seats, particularly to the Conservatives. It was therefore urgently desirable that the necessary negotiations should be conducted and concessions made in Rome itself. He had great hopes that the State would show leniency in the matter of obligatory registration [*Anzeigepflicht*].²

The Chancellor replied that he set no particular store by obligatory registration. He shook hands with Schorlemer when he left, a thing he had not done when he came in.

Just before this, also yesterday evening, Bleichröder³ told me that Windthorst⁴ had called on him after a long interval. He expressed the fear that if the government made too heavy demands on the conservative elements of the centre, the party might split, and one section of it go over to the Progressives.

I failed to see the connexion until the Chief told me later of his conversation with Schorl. [...]

27 February 1882

Orlov⁵ and I were dining with the Chancellor yesterday. The conversation turned on Vereshagin.⁶ The Chancellor thought the painter's opinions were made clear in his *Alexander II at Plevna* by the attitude of the Tsar, who sits watching the battle like someone asleep at the opera.

In a private interview beforehand Orlov had asked the Chan-

¹ That is, when the present Crown Prince should become Kaiser.

² The May Laws of 1873 required the registration of the candidates with the secular authorities before the installation of clergy.

³ Gerson Bleichröder. Head of the Berlin banking firm of that name.

⁴ Ludwig Windthorst. Leader of the Centre Party in the Reichstag.

⁵ Nikolai, Prince Orlov. Russian Ambassador in Paris, 1872–84, in Berlin, 1884–5.

⁶ Russian painter.

cellor what he would advise to be done about Skobelev.¹ The Chancellor replied that it was dangerous to give advice in a domestic matter of this kind; and it would probably be best not even to mention that Orlov had asked him. But if he, Bismarck, were Tsar of Russia, he would dismiss Skobelev and intern him—dismiss him at any rate. If he still wanted to go to Herzegovina,² let him go; he would then be regarded as a rebel against his own Tsar as well as against the Austrian Kaiser and would probably lose his following. The point at issue between Tsar Alexander and Skobelev was essentially a trial of strength. By his speech³ the General had challenged his sovereign to personal combat. It now remained to be seen whether the Tsar was strong enough to throw his opponent.

Orlov hadn't much use for Ignatiev.⁴

Bl[eichröder] tells us that last Friday the Chancellor said to him: 'Our relations with the Russian Government are as good as they have ever been, but—the Austrians ought to hurry up and crush the revolt in Herzegovina, even if it meant sending along another 40,000 troops.' Bl. passed this on. Got the reply: on that terrain it was impossible to deploy effectively more than a given number of troops.

At any rate in the last three days, either *post hoc* or *propter hoc*, Austrian troop movements have become far more lively. There are daily encounters. [...]

They say the Crown Prince has a permanent grudge against the Chancellor. The reason given is that the Prince was offended because his opinion had not been sought beforehand on the decree of 4 January⁵ (conduct of civil service officials at elections). When the Chancellor heard of this recently, he remarked that on the

¹ Michael Skobelev. Russian General, national hero in the Russo-Turkish war of 1877–8, and a convinced Pan-Slavist. His violent speeches denouncing the Germans were interpreted in many quarters as a bid for popularity against the Tsar himself.

² The resistance in Bosnia and Herzegovina to the military service law of 4 November 1881 led at the end of the year to an outbreak of armed revolt against Austrian rule. The revolt was supported by Montenegro and it was widely assumed that Montenegro was in turn supported by Russia, where at this time Ignatiev (see below, note 4) was the most influential Minister.

³ An address to Serbian students in Paris on 16 February. Bismarck commented on it in a report to the Kaiser of 18 February. 'He [Skobelev] threatens the Germans in Russia in his Paris speech. The Russian revolutionaries, to whom Skobelev essentially belongs, always regard the Imperial Family, the house of Holstein-Gottorp, as chief among those Germans who are enemies of Russia. [...]' (From the Foreign Ministry files. Quoted in Wolfgang Windelband, *Bismarck und die europäischen Grossmächte. 1879–85* (Essen, 1940), pp. 354–5.)

⁴ Nikolai Pavlovich, Count Ignatiev. Russian Minister of the Interior, May 1881–June 1882. Pan-Slavist and a supporter of Skobelev.

⁵ The decree stipulated that it was the sovereign's task to direct the policy of his government personally, and that civil servants were bound by their oath of office to follow the government line at elections.

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contrary the Crown Prince ought to be grateful to him because the policy of the future Kaiser thus remained completely free from commitments.

2 March 1882

[...] In 1854,¹ during the Crimean War, Gerlach, who was talking over various matters with Friedrich Wilh. IV, had prevailed on the King to send a stiffer reply than usual to the insistent demands by Austria and the western Powers.² Manteuffel,³ who originally had all the sentiments of a Prussian patriot but was now under Austria's thumb, made objections, but the only result was that Bismarck was summoned from Frankfurt and entrusted with the drafting of the note.

Lewinstein, Manteuffel's banker, also acted as Schleinitz's⁴ business adviser later on. During the Italian War in 1859, Lewinstein called on Bismarck, who happened to be in Berlin on leave. Introduced himself by means of a recommendation from []⁵.

Explained that he wanted to interest Bismarck in an important financial undertaking, but one which would only succeed if Austro-Russian relations remained cordial; if so, then there would certainly be a profit of twenty or thirty thousand taler annually for Bismarck. No deposits were required. At first Bismarck gave a polite refusal, at which the other remarked: 'Think it over; it's not healthy to make an enemy of the Imperial [Austrian] Government.' Bismarck pointed out that the steps where they were standing were high and steep; Lewinstein withdrew, still threatening Bismarck with the hostility of the Imperial Government.

5 March 1882

[...] The day before yesterday Hatzfeldt, who has been ill for some weeks and is now going on leave to convalesce, had an interview with the Chief. Hatzfeldt seemed very pleased with the Chief's friendliness; he had advised him not to worry his head over details but merely to determine the main lines governing policy and affairs both at home and abroad, and to leave the execution of his orders to some trusted person. As he said this H.

¹ This story comes from Bismarck.

² Bismarck is referring to the demands that Prussia adopt at least a diplomatic position hostile to Russia.

³ Otto, Baron von Manteuffel. Prussian Minister-President and Foreign Minister, 1850–8.

⁴ Alexander, Baron von Schleinitz. Prussian Foreign Minister, summer 1848, 1849–50, 1858–61; Minister of the Royal Household, 1861–85.

⁵ Gap in the text.