

1897

592. Holstein to Hugo von Radolin¹

Berlin, 10 January 1897

Dear Radolin,

Muraviev as the director of Russian foreign policy—that is not a brilliant result for H.M.'s efforts during the past few years to make himself agreeable to the Tsar. Without Breslau² and without Darmstadt³ things might perhaps be better.

Muraviev will probably have to be regarded as the personal enemy of H.M., because Muraviev knows that it was H.M. himself who had him removed from Berlin.

I nevertheless don't believe that a revision of the Treaty of Frankfurt is imminent because the flow of the Far Eastern Question, whether fast or slow, cannot be halted and will absorb the attention of Russia as well as her energies. Therefore we don't have to worry.

In view of Muraviev's servile nature, I do not think it would be a good idea for you to make any sort of advances to him. Put yourself on good terms with as many Grand Dukes and influential people as possible, then he too will come around. By that I don't mean the Vladimirs, because they are apparently unfriendly *de parti pris*. If I were you I would not go beyond the conventional requirements in my relations with them.

Is old Michael⁴ a person with whom you could get on closer personal terms? A lonely old man is often very responsive to invitations *en petit comité* with the right people. Perhaps he would talk more freely at an Ambassador's than he does among Russians. In any case you must bestir yourself, because you will have no support in Mur. H[erbert] B[ismarck] will see to that.

With kindest regards
 Your old

H

¹ From the Radolin Papers.

² See vol. III, p. 652, note 3.

³ After his enthusiastic reception in Paris from 5–9 October 1896, the Tsar returned to Germany and stayed in Darmstadt from 11–29 October. On 19 October the Kaiser visited the Tsar in Darmstadt. Waldersee wrote: 'There is no question that the Tsar had no desire whatever to meet our Kaiser again, and it is really deplorable that the latter absolutely runs after him. The meeting was arranged with a vast amount of trouble by having our Kaiser go to Darmstadt and having the Tsar repay the visit on the following day in Wiesbaden. The Kaiserin did not accompany her husband to Darmstadt, nor did the Tsarina come to Wiesbaden, a proof of how cool the relationship is and that the two empresses did not get along together at all well at Breslau and Görlitz.' (Waldersee, *Denkwürdigkeiten*, vol. II, pp. 373–4.)

⁴ Michael Nicholaivich, Grand Duke of Russia. Brother of Tsar Alexander II.

593. Philipp zu Eulenburg to Holstein

Vienna, 13 January 1897

Dear friend,

Hülsen had nothing to do with Goluchowski's visit during the festival of the Order.¹ During the visit H.M. paid to Szögyéni some time ago, the former told him of Goluchowski's projected visit, and subsequently H.M. issued an invitation that he should come to the festival of the Order, which was at once accepted and reported in Vienna.

I would now like to tell you the following about my last talk with Goluchowski before he arrives [in Berlin.] He had come directly from Kaiser Franz Joseph and had apparently discussed politics in general with him. I asked if he had received any news about the proposed appointment of Muraviev as Minister. He replied in the negative. I said that this man who was wholly dependent upon the Empress Mother was not a pleasant prospect. The memories they had of him in Berlin were also not especially good. He was just one of those Russians who made use of *all* methods. Goluchowski replied: 'Yes, you will still experience many surprises in Russia! I simply do not *understand* your attitude. You (P. Eulenburg) are always full of distrust. This does not seem to be the case in Berlin.' I said that my opinion was identical with that of Berlin. My Government also regarded the vacillation shown in St Petersburg with mistrust. But to make this opinion the starting-point for an inimical policy towards an Empire from which we were not divided by any interests that ran counter to ours would be madness, *especially with regard to Austria* to whom we still hoped to render *valuable* service through our friendly relations in critical days.

Goluchowski remarked how regrettable it was that our views, for example on the subject of an occupation of Constantinople, were *so far* apart.

I replied that every Power like every individual formulated its views academically and expressed them to its friends. Austria also had her own particular ideas on various questions and was nevertheless our loyal friend. And so did we. We would be there in the hour of need, but what would happen if we suddenly tipped the scales against Russia? The nervousness of the French would not stand that, and in a twinkling of an eye we would be faced with a European war. The Count acquiesced in these views and throughout the remainder of our conversation he maintained this reassured attitude. I also told him with reference to Constantinople that he should please not draw conclusions about a lack of loyalty on our part to our treaty obligations from our divergent views about the good or evil effects of an occupation by Russia. He surely did not intend to beat the same drum as those people who thought themselves justified by the *Hamburger* 'revelations'² in doubting our loyalty?

The Count strongly denied any such intention and acknowledged that

¹ Count Goluchowski was in Berlin from 16–19 January. (See *Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, nos. 2933, 3114–15, pp. 72–4, 275–9.)

² See above, vol. III, p. 652, note 2.

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one might discuss Constantinople *in a perfectly friendly manner* without necessarily quarrelling about it.

Finally he broke into a very academic lament. 'Bismarck caused the whole trouble when he turned down Gambetta's serious suggestion of an alliance with Germany.¹ He touched us with the plague-spot of the republic and prevented that ideal of all alliances: Germany, France, Austria. The value of such an alliance was *so great* that he should have joined it even at the cost of a neutralisation of the imperial provinces. I worked my fingers to the bone at that time in Paris in order to make propaganda for this idea here and indirectly in Berlin. Now naturally there is no longer any talk of it—but we will all live to see what Russia will do to us *with* France. I simply do not understand how one can fail to look upon Russia as the *common hereditary foe* of all western civilized States.'

You can see Goluchowski's ideas very clearly from the course of this conversation. If I was successful this time in pacifying him, his fanatical hatred of the Russians will always break out again and arouse the wish to involve us. If we *remain calm* however that is unimportant. I prefer that to the opposite, especially now with Muraviev on the scene, for he may make determined efforts to separate Austria from us. It therefore seems to me that Goluchowski's attitude to Russia is a great advantage for us. For his ideas about an alliance with France are *also* completely incapable of realisation in view of his opposition to Russia.

If you think it would be useful to put this letter into the form of a secret report, you may easily do so. I did not want to do so here.

But that is enough for to-day!

With kindest regards

Your faithful

PEulenburg.

Please be so kind as to send the [enclosed] two letters to Their Majesties to the Palace as quickly as possible. Although they contain nothing of importance, they are urgent. I asked H.M. (as a postscript) not to talk about Constantinople with Goluchowski and to show *little enthusiasm* if he brought up the subject.

594. Alfred von Kiderlen-Wächter to Holstein

15 January 1897

Dear friend,

About Muraviev we are surely of the same opinion. As a character he is a swine! There is no doubt about that. I hope to tell you shortly in an official gossip report what they think of him here² and about the influences here that played a part in his appointment. To-day I only want to direct your personal attention to one point. Muraviev is *not* a friend of France. He has no political convictions of any kind. Only he thinks the English disgusting and he has a fanatical hatred of the Poles. Both sentiments are perfectly agreeable to us.

¹ See *Grosse Politik*, vol. III, no. 654, p. 387.

² In Copenhagen.

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He will *only* conduct a policy which he believes will make him most popular in St Petersburg. He will do only what the person in power at the moment—the Tsar or Maria Feodorovna¹—tells him to do, but he will do that with finesse. He is full of the most petty and ridiculous vanity, and I have never seen anything to compare with the way he licks the boots of everything connected with the Court! It was ludicrous and was ridiculed here by *everybody*, especially by the Danes, how he crawled in the meanest and most undignified way into Imperial, Royal and Grand Ducal bottoms. At the same time he always boasted here of how well he was liked at our Court. ‘*L’empereur m’a dit cela*’, ‘*Lorsque j’étais à un thé intime de l’Impératrice Augusta*’, etc. Now he knows, however, that he was rejected at the time as possible Russian Ambassador to Berlin. That offended him deeply. He has often spoken to me about it. I told him straight out that this was not the work of the Foreign Ministry. Whether anything was ever said, I did not know. Perhaps it was only a *Russian* intrigue against him! On this point, therefore, it would be wise to be cautious. At the same time I think that it would be *extraordinarily useful* to praise him in the Press and as much as possible officially for his service in Berlin—which up to now had been his pride—and to treat him like an ‘old Berliner’. He is *so conceited* that this certainly will flatter him, and after all Christmas comes but once a year.

He doesn’t like Osten-Sacken. Perhaps he will wring his neck as soon as he feels himself to be sufficiently firmly in the saddle. As I already said, his political attitude will depend to a large extent on how much he has to depend on the support of Maria Feodorovna and how much support he thinks she will give him. To regard him as an out-and-out foe of Germany would be to overestimate him!

D’avoir une bonne presse is for him the highest good. He was ecstatic when he was mentioned in the *Danebrog* here. The more you have people write about him, the more he will be amenable to one thing or another.

You are probably already better informed than I am, but I nevertheless wanted to write this to you. I only hope that he will not immediately be regarded and treated as an enemy of Germany just because he was a cad in Berlin. cf. Shuvalov: ‘*C’est un si petit caractère!*’

Always your faithfully devoted

Kiderlen

595. Edmund von Heyking² to Holstein

Peking, 17 January 1897

My dear Herr von Holstein,

[...] I would like to permit myself to raise a point which is familiar to you, my dear Herr von Holstein, but the consequences of which may be more obvious here on the spot. We are completely isolated in China;

¹ The Empress Mother.

² Consul-General in Calcutta, 1889–93, in Cairo, 1893–5; Minister in Tangier, 1895–6, in Peking, 1896–9, in Belgrade, 1904–6; frequently a member of the Foreign Ministry staff in Berlin.

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there is no Triple Alliance to back up our position in China. The Italians are at the moment represented by a twenty-four year old interpreter and play a sorry role in Peking; the Austrians intend to accredit a Minister here in the near future, but they have neither interest nor influence in China.

Our isolated position has its favourable side; out here we do not have to consider our allies and our hands are free to take care of the interests of Germany, which are more extensive than those of her two allies.

If it were therefore possible to reach an understanding with Russia beforehand to the effect that we would like to acquire a naval base in southern China outside the Russian sphere of influence, the Russians might be quite happy to see us establish ourselves there to weaken the hitherto predominant English influence, whereas the English at the moment feel so threatened in China that they would let us establish ourselves here wherever we liked because they would hope that in the end we would provide a counterweight to Russian influence. I don't think that the Russians in that case would proceed with annexations of their own because this would be in complete contradiction to their previous policy of waiting and slow absorption. The Russians simply can afford to wait, they have plenty of time and are confident that the Chinese inheritance will fall to them. We, however, are not in this position. We can't wait, because our warships can't swim about here forever like homeless waifs, and we run the risk of losing prestige because we have expressed wishes without pushing them through. A success in Far Eastern waters would certainly stand our fleet in good stead, for the public by and large after all has most understanding and sympathy for a concrete proof of the utility of the naval budget.

You, my dear Herr von Holstein, have exercised an influence on the policy of Germany and the efforts to protect her from the dangers that surround her which no German will forget who knows anything about the inner history of our policies. In grateful memory of the long years in which I was allowed to work as your pupil, I venture to ask you to take into consideration that for the preservation and strengthening of Germany a strong maritime force is a vital necessity, and that our fleet cannot do without the firm support of a naval base in overseas territories. [...]

Always yours most obediently
Heyking

596. Hugo von Radolin to Holstein

St Petersburg, 18 January 1897

My dear friend,

What you write me¹ about the new man may well be true and it is very regrettable that something happened at the time to betray the antipathy of a certain person² to him. Just one more sign of how dangerous this

¹ In the letter of 10 January. See above.

² The Kaiser.

personal intervention is. But I think he will be clever enough to take things as they are and to reckon with the given factors abroad. *Il ne cassera pas les vitres*, of that I am convinced. He is far too concerned to maintain himself in office to go to extremes. Please read my first report about him and his friendly behaviour.¹ He was so natural and easy that I received a good impression. Certainly L[obanov] never behaved as warmly towards me as he did. He complained at length to my Austrian colleague about the irresponsibility of the Press in picturing him as anti-German; he had lived far too long in Germany to be anything of the sort. I will not run after him but continue to deal with him in a natural and friendly manner, as we have always dealt with each other and as we did in our present meetings. He came to see me at once before going to anyone else, stayed for a long time and chatted very comfortably about old times. I told him I hoped he would dine with me before returning to Copenhagen, to which he very willingly consented. [...] We will be able to trust this new man just as little as we were able to trust his former chief, Shishkin, or Shuvalov, etc. Our attitude towards him will depend on his conduct of policy. I will watch him without a preconceived opinion. I am convinced, however, that his policy will be the same as that of anyone else they might have selected. I doubt whether Kapnist would have been better. He too had connections with H[erbert] B[ismarck], and he has besides a whole rat's nest of relatives behind him who swear only by Paris. Would Nelidov have been better? I don't know about that either. Every Russian Minister of the present era will conduct a Russian policy and will try to be on good terms with whatever Power seems useful. He will at all events be careful and not attempt any adventurous *coups*. His position in the country is not secure enough for that, for he has the greater part of Society against him and only the Empress Mother for him—and her influence after all can't remain omnipotent in the long run. I regard his coming to power with great equanimity and tell myself that none of the other candidates was a dependable friend of ours. The Eastern Question will take up a good deal more of his time because he knows nothing about the East. And he can hardly behave more falsely towards me than L[obanov].

I have just returned from Muraviev's first reception and could only report about it briefly because the courier is leaving immediately. I can only say that I am very satisfied by this first official visit. Just as are my colleagues. He couldn't have been more friendly, and what was especially encouraging was that he placed himself entirely at our disposal and of his own accord told us of information he had received, whereas Lob. never did this and in his arrogance replied condescendingly to the questions *tant bien que mal* which one put to him. In the Eastern Question he has taken the view of his predecessor, i.e., not to put too much pressure on the Sultan and thus make it impossible for him, out of regard for his Mohammeden subjects, to carry out what is demanded of him. One has to

¹ Radolin reported on 16 January that Muraviev had informed him that it would be his earnest endeavour to cultivate good and friendly relations between the two Governments. (From the Foreign Ministry files.)

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consider his domestic difficulties and not demand the impossible. He was very well satisfied with the concessions the Sultan had made or had promised.¹ The choice of Lamsdorff² as *adjoint* is *very good*. He is an upright and decent man. Kapnist (of the Asiatic Department) is furious and is resigning. He is *no* loss. Charikov,³ from Sofia, has been designated as his successor. Muraviev has the reputation of being energetic and they say he will put new life into the Foreign Ministry. Actually, the stagnation in the Foreign Ministry is indescribable. Everybody is asleep.

Lob. wanted to introduce reforms but in the end he lacked the courage to do so. I cannot help it. I think I will have a pleasant official relationship with Muraviev. He may be false but he has good manners and after all I want nothing from him. He will be easier to deal with on the Constantinople question than his predecessor, and politically he will not differ from any other Russian statesman in his conduct of affairs. Of that I am convinced. [...]

You wrote that I should try to seek the support of some of the Grand Dukes as *contre poids* to Muraviev; that isn't possible; for *no Grand Duke* has any influence whatever or a dominant position. I am on very good terms with Michael and Constantine and with the Constantine ladies. With the exception of old Grand Duke C, *ils n'ont in politicis pas voix au chapitre*. I am on very good terms with Pobedonostsev. That is not unimportant. La Vladimir also has no political influence. She plays a role only among the *fast set*⁴ which is very much *in discredit*⁴ at the Tsarist Court. In this Vladimir *set*⁴ they do nothing but tell dirty stories and there is no discussion of serious matters. This is what I am told by everyone who belongs to it. I will find out more from the people with whom I am on good terms—for example the Mistress of the Imperial Household, the ladies in waiting of the young and the old Empresses, the more serious people like Pobedonoszev, and a number of old and important dignitaries like Richter—than I would from the Grand Dukes. [...]

Everyone sends you warmest regards,

Your sincerely devoted Hugo.

Ask Frau von Lebbin, to whom we send our kindest regards, to read this letter aloud to you. Forgive this scrawl. I have no time to write more carefully.

597. Holstein to Hugo von Radolin⁵

19 January 1897

Dear Radolin,

The instruction concerning Muraviev⁶—which you may show to the

¹ In his dispatch about Muraviev's reception, Radolin stated that Muraviev had heard from Constantinople that the Sultan had yielded to the pressure of the Ambassadors and promised a number of reforms. (From the Foreign Ministry files.)

² Vladimir Nicholaievich, Count Lamsdorff. On the staff of the Russian Foreign Ministry, 1885–97; Assistant to the Foreign Minister, 1897–1900; Foreign Minister, 1900–6.

³ N. W. Charikov. Consul-General in Sofia, 1896–1907; Third Delegate to the Second Hague Peace Conference, 1907; Assistant to the Foreign Minister, 1908–9.

⁴ In English in the original.

⁵ From the Radolin Papers.

⁶ Not found.

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Princess but otherwise to *nobody*—had to be sent as a private letter; the part concerning H.M. could not be sent through official channels.

They say that Muraviev doesn't like Osten-Sacken. Try to keep him if you can, because we know what we have but we don't know what we may get. O.S. is not an intriguer.

That H.M.'s interference makes our work infinitely more difficult is something to make one cry out to heaven.¹ Though I am tough, I am gradually losing my nerve. The international situation in itself is not at all unfavourable for us, for the reasons described in Hohenlohe's letter.² But to turn them to advantage one must know how to wait. This is something H.M. doesn't know how to do at all.

Now farewell. Remember me to your ladies.

Your weary
H.

598. Philipp zu Eulenburg to Holstein

Vienna, 1 February 1897

Dear friend,

[...] Your exceedingly interesting letter³ about the consequences of a free passage for the Russians from the Black Sea into the Mediterranean is not only instructive for me personally but also valuable in another way.

Whenever my conversations with Goluchowski touched in academic fashion on the Mediterranean, I was always careful to point out to him the advantages of a free *débouché* for the Russians. He invariably listened to me attentively, did not have any special objection to raise, but then—like a woman who does not allow herself to be convinced—always returned in the end to the argument 'that Constantinople and the Dardanelles in Russian hands would be the death-blow for Austrian policy, whose centre of gravity lay in the *East*.'

Your letter was far too valuable a weapon for me not to make use of it. Quite apart from the impressive argument pointing out the advantages of a free *débouché* into the Mediterranean for the Russians, your letter contained certain subtle ideas about a sensible course for Austrian policy which determined me to communicate its contents to Goluchowski.

I also thought that Szögyényi would not be able to repeat his conversation with you *so exactly* as would your letter.

Goluchowski found its contents 'extremely interesting'. He shrugged his shoulders regretfully when I remarked: 'Herr von Holstein is my superior in argument—but otherwise you can see that we are pulling on

¹ The Kaiser informed Hohenlohe in a letter of 15 January that he had questioned the English Military Attaché about his suspicion that England was negotiating secretly with Russia about exchanging Constantinople for Egypt. The English official had pointed out that since the other Powers would not fight for Constantinople, England could not do so alone. The Kaiser had then expressed the hope that England would not act behind the backs of the interested Powers. (*Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, no. 2932, p. 71.)

² In his reply to the Kaiser on 16 January, Hohenlohe argued that the occupation of the Straits by Russia would not necessarily be harmful to Germany. (*Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, no. 2933, pp. 72–4.)

³ Of 22 January. (*Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, no. 3116, pp. 279–82.)

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the same oar.' This shrugging of the shoulders expressed Count Goluchowski's renewed regret that he was unable to convince us how *un-thinkable* it was that Constantinople and the Dardanelles should be in Russian hands. He may have been annoyed that he was unable to accomplish anything in this regard in Berlin. He did not show it to be sure—but there was a hint of it in certain casual remarks of Count Welsersheimb.¹ Another indication of this feeling was his avoidance of any detailed discussion of the contents of your letter.

Count Goluchowski protested against one remark; that was 'an agreement with France even at the cost of the neutralisation of Alsace-Lorraine'. He maintained that he did not have the slightest sympathy for this idea—but I must nevertheless repeat in strictest confidence that at the time he said: 'An infinite number of things could have been accomplished and an infinite number of things avoided by accepting Gambetta's proposals. This should have been done at that time even at the cost of the neutralisation of the imperial provinces'. Those were the words almost exactly.² But please do not make any further use of this but let his *dementi* pass. We have too much to be grateful for to this sincere friend not to spare him in every way. [...]

With kindest regards
Your faithful
PEulenburg.

599. Holstein to Philipp zu Eulenburg³

3 February 1897

Dear friend,

It was not precisely my intention that you should read my letter⁴ directly to Goluchowski, and I find this somewhat disagreeable on account of two points—one of them being Szögényi's shaking his head about Goluchowski's neutralisation idea. In considering the chances of producing a favourable effect with what I write, I count to a large extent on your extraordinarily skilful interpretation. [...]

Salisbury's anger that Austria too is now beginning to see through him (cf. report from London no. 63)⁵ and his effort to pull us into the maelstrom by offering us a bit of Morocco is not without its humorous aspect.

¹ Rudolf, Count Welsersheimb. Senior Department Head in the Austro-Hungarian Foreign Ministry, 1895–1900; First Austrian Delegate to the First Hague Peace Conference, 1899.

² See above, Eulenburg's letter of 13 January 1897.

³ From the Papers of Baroness von der Heydt. Only a typewritten copy of this document was available to the editors. Partly printed in Haller, *Eulenburg*, pp. 224–5.

⁴ Of 22 January. (See p. 8, note 3, and Eulenburg's letter to Holstein of 1 February 1897.)

⁵ Of 29 January. (*Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, nos. 2935, 3106, pp. 76, 264.) The section of Hatzfeldt's report dealing with Morocco (not printed in *Die Grosse Politik*) stated: 'Almost abruptly the Minister then turned to the Mediterranean Question, which he described as very boring. He then quite casually and almost in a whisper let fall the remark: "Isn't there anything you want there? There is always Morocco." I looked at him in astonishment and said: "Morocco? You have already apportioned the choicest morcels to yourselves, like Tangier for instance." He replied that he did not lay claim to either Tangier or Cape Yubi,

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There is less humour and much that is sad in the Imperial marginalia to the report from London no. 38¹ which is being sent to you via this dispatch bag. Here H.M. emphasizes that 'it is our duty to establish closer relations with Gaul' and 'to aid [Gaul] in its task as a main bulwark of European culture against the barbaric preponderance of the East.' So here we have the third foreign policy programme within six months: first, closer relations with Russia and France to protect our colonies against England;² then, the cession of our colonies to that same England with the sole exception of East Africa;³ now, after the Darmstadt fiasco⁴ and the refusal regarding the Jubilee,⁵ both Russia and England are over and done with and we are to seek our salvation with Gaul. We are simply dealing with a sensitive character who gives vent to *personal* displeasure in *practical* affairs. What material these three programmes in six months would have afforded a Bismarck for handing in his resignation!

That the Hohenlohe regime will hold firmly to its previous course in foreign affairs as long as it remains in its power to do so need hardly be said. I can tell you with absolute certainty that the views of which you approved in my letter of 22 January⁶ were completely identical with those of the Chancellor. The letter was submitted to him before it was sent off. Hence we will not run after France but wait until France approaches us. And the moment H.M. already sees approaching when France will seek our alliance as a *substitute* for the alliance with Russia—that moment is still a long way off so far as human reckoning can judge. Before that time comes—if it ever does—we will have to get around a good many sharp corners. H.M. is only harming himself by speaking about this possibility with politicians at this early date. I do not suppose that you will disagree with any of the foregoing.

If you could at some time insert a word in a letter to H.M. to the effect that we must wait until the French approach us, you would be doing not only the present regime but the German Reich a service. The political situation to-day is more simple than it has been for a long time for anyone who has eyes to see. The Eastern Question compels Russia as well as England and France to reckon with us; but calm and caution are in order in dealing with the empty phrases of these three. The attitude of a wealthy uncle towards three dissolute nephews who want to pump him for money seems to me to be the best example of what our attitude should be.

but that he would be sure lay claim to some other point. When I replied laughingly that the point in question was one from which he could if necessary stretch out his hand to Gibraltar to close the Mediterranean, the Minister did not in any way deny this. We dropped the subject after I emphasized once again that, as he knew, we wanted no extension of territory in the Mediterranean.' (From the Foreign Ministry files.)

¹ Of 20 January. (*Grosse Politik*, vol. XII, no. 3104, pp. 260–3.)

² See *Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, no. 3396, pp. 3–4.

³ See *Grosse Politik*, vol. XIII, no. 3399, pp. 7–8.

⁴ See p. 1, note 3.

⁵ The Kaiser had written to Queen Victoria on 2 January 1897 asking whether he should attend her Diamond Jubilee. In view of the animosity still felt in England towards the Kaiser on account of the Krüger telegram, the Queen had advised against his doing so.

⁶ See p. 8, note 3.