

“Berlin, 4th April, 1889.—By Imperial decree dated the 19th ultimo paragraph 4 of section 12 of the ‘Instructions for the Commander of one of His Majesty’s Ships or Vessels of the 28th September, 1872,’ has been altered in such manner as will be seen from the annex subjoined. The commander of a ship of war is thereby bound in the future to test the legal and political bearing of any request made by him of any German representative abroad, when the latter has no authorisation or instruction from the Foreign Office to show; failing this, the commander to wait a higher decision, in case he does not share the view of the Consul as to the necessity of taking active measures of a warlike nature. It is not intended that the commander shall be responsible for the political results of his carrying out any requisition. The authorisation to test the legality and political expediency of requests made by the consular officers on the spot is merely to afford an additional safeguard against dangers which might arise from an unquestioning compliance with the same. This Imperial decree is, in the next place, occasioned by the recent events in Samoa, where an unauthorised consular request, and an unquestioning compliance with the same, have resulted in much loss of life, and serious injury to German interests, and have, moreover, menaced us with quarrels with friendly Powers, without any valid and sufficient reasons existing for recourse to warlike proceedings. To avoid all misunderstanding, I emphasise the fact that the right of a commander to object to a request made without sufficient grounds or authorisation in no way absolves the German representative from sole responsibility for having made such request. The political representatives of the German Empire have to constantly bear in mind that the presence of Imperial men-of-war is no excuse for bringing forward other than such claims of subjects or authorities of friendly Governments as are based on international and treaty rights.—BISMARCK.”

“ANNEX.—The Commanders of Imperial men-of-war act, in so far as the exigencies of the actual situation admit of the same relations as heretofore with an Imperial representative, only on the proposal of the latter, in as far as he can show his authorisation or instruction from the Foreign Office with reference to the requisition in question, or if danger to life and property, as regards Imperial subjects, would result from delay. Failing this, the commander is under orders to examine into the right of such requisition from a legal and political point of view, with power to refuse to comply with the same. In other cases, the commanders are merely responsible for the military success of the operations desired, and are only to decide as to the practicability of the same, and to maintain the honour of the German flag when once pledged. The commanders are only authorised to deal personally with the authorities of the country or chiefs of uncivilised tribes where there is no regular consular representative.”

No. 8.—The Marquis of SALISBURY to Sir E. MALET, Mr. SCOTT, and Mr. CROWE.

GENTLEMEN,—

Foreign Office, 23rd April, 1889.

The Queen having been graciously pleased to appoint you to be Her Majesty’s plenipotentiaries at the Conference respecting the affairs of Samoa which is about to meet at Berlin, I transmit to you herewith a full power to that effect under the Great Seal.

I am, &c.,

SALISBURY.

No. 9.—The Marquis of SALISBURY to the BRITISH PLENIPOTENTIARIES at the SAMOAN CONFERENCE.

(Extract.)

Foreign Office, 27th April, 1889.

I INFORMED you in my despatch of the 23rd instant that the Queen had been pleased to appoint you to be Her Majesty’s representatives at the approaching Conference on the affairs of Samoa.

The object which Her Majesty’s Government have had in view in taking part both in the Conference at Washington and in the present Conference has been mainly to secure the adoption of measures which should lead to the establishment of a firm and stable Government in Samoa, and the maintenance of tranquillity in that group of islands. Their interest in the islands is commercial and not political, and the possession of political influence is therefore, in their view, only valuable for the purpose of preventing the recurrence of disturbances by which the peace of Samoa has been so frequently interrupted, and giving full opportunity for the development of trade.

The reports which have been sent in to the three Governments by their respective Consuls-General, and the impressions which have been left by past experience in these islands, do not leave to us much hope of the successful conduct of affairs by an aboriginal Government acting under the simultaneous impulse of three rival but co-ordinate Powers.

If, on the assembly of the Conference, it should appear that Germany and the United States are in agreement in wishing to try again the experiment of government under the advice of three co-ordinate and equal Powers, Her Majesty’s Government do not feel themselves called upon to offer any opposition to that attempt. Whether it succeeds or not, it can hardly be more injurious than the existing state of things, and therefore, if no other solution can be obtained, they do not feel themselves justified in preventing an arrangement for tranquilizing the islands on which the other two Powers seem inclined to rely.

The selection of a native ruler will be a matter of difficulty, and probably will give rise to serious discussion. Her Majesty’s Government have no other wish but that the Samoans should be governed by the ruler they themselves prefer, and any arrangement for securing the free election of a Sovereign will have their hearty support. But the liberty of choice may possibly be restricted in the view of some of the Powers by considerations arising out of past events.